Ohio 4-H Competitive Trail Ride Rules (1/1/25)

GENERAL RULES:

1. Contestant Eligibility

a. Each contestant must be currently enrolled in a 4-H or FFA Horse project, a member in good standing with the county they represent, and have successfully completed the current year's EquiSTEP by the contest registration deadline.

b. Junior riders must be 10-13 years of age as of January 1st of the current year.

1. Junior riders, including division and overall champions, are eligible to compete in this contest in subsequent years.

c. Rookie riders must be at least 14-18 years of age on January 1st of the current year.

1. Rookie riders may not have previously participated in the Ohio 4-H Competitive Trail Ride as a junior or senior rider.

2. Rookie riders, including division and overall champions, are eligible to compete in this contest in subsequent years but must advance to the senior ride.

d. Senior riders must be at least 14-18 years of age on January 1st of the current year.

1. Senior riders, including division and overall champions, are eligible to compete in this contest in subsequent years.

e. Each contestant must submit their signed medical release form upon arrival at the ride.

f. Each contestant must submit their horse/pony's signed conditioning record upon arrival at the ride.

2. Shadow Riders

a. Shadow riders are permitted with first-time junior or rookie riders and for youth with special needs. If a contestant requires a shadow rider for special needs, a Winning 4-H Plan and/or medical clearance must be submitted with the contestant's entry.

b. Shadow riders must be 18 years of age or older on January 1st of the current year.

c. Shadow riders may shadow (follow) the contestants but may not talk or instruct the contestants in any way during the ride. Failure to follow this rule may result in significant penalties or disqualification of the rider.

3. Rides

a. The junior and rookie ride is approximately 10-12 miles in length, is designed to be ridden at the trot with brief periods of cantering and walking, and is estimated to take approximately 1 ½ hours. See Ride Times for additional details.

b. The senior ride is approximately 20-25 miles in length, is designed to be ridden at the trot with brief periods of cantering and walking, and is estimated to take approximately 3 ½ hours. See Ride Times for additional details.

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FRIDAY AFTERNOON CHECK-IN AND INSPECTIONS

CHECK-IN

1. Contestants and their horses/ponies should arrive at the camp on Friday between 3:00-6:00pm.
    a. Failure to arrive at the camp by 6:00pm may result in a deduction of horsemanship points designated for the pre-ride evaluation and stabling inspection. A limited number of exceptions to this rule may be granted due to academic commitments and the distance that some participants must travel only with pre-approval from the Extension Equine Specialist. Requests must be made to the Extension Equine Specialist no later than 12:00pm on the Wednesday prior the ride.
2. Upon arrival at the horse camp, contestants must stop at the check-in table to receive their rider number which determines the order of go and provide the following items to the event staff:
    a. Water bucket(s) for the PR stop(s) along the trail. Junior/rookie riders will need to provide 1 bucket and senior riders will need to provide 2 buckets.
    b. Medical release form signed by contestant's parent/legal guardian.
    c. Conditioning record, covering at least a 30-day training period, and signed by the contestant's advisor and county 4-H educator. Contestants must use the conditioning record provided on the Competitive Trail web page at www.horse.osu.edu. The conditioning record will be scored on its completeness and quality.

HORSEMANSHIP & VET CHECK

1. Contestants will have 1 hour after they arrive at the camp to prepare their horse/pony and present it to the horsemanship and veterinary judges for the pre-ride inspection. Contestants that arrive between 5:30-6:00pm will only have 30 minutes after they arrive to prepare their horse/pony and present it to the horsemanship and veterinary judges for the pre-ride inspection.
2. The horse/pony should stand quietly during the in-hand inspection and physical evaluation and work easily on a loose lead at the walk and trot.
3. The contestant should follow correct safety guidelines while leading and handling the horse. Contestants will be responsible for taking the horse's body temperature rectally. Event staff will be present to handle the animal while the temperature is taken, or the contestant may have a designated person (at least 18 years of age or older) handle the horse during the procedure.
4. The horse/pony's pulse must be lower than 48 bpm during the pre-ride inspection or it must return for re-check at 10-minute intervals. If the horse/pony's pulse is not lower than 48 bpm after 1 hour of the original check, the animal will not be permitted on the ride.

FRIDAY EVENING

PRE-RIDE MEETING & STABLING INSPECTION

1. A short pre-ride meeting will be held on Friday evening at 7:00pm to distribute the trail maps, review the ride rules, answer questions, and share any additional information with the riders.
2. Horses should be tied to trailers or picket lines where they will be inspected by the horsemanship judge during the Friday evening pre-ride meeting. Horses should be tied with a **quick-release knot**. Please refer to the Trail Riding book for guidelines on stabling area**.**
3. Contestants are encouraged to bring and their water bucket(s) and water to their assigned space in the holding area on Friday evening. They must bring any other items to the holding area (*i.e.*, towels, water scraper, saddle stand) before the start of the ride on Saturday morning.

SATURDAY'S RIDE

1. On the morning of the ride, contestants may longe their horse/pony; however, they may not ride the horse until they have been told to mount as they prepare to leave camp. The horse and rider are being judged by the horsemanship judge when they mount and begin the ride.
2. Wounds may have salves on them. NO leg wraps or protective leg wear is allowed. If the horse/pony loses a shoe, they may continue as long as the animal is sound. NO liniments are allowed until after the last veterinary inspection has been performed.
3. The trails will be clearly marked with flags and tape.
4. Contestants may not lead the horse forward on the trail. If you must get off and walk, you must get off and walk, you must go in a manner to not progress forward on the trail.
5. There may be creeks, ponds, or lakes along the trail. For your safety and the safety of your horse, **do not ride in the water** other than in designated crossing areas. There will be water available at each of the PR stops for you to use to cool your horse.
6. Only one horse/rider may attempt an obstacle at a time. Each obstacle will receive an obstacle score. Riders are limited to a maximum of two (2) minutes to successfully navigate the obstacle. If rider fails to complete the obstacle in the time allowed, the obstacle judge will ask the horse/rider team to move on. Riders are encouraged to attempt an obstacle, as no attempt will receive a score of zero (0). Riders have the option of not attempting an obstacle. Each obstacle is judged on how the horse and rider work together as a team. The team should negotiate each obstacle with calmness and patience, moving safely through the obstacle. Horses should show awareness, be attentive and not spook, shy or spin. Horse should not stumble, tick or clip obstacle(s). Credit will be given to teams negotiating the obstacle with style and appropriate rate of progress, providing safety and correctness is not sacrificed.
7. At the PR stops on the trail, the contestant must hold their horse/pony. At the halfway point or finish, contestants may have someone hold their horse and refill water buckets. They cannot advise you or help you care for your horse. There should be NO TALKING between the contestant and handler. Talking will result in a deduction in horsemanship points.
8. Contestants are being watched on the trail. Stay on the designated trail and follow the rules. All helpers on the ride are officials and can disqualify a contestant if necessary.

PR CHECKS

Junior/Rookie Ride: There is one unannounced 10-minute PR check on the trail and a final 60-minute PR check at the base camp/holding area.

Senior Ride: There is one unannounced 10-minute PR check on each half/loop, a 30-minute PR check at the halfway point, and one final 60-minute PR check at the base camp/holding area.

CONTESTANTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING TRACE OF THEIR TIME DURING PR CHECKS AND REPORTING TO PR TEAMS AT THE CORRECT TIME.

Unannounced/Trail PR CHECKS: Contestants should collect a PR card from the timekeeper when they arrive, dismount, go to an available PR team and have their horse/pony's PR checked and recorded on the PR card. Contestants should return to a PR team in 10 minutes and have the horse/pony's PR checked and recorded on the PR card. The PR team will then direct the contestant to give the PR card to the timekeeper and

prepare to leave the PR check or hold them for another check in 10 minutes if the horse's PR is inverted or if the PR total is greater than 150. Additional hold times are counted in the total ride time.

Halfway PR Check (Senior Ride ONLY): Contestants should collect a PR card from the timekeeper when they arrive, dismount, go to an available PR team and have their horse/pony's PR checked and recorded on the PR card. Contestants should return to a PR team in 10-minute intervals and have the horse/pony's PR checked and recorded on the PR card. At the 30-minute check, the PR team will then direct the contestant to give the PR card to the timekeeper and prepare to leave for the second half of the ride or hold them for another check in 10 minutes if the horse's PR is inverted or if the PR total is greater than 150. Additional hold times are counted in the total ride time. The horse/pony must stay in the designated holding area at all times during the halfway PR check.

Final PR Check: Contestants should collect a PR card from the timekeeper when they arrive, dismount, go to an available PR team and have their horse/pony's PR checked and recorded on the PR card. Contestants should return to a PR team in 10-minute intervals and have the horse/pony's PR checked and recorded on the PR card. **AFTER the 20-minute check**, contestants may take their horse/pony back to their trailer to rest and clean up for the final inspection. Contestants should have their horse ready for the final inspection at the holding area 60 minutes after they finished the ride.

CONDITIONING PENALTIES

Unannounced PR and Halfway Checks:

Inversion at 10 min check = -30 points, hold for recheck

PR > 150 = -0 points, hold for recheck

Pulse > 60 BPM at 10 min = - ½ point for each BPM over 60, no hold for recheck

Final PR Check:

Inversion at 10 min check = -30 points

Pulse > 60 at 10 min = - ½ point for each BPM over 60

Pulse > 48 at 20 min = - ½ point for each BPM over 48

Pulse > 48 at 60 min = - ½ point for each BPM over 48

RIDE TIMES: ** RIDE TIMES AND TRAIL ROUTE ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE UP TO AND ON DAY OF COMPETITION**

SENIORS:	Loop 1 PR Check	0:10 (10 minutes)	
	Loop 1 Ride Time	1:30 (1 hour 30 minutes)	
	Halfway PR Check	0:30 (30 minutes)	
	Loop 2 PR Check	0:10 (10 minutes)	
	Loop 2 Ride Time	1:45 (1 hour 45 minutes)	
	TOTAL TIME	4:05 (4 hours 5 minutes)	
	EARLIEST TIME ALLOWED WITHOUT TIME PENALTY		**3:45 (3 hours 45 minutes)**
	LATEST TIME ALLOWED WITHOUT TIME PENALTY		**4:25 (4 hours 25 minutes)**
JUNIORS:	Loop 1 PR Check	0:10 (10 minutes)	
	Loop 1 Ride Time	1:30 (1 hour 30 minutes)	
	TOTAL TIME	1:40 (1 hour 40minutes)	
	EARLIEST TIME ALLOWED WITHOUT TIME PENALTY		**1:20 (1 hour 20 minutes)**
	LATEST TIME ALLOWED WITHOUT TIME PENALTY		**2:00 (2 hours)**

TIME PENALTIES: 1 point per minute outside of the earliest/latest time allowed

SCORING

1. Horsemanship scores include:
    a. Grooming
    b. Tack & Equipment
    c. Stabling
    d. In-hand Presentation
    e. Ride Care
    f. Equitation & Safety
    g. Trail Obstacles
2. Conditioning scores include:
    a. Post-ride health assessment
    b. Legs & lameness evaluation
    c. Conditioning (PR) penalties
    d. Fatigue
    e. Trail lesions
    f. Conditioning Record
3. Ties are broken as follows:
    a. Horsemanship: Presentation, Questions, Obstacles
    b. Conditioning: Conditioning Record, Time Penalties
    c. Overall: Horsemanship, Conditioning

"Helpful Hints" for Competitive Trail Horsemanship

Grooming

- Horses must be clean! Should not have any sweat marks or stains. Mane and tail free of tangles. Muzzle/nostrils and ears should be clean. Special attention to poll, between jaw/under chin, throatlatch area, under mane/tail, girth area, between chest, behind elbows, along belly, udders/sheath, point of hocks and inside lower legs, etc.
- Horse should be free of any bot eggs.
- Good body condition
- Feet should be clean, in good condition, and be properly trimmed. Deductions for loose or missing shoes.

Tack & Equipment

- Tack must be clean and properly fitted.
- Must be in good repair/leather properly conditioned.

Stable Area

- Area should be clean and free of any manure.
- Horse should be properly tied with a quick-release knot at or above the height of the withers. The end of the lead rope should be pulled through so the horse cannot until itself. An additional neck rope is optional
- Hay and fresh water (full bucket) available where the horse can easily reach it but not where the horse can get its legs tangled in it (not on the ground).
- Organized area with tack stored properly and grain in a secure area.
- Optional sheet or blanket for the horse's comfort if the weather will be cool at night.
- Free choice salt (salt block) where the horse can reach it.

- Optional portable “corral” instead of having the horse tied to the trailer; however, this method does NOT give the competitor any advantage over a competitor who correctly ties the horse to the trailer. There are no “bonus points” for a “corral” enclosure!

In-Hand Presentation

- Horse should stand quietly during presentation, willingly accept examination during veterinary and PR checks, and work easily on a loose lead/rein.
- Handler should follow correct guidelines for safety while leading and handling horse.
- Handler may be asked questions regarding the information found in the Trail Riding project book and may also be required to perform simple “hands-on” activities (ex. demonstrate how to check the horse for dehydration or check a pulse, etc.).
- Handler should be courteous to all officials, volunteers and peers.

Ride Care

- May remove bridle and have the person holding the horse use a halter/lead rope.
- NO TALKING between the person holding the horse and the ride participant. Talking will result in deductions from the horsemanship judge!
- It is okay to offer the horse sips of water and allow the horse to nibble a small amount of grass (if the bridle was removed or a grazing bit is in place).
- There are 2 acceptable ways to “cool down” the horse:
    - Loosen the girth and leave the saddle in place while the horse is walked (10 minutes for every 10 miles ridden) or
    - Loosen the girth or remove the saddle and sponge on water and then almost immediately scrape off the now heated water with a sweat scraper. Special attention should be given to the inside of the legs, under the tail/between the buttocks, girth area, between the chest, udders/sheath, etc.
- Equipment should be properly cared for and put in an area where the horse will not step on it.
- Walk and/or sponge the horse to help it cool down.
- Pick out the hooves to check for any rocks, loose, or missing shoes, etc.
- Be sure to do PR checks on time.

Equitation & Safety

- Horses should stand quietly for mounting and not “step out” until asked to do so by the rider.
- Rider should check to make sure the girth is tight before mounting. The horsemanship judge will want to see that you have done this immediately before you mount.
- A “fresh” horse that is under complete control of the rider will receive little or no deductions but a horse that “circles” when the rider attempts to mount or displays any unsafe behavior (biting, bucking, kicking, rearing, etc.) or is out of control will receive substantial penalty points.
- Should loosen girth slightly at PR checks. Be sure to tighten and check the girth before remounting.
- Should pick out the hooves.
- Should offer the horse sips of water.

Courtesy & Obstacles

- Riders should have good trail etiquette. Should have a safe distance between horses.
- There should be NO TALKING between riders except to let other riders know you are going to pass them, etc.
- Should lean forward off the horses back when going uphill and lean back when going downhill to make it easier for the horse. The “trail judge” will be watching all riders!
- Horses that kick should have a red ribbon tied in their tail to alert other riders.
- Riders will have 3 obstacles to negotiate. Rider has the option to bypass an obstacle, but no points will be rewarded for that obstacle.