CONTEST RULES, REGULATIONS, AND PROCEDURES

1. These rules and regulations contained herein take precedence over any other rules concerning conduct of the show and participation therein.

2. Show management reserves the right to alter or modify any class procedures, obstacles, patterns, or rules in this book for safety concerns, show facility restrictions, or other mitigating circumstances.

3. Show management reserves the right to refuse an exhibitor entry into any class or event if they deem that entry unsafe for the exhibitor and/or other exhibitors or animals. With the exhibitor’s safety in mind, any activity or situation deemed unsafe can and will be stopped by show management and may result in disqualification from that class.

4. The judge’s decision shall be final and may not be protested.

5. All exhibitors are required to wear an SEI or SEI/ASTM approved safety equestrian helmet with fastened chin harness in all classes and all warm-up and make-up areas. Additionally, appropriate footwear and approved helmets must be worn, with harness fastened, at all times when mounted. This pertains to the entire show grounds from the time of arrival until departure. Failure to comply may result in disqualification. (SEI - Safety Equipment Institute, ASTM - American Society of Testing and Measures)

6. Contestant numbers shall be worn on the exhibitor’s back or attached to the saddlepad on both sides. Failure to comply will result in disqualification from said class.

7. An Appeals Committee shall be designated by the management before the show begins and is to be on the grounds for the duration of the show. This committee is to receive and act upon any protests arising out of any class or event. A protest must be filed in writing to show management personnel immediately upon conclusion of the class or event in question. The protest must be accompanied by a $100 cash only fee. If the protest is upheld by the Appeals Committee, the deposit shall be refunded. If the protest is over-ruled, the deposit shall be forfeited to the horse show fund.

8. The show will be held on the date scheduled barring a natural catastrophe. It is the responsibility of the exhibitor’s parent or guardian to determine if he/she is able to compete safely. In case of inclement weather, all contestants must realize that the conditions and facilities are the best available as determined by the show management and show accordingly.

Management reserves the right to stop or cancel a class in progress due to storm, accident, or other emergency (Ex: lightning storm). In the event of a class being stopped while in progress due to any of the above, the following procedure should be followed:

If it is a class in which horses compete together (i.e., pleasure class or heat), when the class or heat is resumed it shall be held in its entirety and no consideration shall be given to the performance during the original session. If it is restarted in a location substantially different, then the class may be rerun in its entirety with original qualifiers remaining qualified and additional qualifiers may be added.

If it is a class in which horses compete individually (i.e., horsemanship), when the class is resumed it shall be continued from the point stopped unless the class is rescheduled to another
day in which case it will be started from the beginning with no consideration given to the performance during the original session. Possible exception could be made if when resumed the class is held in a different location.

9. No horse or rider shall be assisted beyond the plane of the arena gate. Failure to comply will result in disqualification.

10. In support of the 4-H horse philosophy and to insure maximum acceptance of responsibilities through learning experiences, only a 4-H exhibitor registered at the current show is allowed to be riding the horse while on the show grounds. "Tuning-up" by persons other than the registered exhibitor of that horse at the current show is prohibited. Lunging (in a halter with no other tack or equipment on the animal) by someone other than the exhibitor is permitted. Failure to comply may result in disqualification of the contestant.

11. Lunging is not permitted in warm up areas where a class is being staged.

12. When an exhibitor or another person on behalf of an exhibitor is guilty of unsportsmanlike conduct or misbehavior while on the show grounds, management may suspend such exhibitor's right to participate in future classes and/or shows as deemed appropriate.

13. Assistance or coaching of contestants while competing in a class may warrant penalties or disqualification. No electronic communication devices will be allowed by exhibitors while in the class.

14. An official of the show may check the appointments of any horse/rider combination throughout the duration of the show. It is the responsibility of the contestant to comply with all 4-H rules and regulations. The judge, at his discretion, may disqualify an exhibitor for inappropriate appointments or equipment.

15. In concern for humane treatment of the horse, the judge, at his discretion, has the authority to excuse any horse from a class which is obviously lame. Obvious lameness is: consistently observable at a trot under all circumstances; marked nodding, hitching, or shortened stride; minimal weight-bearing in motion and/or at rest and inability to move.

16. The judge or designated show officials have the authority to require the removal or alteration of any piece of equipment which, in their opinion, is unsafe, tends to give unfair advantage, or is deemed inhumane. Inhumane treatment of a horse identified by the show committee at any time on the show grounds may result in disqualification, dismissal, and suspension from further participation in classes subject to approval of show, and/or appeals committee. Any horse receiving inhumane treatment while exhibiting may be dismissed upon the discretion of the judge or show official appointed by the show management committee. The standard by which conduct or treatment will be measured is that which the show management committee rules a reasonable person, informed and experienced in generally accepted equine training and exhibition procedures, would determine to be cruel, abusive, or inhumane.

17. The use of fake tails is strongly discouraged. Loss of a fake tail during a class will result in disqualification from that class.
18. Striking a horse in front of cinch with anything other than the open hand is a disqualification. Striking the horse with anything, including hand, in front of the throatlatch is a disqualification.

19. Chemical stimulants, depressants, and caustic agents are prohibited and can result in disqualification. All horses are subject to drug testing by the State of Florida Department of Agriculture whose rules will apply.

20. While performing in a class, if a horse steps one or more feet out of bounds or out of the arena, that entry is disqualified.

21. Fall to ground by horse or rider during competition and while being judged or timed will result in disqualification.

22. Ponies will be required to be measured on the day of the show at time and place designated by the show committee. If they do not meet the height restrictions, they will be allowed to enter the proper class. If the animal has shoes and/or pads on, the thickness of these should be subtracted from the height of the animal.

23. If shod, horses in all classes must be plain shod and will be allowed a maximum thickness of 1” of wedge or pad or combination of both. USDA rules will supersede this rule if they are more stringent. Excessive length of hooves is discouraged and may be penalized.

24. The management of the show reserves the right to determine the number of horses that will be brought back to any semifinals, finals, or workout unless that number has been previously determined.

25. In all pleasure and pleasure-type classes (e.g. those classes where several horses are in the arena at the same time) the following statements apply:

   A. Large numbers will necessitate elimination heats to accommodate all horses. The suggested maximum number is 25 horses per heat. Finalists in each heat must be brought to the center of the arena and identified.

   B. Any portion of a class or heat may be placed on the rail for extra work by the judge at any time.

   C. At no time shall the fault-out system be used that results in a contestant being eliminated individually. Instead, a more positive approach should be used, with winners being announced and the remainder of the class being dismissed from the arena as a group. Individual horses will not be pulled off the rail while the class is being judged.

   D. The specific number of finalists selected from each preliminary heat need not be the same and is left to the discretion of the judge.

26. In Showmanship, Western Horsemanship, Saddle Seat Equitation, and Hunt Seat Equitation, individual patterns will be completed prior to rail work. For consistencies sake, scoring will be based on a 1 to 20 or 1-100 system. Judging emphasis will be on pattern work, execution, and demonstrated horsemanship/equitation. Ties or close scores may be broken on rail work. Additional pattern work may be requested in finals or semifinals. When more than one pattern is utilized, all scores are cumulative.
Suggested scoring breakdown (1/2 point increments acceptable):

90-100 or 20: Excellent equitation including body position and use of aids. Pattern is performed promptly, precisely, and smoothly.

80-89 or 18-10: Generally excellent performance with one minor fault in appearance and position of exhibitor or execution of pattern (performance).

70-79 or 16-17: Generally good pattern execution and equitation with one minor fault in precision or execution of the pattern (performance), or appearance and position of exhibitor.

60-69 or 14-15: Average pattern that lacks quickness or precision, or rider has obvious equitation flaws that prevent effective equitation, or commits two or three minor faults in the performance or appearance and position of exhibitor.

50-59 or 12-13: One major fault or several minor faults in the performance and/or appearance and position of exhibitor that precludes effective communication with the horse.

40-49 or 10-11: Two major faults or many minor faults in the performance, or appearance and position of exhibitor.

30-39 or 6-9: Several major faults or one severe fault performance, or appearance and position of exhibitor. Exhibitor demonstrates a complete lack of riding ability or commits a severe fault in the performance or appearance and position of exhibitor.

20-29 or 1-5: Exhibitor commits one or more severe faults in the performance, or appearance and position of exhibitor, but does complete the class and avoids disqualification.

27. For any judged class in which a pattern or course is utilized, the judge or show management shall post any pattern(s) to be worked at least on one hour prior to the commencement of the class. If pattern books are distributed to contestants, the responsibility of posting patterns has been met. If the judge requires additional work of exhibitors for consideration of final placing, the pattern will not be posted.

28. An electric timer is preferred for timed events and will be used when available at area shows and at the state show. In the absence of an electric timer, the average time from at least two stop watches will constitute the official time. At state show only, when an electric timer is used all timed events will be backed up by at least 2 stop watches. In the event of a malfunction by the electric timer the contestant will be given the option of taking the average time of the stop watches or having a rerun. Contestant is not to know the time before making decision as to take time or rerun.

29. No rerun will be given to any contestant if handicapped by failure of personal equipment or accident to horse or rider.

30. No string, rubber bands, or other material to tie feet or legs in stirrups is allowed.

31. Bandages (leg wraps) are not permitted in any class.

32. Random bit checks may be conducted by the judge or show management.
33. BITS - WESTERN AND SPEED EVENTS

A. References to hackamore mean the use of a non-mechanical flexible, braided rawhide or leather, or rope bosal, the core of which may be either rawhide or flexible cable. Absolutely no rigid material will be permitted under the jaws, regardless of how padded or covered.

B. Reference to snaffle bits in western performance classes mean the conventional O-ring, egg-butt, or D-ring with ring no larger than 4”. The mouthpiece should be round, oval, or egg-shaped, smooth and unwrapped metal. It may be inlaid, but must be smooth. The bars must be a minimum of 5/16” in diameter, measured one inch in from the cheek with a gradual decrease to center of the snaffle. The mouthpiece may be two or three pieces. A three-piece connecting ring of 1 1/4” or less in diameter, or a connecting flat bar of 3/8” to 3/4” (measured top to bottom, with a maximum length of 2”), which lies flat in the horse’s mouth is acceptable.

C. References to a bit in western performance classes mean the use of a curb bit that has a solid or broken mouthpiece, has shanks, and acts with leverage. All curb bits must be free of mechanical device and should be considered a standard western bit. A description of a legal, standard western bit includes:

1. 8 1/2” maximum length shank to be measured as indicated in the diagram illustrating legal bit. Shanks may be fixed or loose.

2. Curb bit mouthpieces must be round, smooth, and unwrapped metal of 5/16” to 3/4” in diameter, measured one inch in from the cheek. They may be inlaid, but must be smooth. Nothing may protrude below the mouthpiece (bar), such as extensions or prongs on solid mouthpieces. The mouthpiece may be two or three pieces. A three-piece, connecting ring of 1 1/4” or less in diameter, or a connecting flat bar of 3/8” to 3/4” (measured top to bottom with a maximum length of 2”), which lies flat in the horse’s mouth is acceptable.

3. The port must be no higher than 3 1/2” maximum, with rollers and covers acceptable. Broken mouthpieces, halfbreeds, and spades are standard.

4. Slip or gag bits, and donut and flat polo mouthpieces are not acceptable. (See Speed Events section for exceptions, p. 63.)
D. Except for speed event classes, or junior horses shown with hackamore/snaffle bit, only one hand may be used on the reins, and hand must not be changed. When using split reins, the hand is to be around the reins, and if desired only the index finger may be between the reins. Violation of this rule is an automatic disqualification. In ranch classes when showing in a curb bit, reins must be held in one hand, but may be held in any manner.

E. References to a romal means an extension of braided material attached to closed reins. This extension may be carried in the free hand with a 16” spacing between the reining hand and the free hand holding the romal. The rider’s hand shall be around the reins with the fingers closed, thumb on top, and no fingers between the reins.

F. The romal shall not be used forward of the cinch or to signal or cue the horse in any way. Any infraction of this rule shall be penalized severely by the judge.

G. Junior horses (5 years old and under) competing in western pleasure, western horsemanship, reining, western riding, ranch classes, and trail that are shown with a hackamore or snaffle bit may be ridden with two hands on the reins.

H. Horses five-years-old and younger may be shown in a snaffle bit, hackamore, curb bit, half-breed, or spade bit. Horses six-years-old and older may only be shown in a curb bit, half-breed, or spade bit. In the speed events only, horses of any age may be shown with a snaffle bit.

I. Chain curb straps are permissible, but must meet the approval of the judge, be at least 1/2” in width, and lie flat against the jaw of the horse. Absolutely no rigid material will be permitted under the jaws, regardless of how padded or covered.

BITS – HUNTER CLASSES

34. Bits used in hunter classes must be at least 3/8” or larger in diameter. The mouthpiece may consist of one, two, or three pieces and must be smooth. Waterford bits are permitted. Any port may not be taller than 1 1/2”. Slow or fast twist, corkscrew, twisted wire, double twisted wire, and triangle (knife edge) bits are not allowed. If a bit is used that requires two reins, it may not be used with a converter. True gag action and elevator bits are not allowed.

35. BITS - BRIDOONS (Saddle Seat and Hunter)

Design of the bridoon mouthpiece must conform with that of acceptable snaffles described in #31B and #32. However, smaller dimensions of the mouthpiece are permissible.