

State 4-H Horse Advisory Board Meeting

September 19, 2025

Meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Dr. Saundra TenBroeck

PRESENT (note that attendees were allocated to the current Horse Show Areas):

Area	4-H Agent/Extension Professional	Volunteer
North	Jessica Emmerson (Levy)* Claire Davis (Calhoun)*	Terry Stout (Okaloosa) Mae Whitehurst (Levy/Alachua) Kelsey Irvine (Nassau)* Bobbi Barnes (Marion)
East	Shane Michael (Seminole)*	Tracey Clement (Lake)* Liz Jett (Seminole) Barbara Nagle (Brevard)* Sierra Coward (Okeechobee)* Candace Wickham (St. Lucie)* Sheri Trent (Seminole Tribe)* Stephanie Kline (Lake)*
West	Shayla Tillett (Pasco)* Alexandra Draper (Manatee)* Amber Norris (Hillsborough)*	Amy Wade (Sumter) Dorothy Blair (Hernando) Colleen Martin (Sumter)* Jennifer Forthman (Manatee)*
UF/4-H	Dr. Saundra TenBroeck, Alyssa Ohmstede, Joel McQuagge, Christopher DeCubellis*	

*Attended via Zoom Workplace

Advisory Board membership was reviewed. The board recommended Extension Program Assistants be allowed to represent counties in the same role as agents when appropriate. The board voted to add one Agent or Extension Professional (3-year rotation) and one Leader (4-year rotation) for each Area.

Area committees will meet to discuss representatives and provide the updated list to Alyssa Ohmstede by October 6th. The updated list will be posted on the website www.animal.ifas.ufl.edu/extension/youth/horse.

Horse Program Financial Information

The 4H Horse Program maintains three accounts within the UF 4H Foundation:

- Horse Judging
- Horse Training Programs (T&P)
- Horse Recognition & Awards (R&A)

Overall, the program is currently generating surplus revenue over expenses. We have a reserve balance of \$263,240.

Discussion of the Department of Animal Sciences support of the 4H Horse Program including faculty, staff, facilities, trucks and trailers. Example: 5 vehicles and 4 trailers were used in support of the State 4H Horse Show and 4 vehicles/3 trailers were used for Regionals. The need to purchase a vehicle that can be used to support equine extension youth programming efforts was discussed. It should be a model that can haul a cargo trailer. We got a quote last spring for a 2025 Ford Explorer at \$39,500 on State Contract.

Terry Stout made a motion to utilize 4H Foundation Horse money to purchase a vehicle to be housed in Animal Science and used by equine faculty and staff in support of our equine youth outreach programs. Liz Jett seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous.

The Florida 4H Horse Program Endowment (F019841) was established in May of 2015 after Ed Johnson retired. Funds for the endowment came from accumulated excess funds in both T&P and R&A. Four percent of the annual interest earned from the endowment fund is paid out quarterly to T&P and R&A. One percent of the annual interest earned from the endowment fund is collected as administrative fee. Interest earned above 5% goes back into principle. The current Endowment Fund total is \$160,654.00. Transfers from the endowment in 24/25 were \$4490.35 into R&A and \$1122.58 into T&P.

Summary of 2025 Horse Shows and Horsemanship Schools are shown here.

	Area North	Area East	Area West	State	Regionals (FL)	Horsemanship School
Expenses	(3,053.01)	(2,999.98)	(4,268.72)	(39,348.43)	(20,224.53)	(19,663.69)
Income	7,440.00	7,420.00	5,805.00	55,302.25	19,601.08	24,360.00
Profit/Loss	4,386.99	4,420.02	1,536.28	15,953.83	(623.45)	4,696.31

The Southern Regional 4-H Horse Championship event saw significantly fewer entries in 2025 than in 2024 resulting in a \$3,022 loss of income. Income from sponsorships is also down. Show facility expenses were up by about \$2000.00 as well as several other expense categories. The region lost \$9,931.17 in 2025. The region has a reserve in the GA foundation of about \$75,000 so the event can continue to be conducted, even at a loss.

General Program Information

- Eastern National 4-H Roundup November 6th
- Equine Ambassador Program – administered through UF Animal Sciences Department
 - To engage youth in advocating for the horse industry through 4-H and outside activities by helping them develop skills and providing networking opportunities.
 - 2 youth will be selected per Horse Show Area
 - The deadline to apply is Oct. 15 including references
 - Plan to expand to FFA members as well next year
- Horse Judging School, December 13th
 - Pre-registration will open in October at \$10 per person, but day of registration will be offered as well at \$15 per person
- Celebration of 30 years UF Horse Program – December 6th, Straughn Center in the a.m. HTU p.m.
- State Fair Horse Judging Contest – February 7th; one senior team and one all age team per county
- State Youth Horse Judging Contest, March 28 at the HTU; one senior team per county

- Hippology March 28 (w/ Horse Judging) at the HTU and March 29, at the Straughn Center/Animal Sciences
- Horsemanship School – tentatively one week in June for 2026
 - Change format: June 7-10 (Sun. p.m.-Wed) June 10-13(Wed. p.m.–Sat. a.m.)
- State events – Public speaking, individual and team demonstrations, Quiz Bowl
 - June 20? dependent on Horsemanship School dates; possibly weekday?
- State Horse Show, July 9 – 11 (tentative) Contract not yet signed but Fair staff has been notified.
- Regional Horse Show, July 29 – August 2 Perry, GA

2026 Area Horse Show Discussion

Area Show Standard Operating Procedures

Alyssa reviewed a generic SOP for Area Show Managers which can be used as a tool for Areas to create an Area specific SOP.

Areas may also consider creating an “Information Sheet” for exhibitors or conduct an orientation meeting for exhibitors/parents/trainers/coaches

State Qualifying Policies/Procedures

Counties are assigned to one of 3 Areas. Each Area holds an Area Horse Show as a qualifying show for the State 4H Horse Show. The county assignments will stay the same for 2026.

Horse/rider combination must earn at least 1 point at an Area Show to qualify for the State Horse Show. Entry procedure for Area Horse Shows will continue to be 4H-Online.

Contestant must show the same horse(s) at the state show as they qualified on at the area show.

A horse/rider combination may show in **any** Area Horse Show with the approval of their Agent.

Horse/rider combination may submit a Hardship Waiver Declaration if they are unable to attend an Area Horse Show.

If the Hardship Waiver is granted, the youth must meet the following requirements for participation in the State Horse Show:

- Proof of participation for the horse/rider combination in at least 2 other horse shows of any flavor and anywhere; such participation must be verified by County Agent and Horse Show Judge or Horse Show Manager/Secretary
- And youth must participate in at least one horse educational event (county level or above)

Area Horse Show Details

Area North:	Clay County Fairgrounds, Green Cove Springs	May 8-9
Area West:	Sumter Equestrian Center, Bushnell	April 17-18
Area East:	Clarcona Horse Park, Apopka	May 1-3

Show Managers are encouraged to hire judges sooner rather than later as the supplier process can be tedious/time consuming. Potential judges should be told that direct deposit payments take 1 – 2 weeks post-show to process BEFORE they sign a judging agreement.

First place prize suggestions:

Customized door mats; Engraved or branded items; lunch box coolers; gift buckets; groom kits

- Check out “4Imprint” (browse their clearance section)

Areas can choose how to award any high point or high score awards. Note that the State Horse Show will continue to award high point winners per division where points are earned based on class placing.

The rulebook states that at the Area Horse Shows, classes will place only 6 exhibitors and points will not exceed six for first place.

Area Horse Shows are responsible for defining their horse substitution rules and deadline.

2026 State 4H Horse Show

Regional Qualification

Qualifiers will include:

- Top 10 scoring Juniors (no further down the list once 10 have been identified)
- Up to 70 Seniors (must earn at least one point at State)

Intermediate age riders may show as a senior at state to vie for a senior spot at Regionals. They MUST show as a senior at the Area Horse Show in order to show as a senior at the State Show. An intermediate age rider who shows at the Area Horse Show as a senior may step down and show as a junior at the State Horse Show.

Regional T-shirts

If no t-shirt sponsor can be found (\$800-900), exhibitor’s will pay for shirts. T-shirts will be pre-ordered and there will be no t-shirts for sale at the show.

Class Schedule

The request for the State Fair crew to spend more time working the arena dirt in preparation for the speed events will require a schedule change. Options were discussed.

Consider starting speed events one hour later on Saturday. Potentially move speed events to late Wednesday afternoon and move Ranch Trail to Saturday. Other options for schedule changes will be discussed in April.

Class Awards

Everyone loved the 2025 trophies. Same trophies will be used in 2026 but wood base will be stained a different color. Vendor may be able to add color to clover.

Emerald Judging and State Decorations

Area North is in charge of the Emerald Award Judging and will determine the theme for the State Show decorations. The committee liked the idea of a decoration theme as it facilitated the Emerald Award judging.

Exhibitor Social

The 2025 social offered beverages, popcorn and a movie. Attendance was low this year but this has been the trend for a few years.

The committee decided to eliminate the Thursday social and instead will supply light snacks/beverages at the Awards Ceremony. Area West will provide resources to help organize the snacks/beverages at the Awards Ceremony. UF will purchase the supplies and deliver them to the venue.

Florida Rules, Procedures, and Classes

Approved Changes

4-H Rulebook will define the bit rules for speed events. The following will be added to the bit rules for the “Speed Events Division Only”:

- Mouthpieces must be between 1/4” to 3/4” in diameter, measured 1” from the cheek.
- Bits with a slow twist mouthpiece are allowed.

Roping reins are allowed **only** in Ranch Roping.

Adjust rulebook verbiage for tack on pg. 68 for clarity: Standing martingales are optional in the following over fences classes: Working Hunter, Handy Hunter, and Equitation Over Fences. Standing martingales are not legal to be used in either portion of Hunter Hack.

Changes Discussed but No Action Taken

Dressage Division

Since dressage is now its own division and a division high point is awarded at the State Horse Show, the request was made to add a dressage rail class or in-hand class to the division. This would provide more class opportunities for riders who only ride dressage. The following classes were suggested for consideration:

- Dressage Seat Equitation (rider is judged; rail class with limit of 6 riders in a group; if staged in a dressage arena; this limit does not exist if not ridden inside a dressage arena; class score sheet is used to score each individual rider)
- Dressage Sport Horse Prospect (horse is judged in-hand; each horse typically walks and trots a triangle to evaluate movement and then stands for conformation judging; judged 60% on movement, 30% on conformation, 10% overall impression; horse score sheet is used to score each individual horse)
- Dressage Sport Horse Under Saddle (horse is judged; rail class with same potential constraints as Dressage Seat Equitation; 60% on movement, 30% on conformation, 10% overall impression; class score sheet is used to score each individual horse)

All of the above options present a schedule challenge and a potential Judge challenge.

An alternative was suggested to allow a horse/rider combination to enter a Dressage TOC class multiple times for different tests. The tests would be placed as one class so there is the potential that a single horse/rider combination could place multiple times. Although the Committee voted to approve this suggestion, it was pointed out that standard horse show management software will not allow a horse/rider combination to be entered/placed in a single class more than once. It was noted that the custom Horse Show Management software used by Area North, Area East and State identifies “test” as a key on the entry record for the class and therefore can accommodate multiple entries/places in the class for different tests.

The change was ultimately not approved because it violates the general rule that a horse/rider combination cannot enter a class more than once.

Noseband fit

In the interest of preventing discomfort to the horse Kelsey Irvine proposed an equipment rule regarding noseband fit. Based on recent survey results, more than half of the youth showing with nosebands in 4H adjust them incorrectly. FEI show stewards currently use a measuring device at shows to objectively control the tightness of nosebands. 4H shows don't have the luxury of paying trained stewards. The consensus was reached to address the concern through education. Monitoring by committee members at shows is encouraged when possible but we will NOT eliminate a horse/rider combination post competition.

We may purchase several measuring devices to be used at educational events and shows. It was suggested that Kelsey partner with UF faculty to generate an information guide for bridle noseband fitting similar to the bit guide. An EDIS publication with more detail could also be generated.

Walk/Trot

The State rule book does not address walk trot classes. Some Area Horse Shows do provide walk trot classes so associated rules should be defined by the individual Area Horse Show offering these classes.

Barbara Nagle requested making the Gate an optional obstacle in Ranch Trail. The reason given was that at the Area East show at least, it is not physically possible or feasible given the schedule to set up a fixed gate and therefore only a rope gate can be set up. The obstacle is identical to what is presented in Western Trail and is not unique to the Ranch Trail class. When deferred to Joel McQuagge, he does not support the rule change. The gate obstacle will remain required. Assistance with a "hard" gate will be offered. Substitution of a rope gait is still allowed based on current rules allowing changes due to facility constraints.

Miscellaneous

As of January 2026, the 4-H Horse Program will be managed by Alyssa Ohmstede in her role as Extension Youth Horse Programs Coordinator and Joel McQuagge's 10% extension appointment. Although Carissa Wickens does have a role in Extension (60%), her primary focus is conducting adult equine extension programs and developing educational resources for equine owners. She conducts applied research (40%) in horse behavior and welfare, equine nutrition, and management.

The committee recommended UF webinars on the following topics:

- Feed analysis; how to read and understand a feed tag
- Tack fitting
- Focused Hippology training

Next meeting – Friday, April 10, 2026, 10:00 am HTU or Zoom

Meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Barbara Nagle