

# Ranch Horse rules

## Class Divisions

**COWBOY CLASS:** Anyone who is an RHAA member and has not won more than \$1500 in any RHAA sanctioned event can enter this class. A person that starts the year in the Cowboy class may finish the year in the Cowboy class regardless of how much money the contestant wins in that year. Professional horse trainers are not eligible for the Cowboy class. Contestants with Open earnings in the NRCHA, NCHA, ACHA or NRHA or Open points in AQHA or APHA in the working cow horse, cutting or reining classes are ineligible to compete in the Cowboy class. It is the responsibility of the contestant to keep up with their eligibility for the Cowboy class. If a contestant enters after they have earned out of the Cowboy class they will forfeit that qualifying spot in the finals and the next contestant will be moved up. Any RHAA member that enters the Cowboy class fraudulently faces disciplinary action that can include suspension of membership. The RHAA office will make every effort to ensure that updated information is available to all members. The RHAA board of directors reserves the right to reclassify any contestant that they feel is violating the intention of the Cowboy class. This class is a qualifying class for the RHAA National Finals. Rules to enter this class are: 1) the RHAA member has to own the horse being shown; however, there is no time limit on ownership for this class, and/or; 2) the RHAA member must have been a fulltime employee of the owner of the horse for at least six (6) months prior to competing in this event. The rein rule applies unless showing a junior horse.

**RANCH HAND:** This class is for RHAA members with less than \$3500 lifetime earnings in any RHAA sanctioned event. Professional trainers and members with NRCHA Open earnings, NCHA Open earnings, NRHA Open Earnings, ACHA Open Earnings or AQHA, APHA Open Points in Reining, Cutting or Working Cow Horse within the previous ten years are ineligible to compete in this class subject to review by the board. The RHAA reserves the right to move any member out of the Ranch hand class that violates the intent of this class. This class is designed as an intermediate division for riders advancing out of the Cowboy class. The Ranch hand class has a one year ownership and/or six month employment requirement. Members who begin the year in the Ranch hand class may complete the year in the Ranch hand. The rein rule applies unless showing a junior horse.

**JUNIOR RANCH HORSES:** A Junior horse is defined as being five (5) years old or younger as of the first Sunday following the RHAA finals and may compete in the Junior Class until the completion of the RHAA finals at the conclusion of the current RHAA fiscal year. The burden of proof for a Junior horse status is on the contestant through presentation of a current competition license. It is up to the event director or secretary of the show to view these documents before allowing any contestant to enter. It is with the understanding that the integrity and professionalism of the competition is of utmost importance and should be carried out by the local show committee. In the Junior division, horses may be ridden with a ring snaffle or a hackamore with two hands without penalty. This class has a one year ownership and/or six month employment requirement.

**SENIOR RANCH HORSES:** A Senior horse is defined as an aged horse no longer eligible for the Junior division. This class has a one year ownership and/or six month employment requirement. Horses in this age group will be exhibited one handed in the bridle. (shanked curb bit) Junior horses may be shown in the Senior class but must adhere to Senior class requirements, provided it is not a combined class. In the event the Junior and Senior class is combined, a Junior horse may be shown two handed in a two handed bridle, such as a ring snaffle, or a hackamore. There will be a penalty for showing any horse two handed in a shanked bit. There will be a five (5) point penalty per judge per violation of showing the horse two handed at any time during the judging.

**OPEN:** This will be an optional class in the show schedule. This is a true open that allows any horse and any rider. The owner and the rider must be members.

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## Qualifying Class Size

The total number of horses in the competition must be 6 or more. The minimum class size must be 6 horses for Open, Senior, and Ranch hand class and 8 horses for the Cowboy class. A Junior horse may enter both Junior and Senior divisions. In order to fill a class to fulfill the qualifying requirements, the Junior and Senior horses may be combined into one class. The judges should know which horses are Junior horses and also that a Junior horse may be ridden two-handed with a two handed bridle. Prizes may be awarded for top Junior and Senior horse; however, payouts cannot be kept separate. A horse that is qualified in a combined class must show at the finals in its age division. A Junior

horse that qualifies in a combined class will show in the Junior semi-finals. The Cowboy and Ranch hand classes maybe combined as described for the Junior and Senior classes. The Cowboy and Ranch hand classes have an 8 horse minimum for a qualifying class, if the two classes are combined, and these two classes may be combined in order to fulfill qualifying requirements. The payouts may not be split, but if prizes are to be presented, they may be presented the top Cowboy and Ranch hand entries.

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### **Horse Ownership**

All contestant horses must have been owned by the current owner or rider for one year prior to the competition entered, except in the Cowboy class, where all that must be proved is ownership at the time of the show. The horse cannot be an AQHA leased horse. The RHAA recognizes horses owned in a partnership and they may be shown so long as they meet the RHAA requirements for the class they will be shown in. This means that a registered horse must be in both parties' names or in the name of the partnership, and proof of the partnership must be provided. The horse in partnership must have been owned in partnership for one year prior to the first event entered. A horse owned in partnership that will be shown in the Cowboy class must be in both parties' names. The burden of proof for ownership is upon the owner/contestant and it is up to each individual event director or secretary to approve the qualification. If the rider of the horse is not the owner, but is instead an employee of the ranch-owner of the horse, then the employee must be a full-time employee of the ranch doing general ranch work and work on this ranch at least six months prior to the competition entered. A signed statement from the employer will sustain this, stating that this employee receives wages as a main source of income from the ranch and works on this ranch on a full time basis. In the Cowboy Class, the contestant must 1) own the horse being shown, (there is no time limit on this ownership for this class), and/or; 2) the

RHAA member has to have been a fulltime employee of the owner of the horse for at least six (6) months prior to competing in this event. The show must submit proof of ownership and/or employment. This proof must accompany the show results, along with the sanctioning fee. In the event that proof of employment must be provided, documentation will be submitted to Kelly Gill. Kelly Gill is RHAA legal council and all information will be confidential. A family member may ride another family member's horse provided it is a member of the immediate family. This is defined as the spouse or immediate blood offspring or spouses of immediate blood offspring

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### **Age of Contestants**

There is no age restriction, although a requirement of eighteen years or older is encouraged for liability reasons. Many arena rules or insurance policies may prohibit minor contestants. A comprehensive, written release should be obtained from all minor contestants, executed by an adult parent or guardian.

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### **Professional Trainers**

Professional horse trainers are not disqualified as contestants so long as they are otherwise qualified to compete by RHAA rules. Professional trainers are prohibited in the Cowboy and Ranch hand classes.

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### **Contestant's Equipment**

- 1) Dress Code: Boots, hat and long sleeves are required, anything beyond that such as leggings, chinks, etc., is optional
- 2) Saddles: The horse must be ridden with a western or stock saddle.
- 3) Horse Shoes: Any shoes are legal.
- 4) Two handed bridles, such as ring snaffles and hackamores, may be ridden two handed in the Junior division, only. A horse may be ridden in a two rein and the bosal may be of any size with no iron or metal of any kind. A two rein horse must be ridden one handed. Reins on a shanked bit must be held in one hand with no more than one finger between the reins. Romal reins must be held full fisted.
- 5) Bridles and Bits: Any bit is legal provided nothing extends below the bars of the bit. A

bridle is defined as curbed, shanked bit. Chain bits are legal provided there is no gag or slide. Contestants will not be allowed to use any device that gives him/her undue control over the horse such as:

- Tie Downs
- Mechanical Hackamores, Quick Stops, etc.
- Martingales
- Nothing may be around the horse's nose
- Gag Bits
- Wire on the Curb Device or any part of the Bit or Headstall.
- Bits must be free of mechanical device
- Nothing extending below the bars of the bits

A judge may ask any contestant to drop a bridle after a run is completed. Judges will check one bridle at random from each class at each competition. Any horse observed with a pink or bloody mouth will be disqualified.

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### Horses Advancing Toward Finals:

All qualifiers must have a current RHAA membership. The RHAA National Finals will be split into the four (or five) separate divisions that the shows are divided into. Horses will compete in the division which they qualified in. The number of horses qualifying for advancement toward the finals, which may include regional's and semi-finals, depending on the number of horses involved, will depend upon the aggregate number of horses entered in the local competition. The breakdown is as follows:

#### Cowboy Class

# of Horses in Local Competition	# of Horses to Advance to Finals
8-12	1
13-17	2
18-22	3
23-27	4
28-32	5
33-37	6

#### Senior, Open, Junior & Ranch Hand Classes

# of Horses in Local Competition	# of Horses to Advance to Finals
6-10	1
11-15	2
16-20	3
21-25	4
26-30	5

If any of the winning horses from any local sanctioned competition have previously qualified for the finals, then the next highest point scoring horse, or horses, shall advance to the finals. For instance, if a local sanctioned competition has 20 horses in the senior, open, ranch hand, or cowboy divisions competing, following the chart above, 3 horses would qualify to advance to the finals. If the first and second place winner in this local sanctioned competition had previously qualified to advance to the finals for the RHAA, then the third and fourth and fifth highest point scoring horses would qualify to advance toward the finals under this example, providing the class had 20 in it. If there is a tie for the last advancing place, then both horses will advance to the finals. This advancement of additional horses to the finals does not, however, affect the local competition or the prize money or winners of the local competition in any way. The RHAA office will determine who qualifies for advancement following this formula from each competition.

## RULES AND GUIDELINES FOR RANCH HORSE COMPETITIONS

### Class Description

This is a timed event. Each rider's time will begin when he/she enters the arena and the contestant will have five (5) minutes to complete his/her task in an average size arena. If you have an extremely large arena, you may increase the time to six (6) minutes. The announcer for the event calls out a 2 minute warning ("2 minutes remaining") when the contestant reaches this point in his/her run. It is also called out again when he/she reaches only 1 minute left ("1 minute remaining") and then, of course, when his/her time has been exhausted, the announcer will call "Time" and the run will be over. The contestant is judged on the segments of his/her run that was completed prior to the calling of "Time".

No abuse of horses or abuse of cattle will be tolerated during any RHAA competition. In the event, the rider deviates from any judged segment of the competition and displays unsportsmanlike training of horse or cow, he will be asked to leave the arena and shall be disqualified from the class.

This contest consists of three (3) divisions all performed as one event, or competition, within a five (5) minute time span. The normal flow of the event for the contestant is that he/she enters the arena and performs the reined work portion, then moves straight into the cow-working segment (at this time contestant signals for only one animal to be turned out into the arena for the contestant to work and rope), and then straight into the roping segment.

In the event of a tie, the judges will use the scores on the judges' score card from the first portion of the cow work and proceed from that point to break the tie. Dry work will be the last segment utilized to break any ties. This will save time and prevent contestants from having to show their horses again.

The awarding of a contestant's rerun is the sole decision of Judge No. 1. At each show, judges will be designated as Judge No. 1, Judge No. 2, and/or Judge No. 3. This will be decided upon prior to the start of competition. Judge No. 1 will call for a rerun to the secretary and the clock will stop. Uses of a whistle, walkie talkie's, short wave radios or waving a white flag is good for this signal. A new animal will be turned out to the contestant, thirty (30) seconds will be added to his time and he will complete his competition from where he left off in the original time-frame allotted, i.e. (the clock was stopped when the judge called for a rerun, now the contestant will start from that point and go forward until he reaches the 5 minute limit). A rerun animal is only given if he is unworkable or leaves the arena working floor. Unworkable is defined as an animal that, for any reason, does not let the contestant exhibit his/her horse at all. Examples of this are animals that immediately fight the contestant's horse or enter the arena and simply refuse to move. Awarding a contestant a new animal is the sole discretion of the designated judge and is only intended in the event of an unworkable animal. Under no circumstances will a rerun be awarded if it is the contestant's fault that the animal is tired, out of air, run down, or overworked to the point he doesn't care to move, etc. Judges please keep this in mind - we are also judging the cowboy's ability to recognize these things and adjust his run accordingly. This is a ranch horse and cowboy event designed to replicate how they work together out on the range.

A judge will stop any run which shows excessive danger, including any abuse to horse or cow. Equipment failure that poses danger to the horse or rider will terminate the run. Separation of horse and rider due to the horse falling or the rider falling off the horse will terminate a run.

### **DRY WORK OR REINING - 60 points**

Horses are to be judged on their ability to perform four basic sets of maneuvers- rollbacks, circles and lead changes, stopping and backing, and spins. Each of these parts will receive equal credit of fifteen points.

Rollbacks (15 points): At the end of the stop, the rollback should be a 180-degree turn, where the horse turns and leaves in one motion. Short, choppy rundowns will be penalized, as will bouncy, forced stops and rollbacks that come out

at less than 180 degrees.

Circles and lead changes (15 points): To be judged on the horse's ability to be willingly guided without pulling to the inside or to the outside of the circle, and on his ability to demonstrate his willingness to increase or decrease speed, and on his ability to change leads, front and back, smoothly with a minimum of cueing from the rider. In the circle segment of the dry work, the rider can increase his score by making his circles come together at the "same midpoint of the arena", making large circles the same size on each side, small circles the same size on each side and lead changes at the center of the arena. This will demonstrate control to the judges.

Stopping and backing (15 points): To receive maximum credit, a horse should approach the stop loping or galloping freely, willingly moving forward in a straight line, and gradually increasing his speed. The stop should be straight and square, and give the appearance of stopping because he is trained to stop, not because he is forced to stop. As in the rollback maneuver, maximum credit will be given to the horse that approaches the stop running straight, gradually increasing speed, stops straight and square, hesitates momentarily. Short, choppy, checky-looking rundowns, bouncy stops, head throwing, excessive open mouth and resistance on the part of the horse will be penalized. Maximum credit will be given to the horse that backs straight and then backs willingly in a straight line for at least fifteen feet. If the horse backs crooked, throws head, opens mouth excessively and shows resistance, the horse will be penalized.

Spins (15 points): In order to receive maximum credit, a horse should do at least two spins in each direction. Credit will be given to the horse that spins flat and smooth, showing no indication of being forced, and demonstrates a willing attitude. Forced speed should not score higher than moderate willing speed. Horses will be penalized for elevated hoppy, forced, or extremely slow spins. The horse that spins smoothly, with moderate speed, keeping his hind quarters in the same general area, and demonstrating good footwork in front should receive the greatest amount of credit.

### **COW WORK - 60 points**

Cow work will consist of two segments, boxing or holding a cow at the end of the arena, and turning a cow down the fence in both directions. Each of these segments will be worth thirty points each. . At any point in time when a horse turns tail to the cow, the maneuver will be zeroed by the judge.

Throughout the cow work, it must be remembered that the name of the game is controlling the cow. Judges must take into consideration what kind of cow each contestant draws in order to accurately judge the degree of difficulty in each credit-earning situation. When a contestant is holding a cow at the end of the arena, maximum credit will be given to the horse that is obviously watching a cow and making counter moves to hold the cow at the end of the arena without the help of the rider. The more a horse is trying to do on his own, the more credit he should receive. Maximum credit should only be given when the horse is in control of the cow when the cow is allowed to go down the fence. Contestant needs to deliberately stop or pull up on his horse to show the judge that he is now ready to let the cow go down the fence. Again, the difficulty of the cow should always be considered when deducting from maximum credit. When the cow is allowed to go down the fence, maximum credit will be given to the horse that turns the cow at least once each way on the same fence that the cow originally went down. . At any point in time when a horse turns tail to the cow, the maneuver will be zeroed by the judge.

Horses will be penalized for losing control while boxing the cow at the end of the arena, getting outrun down the fence, for running more than one horse length past the cow on the turn, hanging up on the fence, refusing to turn, running over the cow, biting cattle, hanging back and not running past the cow to turn the cow and for generally losing control. Cattle are to be worked on the end of the arena that they are called for from. If a contestant calls for their animal and lets the animal go past the contestant to the other end of the arena to work this should be penalized heavily. Giving ground down the arena to gain control and working the animal back to the end of the arena that it was called for on should be given appropriate credit.

### **ROPING - 60 points**

The roping work will consist of three segments, each to receive twenty points.  
Speed, rate and tracking - 20 points: Maximum credit will be given to the horse that shows ample speed going to cattle, rates off so the rider can rope, tracks a cow that circles, ducks right or left and stays in position to allow the rider to rope. The loop has to go over the animal's head, i.e., the animal has to look through the loop. The animal may end up being caught by the neck, body or a hind leg. If the animal is not roped within two loops, the scoring will cease at this point. The roper may only carry one rope and, if that rope is lost, time will stop and the run is considered completed. Contestants may not receive any ropes from outside the arena to

complete their run. Contestants may not retrieve their rope from the animal if it comes loose from the horn. If a contestant drops their rope prior to the roping the animal they may dismount and retrieve the rope to complete the run if time allows.

Stop - 20 points: Maximum credit will be given to the horse that stops square and hard in a straight line with the cow, hindquarters underneath him, alert and paying attention, holding the stop when the rope comes tight and leans back slightly to absorb the jerk. The loop has to go over the animal's head and, therefore, any part of the body that is caught may be used to stop the animal. The contestant may tie their ropes on or dally.

Pulling from the horn – 20 points: Maximum credit will be given to the horse that turns crisply, when asked by the rider, drops his neck to pull, leans into the breast collar, drives from behind and pulls from the horn in a straight line for at least fifteen feet. Cattle must be standing to be drug when roped around the neck. No choking of a down animal is allowed and the judges will disqualify a contestant for dragging by the neck on the ground, tripping or any other behavior they deem abusive.

Horses will be penalized if they are slow going to cattle, run over cattle, lose position tracking, or generally appear hard to manage. Horses that stop crooked, sideways, duck off or appear that they might be pulled down by big cattle should be severely penalized. Horses should be penalized that resist turning, pull with their head up and back hollow, wander from side to side, lunge forward, stop before asked by the rider or show any reluctance to willingly pull.

The rider will be disqualified for intentionally choking, dragging by the neck while on the ground, or tripping the cow during the roping segment. Any unnecessary roughness or abuse to livestock will disqualify the contestant. When roping, reins may be held as romal reins. One judge should be designated to be able to disqualify a contestant for these reasons. This judge should be provided with some way to signal for the disqualification. A whistle is recommended for this purpose.