

Class Descriptions for Ranch Horse and Stock Horse Classes

Ranch Riding – AQHA Patterns 1 through 5 - AQHA handbook, pages 133 - 137

From the AQHA 2017 Handbook: The purpose of the ranch riding class is to measure the ability of the horse to be a pleasure to ride while being used as a means of conveyance from performing one ranch task to another. The horse should reflect the versatility, attitude and movement of a working ranch horse riding outside the confines of an arena. The horse should be well-trained, relaxed, quiet, soft and cadenced at all gaits. The ideal ranch horse will travel with forward movement and demonstrate an obvious lengthening of stride at extended gaits. The horse can be ridden with light contact or on a relatively loose rein without requiring undue restraint, but not shown on a full drape of reins. The overall manners and responsiveness of the ranch riding horse to make timely transitions in a smooth and correct manner, as well as the quality of the movement are of primary considerations. The ideal ranch riding horse should have a natural head carriage at each gait.

For more rules and details see the Ranch Riding rules beginning on pg. 131 in the AQHA Handbook.

Ranch Reining – AQHA Versatility Ranch Horse - Patterns 1 through 8 -

AQHA handbook, pages 220 – 227

From the AQHA 2017 Handbook: The ranch reining class measures the ability of the ranch horse to perform basic handling maneuvers with a natural head carriage in a forward looking manner. Patterns may be chosen from any of the ranch reining patterns or approved by the show management and judge. To rein a horse is not only to guide him but also to control his every movement. The best reined horse should be willingly guided or controlled with little or no apparent resistance and dictated to completely. Any movement on his own must be considered a lack of control. All deviations from the exact written pattern must be considered a lack of or temporary loss of control and therefore a fault that must be marked down according to severity of deviation. The horse/rider team's overall performance should be credited for smoothness, finesse, attitude, quickness and authority of performing various maneuvers while using controlled speed which raises the degree of difficulty and makes the horse/rider team more exciting a pleasing to watch.

For more rules and details see the VHR Ranch Reining rules beginning on pg. 219 in the AQHA Handbook.

Stock Horse Horsemanship

1. The class will be judged on the horsemanship and overall riding ability of the rider. Recognition will be given to the exhibitor's ability to ride a horse functionally, with correct position, using various aids to cause the horse to perform required basic stock horse maneuvers. The performance of the horse is not to be judged more important than the riding ability of the exhibitor. Scores on

individual works will be based on the rider's skills during execution of the pattern. The emphasis of this class will be to reward the stock horse riders who have the best horsemanship skills, while completing stock horse- type maneuvers.

2. Horses to be shown in plain, clean and functional, western tack. Rider attire will be jeans (such as blue, black, dark brown, dark gray) and a long-sleeved collared shirt, cowboy boots and a cowboy hat or approved helmet. Chaps or chinks are optional. A conservative scarf around the neck is also optional. Tack should be traditional and conservative in appearance and should not display extraordinary silver or other decorations other than normal buckles and connectors. Judge may fault riders who are in violation of the intent of this rule. No banded or braided manes, or hoof black will be allowed.
3. Rules concerning legal reins, bits and other tack are same as other western stock horse classes. Protective boots or leg wraps (conservative colors) on the horse are allowed.

4. General - Position

Arms and hands. Arms and hands should be held in an easy, relaxed manner. Upper arms are held in a straight line with the body, with the arm holding the reins bent at the elbow. Only one hand is used for reining, and hands shall not be changed on the reins. Free hand should not touch the saddle at any time. The reining hand is to be around the reins with one finger permitted between split reins. Reins are to be carried immediately above and slightly in front of the saddle horn. Reins should be held so that light contact is maintained with the horse's mouth. Riders with soft, supple hands which are able to show their horse with minimal movement of the reins should be rewarded. Reins with a romal are allowed, but reins must be held in one hand, with hand completely around the reins, in a fist position, with the thumb up. When using a romal, no fingers between the reins. The non-rein hand must be on the romal (tail) and cannot be changed during the performance. If the non-rein hand touches the reins at any time during the performance, it should result in a disqualification.

Basic position. The rider should sit in a comfortable, balanced, relaxed, and flexible manner. The lower leg should hang straight down from the knee to the stirrups with a slight bend in the knee, depending on the type of saddle. Stirrups should be just long enough for the heel to be in a direct line under the shoulders and hips, with the heels lower than the toes. This allows flexion in the ankle joint which provides for a more balanced ride, and allows rider to stay in rhythm with the horse. The feet should be placed in the stirrups with the boot heel touching the stirrup or slightly less deep. Riding with the weight on the toes will be penalized. The toes should be turned only slightly out, with the ankles flexed in a comfortable position. The lower legs and feet should be kept close to the horse's body, but not in constant contact except when applying aids. Application of leg aids should be barely perceptible by the judge. Upper body should be upright, but relaxed and not rigid. Shoulders should be square and head and eyes should be up and looking ahead.

Position in Motion. The rider shall sit the jog and not post. The rider should be close to the saddle at a lope. If asked for an extended jog, rider may post or sit. Exaggerated shifting of the rider's weight is not desirable and will be penalized in judging. Rider should at all times, be in rhythm with the movement of the horse so as to present a smooth, efficient and functional overall appearance and to always be in position to aid the horse during required maneuvers.

Class Routine

The judge will ask each rider to work individually. Individual works will be a combination of stock horse maneuvers that the judge feels are necessary to determine the horsemanship ability of the rider.

Scoring for this class will be based on the combination of basic position of the rider and the ability to effectively communicate with the horse to execute a smooth, efficient and correct pattern.

The pattern must include only maneuvers from the following list:

- straight walk, jog, and lope, and/or circles in either direction,
- stop
- back straight, in an "L", or in a circle
- 360-degree (or more) spin pivot, both ways turns of 90, 180 or 270 degrees rollbacks
- lope circles of varying size and speed
- pick up leads from standstill, walk, or jog
- simple or flying lead changes on a straight away or in a circle
- side pass
- counter canter
- two track

The pattern will be posted at least 1 hour before the class begins.

Riders may be asked for additional individual work or work on the rail. If held, rail work will include walk, jog, and lope in one or both directions of the ring at the discretion of the judge.

Stock Horse Pleasure

This class serves to measure the ability of the horse to be functional and a pleasure to ride while being used as a means of conveyance from one task to another. This horse should be well-broke, relaxed, quiet, soft, and cadenced at all gaits. The horse should be ridden on a relatively loose rein with light contact and without requiring undue restraint. Excessively long, floppy reins will not be given extra credit. The horse should be responsive to the rider and make all required transitions smoothly, timely, and correctly. The horse should be soft in the bridle and yield to contact.

Horses shall be shown individually at the walk, trot, and lope in both directions. The walk, trot, and lope will be extended in one direction only. Markers set up in the arena will designate gait changes. The pleasure course shall be set to make approximately one pass of the arena in each direction. The pattern may be started either in the left or right direction. The order of gaits shall be:

- . 1) extended walk,
- . 2) trot,
- . 3) extended trot,
- . 4) lope,

- . 5) stop and reverse,
- . 6) walk,
- . 7) lope,
- . 8) extended lope,
- . 9) trot, and
- 10) stop and back.

Description of Ideal Pleasure Gaits

The ideal pleasure horse will have a level head carriage at each gait – neither too high nor too low.

Walk – The walk should be straight, square, flat footed, relaxed, and should move out freely with horse looking ahead.

Extended Walk – The extended walk should be straight, square, flat footed, relaxed, and should move out freely with horse looking ahead, It should show more length of stride than the ordinary walk.

Trot – This gait should be a square two-beat diagonal trot. The trot should be steady, soft, and slow enough for riding long distances. Trots which are too fast, rough and hard to sit should be penalized. Excessively slow and uncadenced trots should also be penalized.

Extended Trot – The extended trot should show a definite lengthening of stride from the regular trot with the same cadence, which will cause an increase in speed. This trot should be level, flat, and steady with the appearance that the horse could hold this gait for an extended distance. The method riders chose to ride the extended trot is optional. It is acceptable to either post at the trot, sit, or stand in the stirrups, while holding the saddle horn, at the extended trot only.

Lope – This gait should be a three-beat gait that is collected, cadenced, straight and steady, and is comfortable to ride.

Stop (from both lope and trot) – The horse should be in the correct stopping position – both hocks engaged and stopping on the hindquarters.

Reverse – A horse should turn briskly and flat with front feet on the ground and holding an inside rear pivot foot.

Extended Lope – This gait should be an obvious lengthening of stride from the previous lope, be at the same cadence and cause an increase in speed. The gait needs to be steady, quiet, and holding the increased speed while being under complete control.

Scoring the Stock Horse Pleasure

Judging is based on quality of movement, mannerisms, disposition, and responsiveness to the rider. Part of the evaluation of this class is on smoothness of transitions. All transitions should be smooth with willingness and responsiveness to the rider's cues. Note that the rules allow for a horse to be taken back (collected) a bit from the extended trot as the horse moves into the lope. The transition from the extended lope down to the trot is very difficult to achieve; however, a good stock horse should be able to make this transition smoothly and easily, with calmness and a good attitude.

Each gait, including transitions, will be scored from 1-10. There will be 5 scores in each direction for a total of 10 scores and a maximum of 100 points for each horse's work.

The scoring guide for each maneuver, including transitions, is as follows:

1-4 Points..... Major faults such as wrong lead, broken gait, lack of control, very poor quality of gait, failure to perform requested gait.

5-7 Points..... Average quality of movement of gaits and transitions with minor or no faults.

8-10 Points.... High quality mover that is functionally correct in gaits and transitions. Well-mannered and responsive.

Stock Horse Trail

This class, as the name implies, tests the horse's ability to cope with many situations encountered in everyday work. The horse is ridden through a pattern of obstacles, which should nearly approximate those encountered during the course of everyday work. The horse is judged on the cleanliness, neatness, and promptness with which the obstacles are negotiated, ability to negotiate obstacles correctly, and attitude and mannerisms exhibited by the horse while negotiating the course. Emphasis should be on identifying the well-broke, responsive, well-mannered horse which can correctly negotiate the course.

Trail Class Obstacle Requirements

1. Course will include no less than six and no more than nine obstacles. It is mandatory that the horse be asked to walk, trot, and lope during the course.
2. The actual trail course cannot be made available to exhibitors or posted prior to the day of competition, but must be posted at least one hour prior to competition.
3. The course may be walked on foot by the exhibitor but no horse/rider exhibitors are allowed on the actual course after it has been set until their trail run begins.
4. Course must be designed using the mandatory obstacles and maneuvers plus optional obstacles. Combining of two or more of any obstacles is acceptable.
5. Mandatory obstacles or maneuvers:
 - Ride over obstacles on the ground – usually logs or poles. It is recommended that all three gaits (walk, trot, lope) be used; however, only two gaits are required.
 - Walk-Overs – Walk over no more than five logs or poles. The space between logs for walk-overs should be 20-24" apart and no more than 10" high. These can also be in a straight line, curved, zigzagged, or raised.
 - Trot-Overs – Trot over no more than five logs or poles. The space between trot-overs should be 36-42". Poles may be elevated a maximum of 10". These can also be in a straight line, curved, zigzagged, or raised.

- Lope-Overs – Lope over no more than five poles. The space between lope-overs should be 6' to 7'. Poles may be elevated a maximum of 10". These can also be in a straight line, curved, zigzagged, or raised.
- Opening, passing through, and closing gate.
- Ride over wooden bridge.
- Backing obstacles – Backing obstacles are to be spaced a minimum of 28" spacing. If elevated, 30" spacing is required. Back through and around at least three markers. Back through L, V, U, straight or similar shaped course. May be elevated no more than 24".
- Side-pass obstacle – Any object which is safe and of any length may be used to demonstrate responsiveness of the horse to leg signals. Raised side-pass obstacles should not exceed 12".

6. Optional obstacles: Following is a list of optional obstacles from which selections can be made, but not limited to:

- Jump - An obstacle whose center height is not less than 14" high or more than 24" high. Holding the saddle horn is permissible for this obstacle
- Carry object from one part of the arena to another,
- Remove and replace materials from mailbox,
- Trot through cones – spacing to be minimum of 6',
- Cross natural ditches or up embankments,
- Step in and out of obstacle,
- Put on slicker or coat,
- Pick-up feet,
- Walk through brush,
- Ground tie,
- Lead at the trot.

7. Prohibited obstacles: Tarps, water obstacles with slick bottoms, PVC pipe used as a jump or walk over, tires, rocking or moving bridges, logs or poles elevated in a manner that permits such to roll in a dangerous manner. Animals live or stuffed. Exhibitors will not be asked to drag or pull any object.

8. The rider has the option of eliminating any obstacle and taking a score of "0" for the missed obstacle. A judge may ask a horse to pass on an obstacle after three refusals or for safety concerns. Each obstacle will be scored 1-10.

Trail Credits:

Credit is given to horses negotiating the obstacles with style and some degree of speed, providing correctness is not sacrificed. Horse should receive credit for showing attentiveness to obstacles and capability of picking their own way through the course when the obstacles warrant it, and willingly responding to the rider's cues on more difficult obstacles. Quality of movement and cadence should be considered part of the maneuver score for the obstacle.

Trail Deductions:

1. Artificial appearance and/or unnecessary delay while approaching or going through obstacles.
2. Each tick of an obstacle.
3. Break of gait at walk or jog.
4. Placing both front or hind feet in a single-strided slot or space.
5. Skipping over or failing to step into a required space.
6. Split pole in lope-over.
7. Stepping on a log, pole, cone, or obstacle.
8. Wrong lead or breaking gait at lope.
9. Stepping outside the confines of, falling off or out of an obstacle such as a back thru, bridge, side pass, box, or water box.
10. Refusals, balk, or attempting to evade an obstacle by shying or backing.
11. Blatant disobedience (kicking out, bucking, rearing, striking).
12. Failure to ever demonstrate correct lead or gait, if designated.
13. Failure to complete obstacle.

Stock Horse Showmanship

The Stock Horse Showmanship class is judged on the exhibitor's ability to fit and train a horse for a show or sale. Emphasis will be on proper fitting of the horse and the ability to present a well-groomed, well-trained horse to the judge through a series of practical and basic maneuvers from the ground. The class should always be judged with this in mind, giving credit to the exhibitor who can correctly perform each maneuver of the total pattern or run. In Stock Horse Showmanship, conformation of the horse is not judged.

Attire. Exhibitors should be neat, clean, and well-groomed. Required attire is the same as that required for Stock Horse Horsemanship. Conservative scarves around the neck are acceptable. Hats should be clean and well-shaped and cowboy boots should be clean. Chaps, chinks and spurs are NOT permitted in showmanship.

Equipment. Use a clean halter that is adjusted to fit the horse. The halter should fit well on the horse's

head, to maximize response to subtle halter cues. Plain leather halters or flat nylon halters are preferred and should be clean, neat and adjusted and well-fitted to the individual horse. Silver on halters is not allowed other than on normal buckles and hardware. Judges may penalize contestants who do not conform. Lead straps are often attached to a chain and snap. The lead strap may be snapped below the jaw in the center ring of the halter, or the chain can be run under the horse's chin and snapped to the upper or lower halter ring on the right side of the horse's head.

Horse Fitting and Grooming (to count for minimum of 30% of total score)

1. The horse should be clean and well-groomed. Manner of fitting for mane and tail may vary according to recognized practices for a stock-type horse. Emphasis should be on proper fitting and grooming acceptable for high-end stock horse sales. Hair coat should be clean, shiny and should show evidence of frequent grooming. It is acceptable to trim bridle paths, ears, nose and fetlocks to make the horse more attractive, just as one might do for a horse sale. Horses' feet should be clean, neat and well-trimmed or shod. Hoof black should not be used.
2. A well-groomed horse that is clean, properly trimmed, and conditioned does have a justified advantage in showmanship at halter.

Method of Showing

1. Walk, trot, turn, stop, back, and pose the horse as shown in the posted pattern or by the judge's instructions.
2. The horse is always led from the left side. The exhibitor's right hand is held closest to the halter, with the distance being highly dependent upon the mannerisms of the horse, the size of both the horse and the exhibitor, and breed standards. The excess amount of lead is folded or loosely coiled in the left hand and held about waist high. Never wrap the excess lead around the hand or make a coil so small that a sudden jerk could cause the lead to wrap around the hand.
3. At both the walk and the trot, the exhibitor's shoulder should be about even with the horse's throatlatch. In this position, the horse is beside the exhibitor, allowing the judge a clear view of the horse's travel. Movement at both gaits should be brisk and sharp, as opposed to slow and dull. Speed of travel is somewhat related to straightness of travel, and the slower a horse moves, the greater chance for deviation from a straight line of movement.
4. When leading to or from a judge or ringmaster, stops and turns are very important. The exhibitor should always allow plenty of space between the horse and the judge. Stops should be executed squarely and without hesitation, as the stop is an important maneuver preceding a correct turn or reverse of direction.
5. Turns of more than 90 degrees should always be executed to the right. Pushing the horse away, rather than pulling the horse around, will allow more distance between the horse's and the exhibitor's feet. In addition, turning to the right allows the horse to use the right hind foot as a pivot point. The horse can then cross the left front foot over the right front to execute a very uniform and smooth turn. This results in the horse remaining in essentially the same tracks after the turn is completed and provides the judge a good view as the horse is walked or trotted away.
6. Immediately following a turn or reverse of direction, the exhibitor should look back to make sure the horse is lined up with the judge. Class routines may require walking or trotting back into the lineup of horses.
7. Pose or set up the horse with its feet set according to its type or breed. Stock horse breeds stand

square. Move the horse's feet by pushing or pulling on the lead strap as necessary with the right hand. Touching the horse's body with a hand or foot to change the horse's position is penalized.

8. Once set up, the horse should be presented in such a way as to not distract the judge's attention from the horse. The exhibitor stands on the opposite side of the horse when the judge is toward the front and on the same side as the judge when the judge is toward the rear of the horse.

9. For safety reasons, at no time should an exhibitor stop and stand directly in front of the horse.

10. The primary objective is to show the horse. Exhibitors should stand where they can see the judge and the judge can see them, but without obstructing the judge's view of the horse. The basic position of the exhibitor should allow constant observation of the horse's position and also permit observation of the judge.

11. Staring at the judge keeps an exhibitor from continually observing the horse and keeping the horse set properly. Exhibitors should maintain eye contact with the horse. It is acceptable to glance at the judge from time to time, but an exhibitor should NOT do this continuously.

12. Exhibitors should keep their proper position in line and allow reasonable space (at least 5 feet) between horses on either side. Keep horses from making contact with a competitor or encroaching on space rightfully belonging to another exhibitor.

13. Additional tests, such as walking or trotting over logs, leading horses through a gate, moving around markers such as cones or other suitable obstacles, ground tying or any other maneuver which the judge feels is a fair test for determining the level of training and ground handling ability of a stock horse, may be included in the pattern.

Faults

1. Allowing the horse to remain out of position.
2. Standing directly in front of the horse.
3. Kicking the horse's feet to move them.
4. Failure of the horse to lead properly.
5. Failure to stop before pivoting when showing at a walk or trot.
6. Failure to back.
7. Loud voice commands to the horse or other unnecessary actions.
8. Picking up the horse's feet for positioning purposes.
9. Tracking crooked.
10. Posing incorrectly.

Class Routine

1. Each exhibitor will perform individually.
2. Exhibitors will be asked to enter the arena individually and work a pattern designed by the judge.

The pattern will be posted at least 1 hour before the class begins.