

Wyoming County 4-H



Horse Project Handbook

Prepared by: Wyoming County Horse Committee

Sarah Clark - Community Educator

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Wyoming County 4-H Horse Project Handbook

This Horse Guide contains a brief sketch of the Equine Program for 4-H members of Wyoming County. This is a reference guide for the program. Events will be scheduled to help you plan a uniform program throughout the year. Each 4-H family receives the 4-H News, which lists the educational opportunities available.

Our programs encourage both understanding and knowledge of the equine industry, as well as leadership and personal development through once-in-a-lifetime experiences. These programs give youth opportunities to develop valuable life skills, increase confidence, and make valuable lifelong friendships and connections with each other and industry professionals. Youth interested in participating in 4-H horse events get the opportunity to learn horsemanship and equine science, not just riding and showing skills.

How to complete a horse project:

Each year we receive questions about what youth members need to accomplish to exhibit 4-H projects at the fair. Here is a broad overview of the requirements/steps for 4-H youth members and families to follow. Please reach out to the 4-H office with specific questions for each area.

Can I use one Educational Event for multiple species? The short answer is no. Some events like public presentations can be used for different species but you must designate which species. The only exception is livestock, where we group beef, sheep and swine together as a “species” and one event will cover these groups. We of course encourage youth to take part in more than just one event for any species! To show a horse at the Wyoming County Fair, youth must participate in at least one horse focused educational event. We typically offer 1 per month January – July.

Horse Project (Ages 5-18 as of 1/1/26): 4-H horse exhibitors must own or lease their project animals by June 1, 2026. Horse certificates are due to the 4-H office by June 1st. Please contact us with any animal ownership questions before the deadline. To exhibit a horse at the Wyoming County Fair, youth members must complete one of the specified education events for the equine program. Some of these educational opportunities happen annually, others are offered based on the needs of our 4-H community! Pre-registration in the form of a fair entry is also required by July 15th. Horse Project members ages 5-7 are limited to leadline riding opportunities, and non-contest educational opportunities.

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Calendar of Educational Events, Activities & Important Dates:

**This calendar is an outline for the 4-H year. It is subject to change.*

October:

- New 4-H years starts October 1st

January:

- Horse Bowl: Traditionally held the last Friday of the month
 - January 23rd, 2026, 6:30pm at the Ag & Business Center, Warsaw

February:

- Public Presentations

March:

- Hippology

April:

- Equine Educational Opportunity (Topic TBD)

May:

- Equine Educational Opportunity (Topic TBD)
- Rider Evaluations

June:

- Horse Certificates due June 1st
- Rider Evaluations
- Equine Educational Opportunity (Topic TBD)

July:

- Fair Entries due July 15th
- NYS Fair Qualifier Show

August:

- Wyoming County Fair: 4-H Shows are Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of fair week
- NY State Fair
- State Fair Hippology and Horse Judging Contests

September:

- Horse Banquet, Trail Ride and Potluck: Traditionally held on a Sunday afternoon

Activities:

Many activities are offered to encourage youth to engage in the horse project. Most of the activities are designed to be educational and teach a lesson or offer an experience which will benefit the members. We do hope that youth will participate in more than one educational activity throughout the 4-H year. To exhibit equines at the Wyoming County Fair, youth members must complete one of the specified education events for the horse program.

Horse Bowl

This event is conducted in three divisions, Novice (1st 2 years competing), Jr. Division (ages 8-13) and Sr. Division (ages 14 and over). The Bowl competition consists of two teams- four members each. Questions are asked by the moderator, and each team has a chance to answer. The first team member to answer right gets positive points. The top scoring members from both the Jr. and Sr. events go on to compete at the district contest in March if they choose. Any 4-H member 8+ can participate in the horse bowl contest. Study materials are available at the 4-H office or on their website.

Public Presentations

The purpose of this program is to help youth develop poise, self-confidence, the ability to speak in public, and an appreciation of effective communication. County presentations are held in February. There are opportunities to compete at the district level. Any 4-H member 5+ can participate in the public presentations program. Information can be found in the December 4-H newsletter, online, or call the 4-H office.

Hippology

The hippology contest is held in March. Hippology is a Skillathon – different stations of varying topics are presented to youth. Including but not limited to breeds, feeds, judging, tack, health, anatomy. The top scoring individuals in both the junior and senior division are invited to advance to the district level. The top individuals can compete at the NY State Fair. Any 4-H member 8+ can participate in the hippology contest. Study materials are available at the 4-H office or on their website.

Other Equine Educational Event Opportunities

During the months of April – July, the horse committee decides on various topics to host the remaining educational opportunities. This can include but is not limited to showmanship, tack ID, business tours, saddle fitting, first aid, etc. These opportunities will be published in the 4-H newsletter and posted on our website throughout the 4-H year.

Riding & Driving Evaluation Guidelines:

These guidelines are designed to help 4-H educators, leaders, and evaluators to provide 4-Her's with a safe and positive riding/driving evaluation. They are to be implemented in a way that best meets the needs of a respective county while upholding the safety and positive youth development techniques for members to thrive.

The purpose of the riding evaluation is to provide a safe and positive educational experience for youth working with live horses. The riding/driving evaluation is an evaluation of the member's skills and abilities, not the horse.

According to NYS Horse Program form approved by PW Wood, the following need to be evaluated:

- Any youth who wishes to participate in 4-H sponsored mounted or driving events other than club activities.
- Any youth who is riding or driving in the 4-H program for the first time.
- Any youth that has been evaluated to ride safely in the Junior or Senior levels does not need to be re-evaluated unless there is a need to be re-evaluated.
- Youth who wish to move up a riding level must be re-evaluated.
- Youth do not have to be evaluated on each horse, but they must use a project horse.
- If you receive a high point trophy in any discipline at the Wyoming County Fair, you must move up to the next highest division the following year.

Potential Riding Levels:

- **Lead Line:** The child is mounted and led by a side walker, who is 18 years of age or older and has horse-related experience. A properly fitted halter must be under the bridle, and a lead line must be attached to the ring at the bottom of the halter, not on the side or to the bit. Youth must be capable of holding the reins in their hands. Youth will not be asked to back their horse. Youth at this level cannot qualify for State Fair. In Wyoming County, leadline level is appropriate for Cloverbud youth ages 5-7 by 1/1 of the program year.
- **Walk/trot or walk/jog:** Youth 8+ but under the age of 12. The child is mounted and can ride safely in walk/trot or walk/jog situations. Youth may or may not be expected to know their diagonals, depending upon the level ridden or class entered. The youth will not be asked to back their horse. Youth must be able to control their horse in a group setting. Youth at this level cannot qualify for State Fair.
- **Novice Class (Walk/trot/canter or Walk/jog/lope):** This level is designed for youth that have mastered the skills of walking, trotting or jogging, and cantering or loping the horse safely. Youth may be asked to back their horse. Youth must be able to control their horse in a group setting. Youth at this level cannot qualify for State Fair.
- **Junior or Senior (Walk/trot/canter or Walk/jog/lope):** Youth must have mastered the skills of walking, trotting or jogging, and cantering or loping the horse safely. Youth must know their diagonals and be able to canter or lope the horse on the correct lead. Youth may be asked to back their horse. Youth at this level may need to do independent patterns or more complicated riding skills demonstrations, depending upon the classes they will enter. Youth must be able to control their horse in a group setting. Youth age 13 and under in this class will be classified at the junior level. Youth 14+ will be considered Senior level. Youth at the Junior or Senior level may qualify for the NYS Fair.

Wyoming County Fair Agricultural & Equine Rules

1. All horse entries must be made by July 15. All equine entries, and health papers must be mailed, emailed or dropped off to the 4-H office in Warsaw.
2. Register for all expected classes. Classes can be scratched during the week, but they may not be added.
3. All equines must have been owned and cared for since June 1st of the year of the Fair. All horses, donkeys or mules must have **horse certificates** on file in the exhibitor's name by June 1st. All potential horses a youth may consider riding should be on file by June 1st. **See the horse certificate rules on the next page for further information.**
4. Equine exhibits must be in place by 4pm on Monday and remain until 4pm on Wednesday.
5. Stall space for all equines will be assigned by superintendents. Exhibitors must stable animals as designated to receive premiums.
6. The horse barns will be checked at release time on Wednesday. Exhibitors are expected to clean their stalls before leaving for the week.
7. Animals must be exhibited at the Wyoming County Fair to be eligible for youth exhibition at State Fair. Exceptions are made for divisions not offered at the county fair (including but not limited to: dressage, ranch horse, mounted games).
8. Each exhibitor must provide hay, straw, and grain for their own animals. Donated sawdust is available at first come first come availability.
9. A horse or pony may enter a specific numbered class only once. (You must choose either the horse or pony division, not both). A pony is classified at 14.2 hands or less. If the pony class is chosen, ponies may only enter designated pony classes plus trail, showmanship at halter, egg and spoon, and costume. If ponies do not have an official measurement on file with the 4-H office, they will be measured at the Wyoming County Fair Monday morning to verify height. This measurement will be the basis for determining class. If 5 or less ponies register for 4-H participation, the classes will be scratched, and youth will be moved to their respective junior or senior division. A rider must choose to ride either in the pony, junior or senior division.
10. An exhibitor may have only one entry per class except in conformation classes where two entries are allowed. Second entry must be shown by person of 4-H age.
11. Showmanship at halter is an optional class.
12. In classes that have fewer than three entries, the contestants will be moved to another section of a similar class if available. However, for example, Horse foals will be shown even if there is only one entry, because there is no other place to show them.
13. Donkeys and mules may be entered in all appropriate performance classes. If there are sufficient numbers, the classes will be split.
14. Leadline participants are limited to enrolled 4-H members ages 5-7 by 1/1 of the program year. They are limited to participating in the leadline classes on Tuesday (Western show day).
15. Walk-trot and walk-jog classes are limited to first- or second-year riders, ages 12 and under. (Evaluation Discretion)
16. If an exhibitor rides in the Junior or Senior Division at the Qualifying Show, they must ride in the respective class at the Wyoming County Fair.
17. A rider may only ride one equine per division.
18. All classes are subject to change due to conditions.

19. In pairs class, at least one rider must be formally entered. Youth must participate in the higher level of the riding pair. You may only participate in this class once, per division.
20. Classes will be split if there are over 20 riders or less at the judge's discretion.
21. All costume class commentaries must be to the entry booth by noon Tuesday of the Western show.
22. Horse and rider combinations will be screened for entry in Huntseat over fences classes. Screening will be by the judge during warmups on show day.
23. If a rider receives a high point trophy in the walk/trot or novice class the previous year, they must move up to the next class level the following 4-H year.
24. Any display of unsportsmanlike behavior on the part of the spectators, parents, or exhibitors will cause the offender to be excused from the area. There is to be no coaching from anyone on the sidelines.
25. All horse trailers must be parked in the far horsemen's parking lot behind horse barn #2. No vehicles should be parked around the horse barns during the week except for loading/unloading.
26. The 4-H Horse shows will begin on Monday starting at 8:30 am. Exhibitors must check in at the entry booth to receive their show numbers, and approve their helmets.
27. No stallions may be shown except in the foal and yearling classes.
28. **N.Y.S. 4-H Horse Show rules will be used unless indicated otherwise in the fair book.**

Helmet Guidelines:

Events (all 4-H events at which riding or driving occurs)

- Helmet policy:
 - All youth must wear helmets while mounted, driving, or in the show ring with an equine (e.g. showmanship at halter).
 - Any adults riding at 4-H events must wear helmets while mounted.
 - A helmet meeting ASTM/SEI certification is required for all riders while mounted, sitting in a cart, or handling a horse in the riding arena
- Concussion policy (effective October 1, 2019):
 - All 4-H events, including state-level events, that include equine driving or mounted riding will have a written concussion protocol on hand and must have at least one staff member or volunteer present who has successfully completed the **Heads-Up Online Training** (CDC). Information about and the link to the Heads Up Online Training course offered by the CDC can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/heads-up/training/youth-sports.html>.

NYS Rulebooks and Guidelines

Wyoming County 4-H follows the rules and guidelines set forth by the NYS 4-H Horse Program, in regards to educational events and showing. The updated rules and regulations can be found on their official website – or they are available in print form from the county 4-H office.

<https://cals.cornell.edu/nys-4-h-animal-science-programs/livestock/horses>

County Horse Certification Rules

1. Project horses must be certified by June 1st in the 4-H office.

2. One certificate is required for each individual rider/horse combination to be on file at the 4-H office. They are held for the duration of the horse and rider's duration in 4-H.
3. If several children in a family have the same horse certified in their names, they can all use the horse, but in different performance classes. For example, John rides the horse in Western Pleasure, Sue rides it in Western Equitation (NO on John riding Junior Western Pleasure and Sue riding in Senior Western Pleasure).
4. If you lease a horse, the leased horse MUST be used in all riding classes that you participate in. This does not count for driving horses.
5. If a 4-H'er owns a horse and certifies it, another youth from the community could lease that horse (if they don't own one.) Both 4-H'ers could ride the horse, but it must be in different show divisions. For example, Joe rides the horse in Gymkhana, Sam rides it in the Western Division.
6. First and second year riders, aged 12 and under, can ride in Walk-Trot, Walk-Jog class. They can use any certified horse (certified by themselves or any other 4-H'er) in any walk-trot, walk-jog class. Novice and Leadline riders may also use any certified horse.

NEW YORK YOUTH LIVESTOCK "NON-OWNERSHIP" POLICY

The exhibitor, upon request to the event sponsor, shall provide proof of ownership of any exhibit.

*This **certificate** verifies that a 4-H member in New York has enrolled this animal as a 4-H Project Animal by June 1 of the current year.*

For all "non-owned" animals, the 4-H member and the owner of the animal have entered an agreement. A lease agreement allows a 4-H member to use the specified animal as a 4-H project.

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) encourages the use of written lease agreements; however, it is the responsibility of the exhibitor and the animal owner to agree upon the lease terms. Neither CCE nor Cornell University is legally involved in writing, implementing or terminating any lease agreements.

The following bill was legally adopted by the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, July 1987.

Exhibits shall have been owned by the exhibitor for a period of at least (30) days prior to the entry of the exhibit provided, however, that any animal exhibit entered in a youth fair, youth exhibition or 4-H show or exhibition shall have been in the care of the exhibitor for a period of at least (60) days prior to entry of the exhibit.

CCE staff and state program administrators have maintained the following philosophy since 1987.

Non-owner/lease opportunities are intended for youth who do not already own an animal of this type. For exhibition purposes, youth are limited to one non-owned breeding class animal of this type.

Specific for Equine: *The only approved NYS 4-H Horse Program exceptions are donkey, mule, miniature equine, and driving equine (used only for driving). A youth may own or lease an equine and also lease a donkey, mule, miniature equine, and driving equine (used only for driving), and vice versa (the youth may own a donkey, mule, miniature, or driving equine, and lease an equine for riding).*