

4-H WORKING RANCH COMPETITION RULES INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR

GENERAL RULES

Regular and Non-Regular Divisions may be offered at the State Working Ranch Horse show. Regular divisions include Juniors, Intermediates, and Seniors. Non-regular divisions are Novice, and Open.

Novice divisions will follow the same rules, judging criteria, and scoring as the Junior division, while the Open division will follow the same rules, judging criteria, and scoring as the Intermediate/Senior divisions.

The regular classes are for 4-H youth that are ready to compete in their age division. The non-regular Novice class is for 4-H youth of any age not ready to rope, drive, or pen live cattle. The non-regular Open class is for when the state offers 4-H volunteers and adults a chance to compete at a 4-H show too.

Intermediate and Senior contestants will compete in 5 events for the 4-H Working Ranch Competition. These events will be 1. Test, 2. Working Ranch Roping (heading/heeling), 3. Ranch Sorting, 4. Reining, and 5. Cow Work.

AWARDS AND SCORING

For all events, each horse/rider team automatically begins with a score of 70. A score of 70 denotes an average performance. Events are judged with points added or subtracted from 70 to achieve a final event score and placing. The test will break all ties in every event. All event's final points will be totaled for the all-around show placing.

Overall awards will be given in each event for the top 5 placings from the regular age divisions. All-around show awards will be given for the top 10 placings from the regular age divisions. Additional awards may be given at show management's discretion.

ATTIRE AND TACK

Western attire consisting of a long-sleeve shirt with a 4-H patch on the upper left sleeve, long pants, boots, a belt, and a properly fitted equestrian helmet are required. Gloves and leg protection such as chinks or chaps are optional.

Tack will follow the rules listed in the *Utah 4-H Western Horse Rulebook* in the sections regarding judged events. Leg protection is permitted in all events. It is acceptable to use the saddle horn in events that have cows. Contestants are permitted to show younger horses in age appropriate headgear without being penalized.

TEST

Each contestant will be required to take a general knowledge test worth 70 points with 6 bonus points possible. Seniors and Intermediates will have questions from the Utah 4-H Horse Programs Study Guide Volume 1 and 2 as well as questions from the Working Ranch Horse Practical Training Guide found on the website here:

<https://extension.usu.edu/utah4h/files/working-ranch-horse-training-guide.pdf>. They will also be tested from the Working Ranch Rules and Working Ranch Scorecards.

WORKING RANCH ROPING

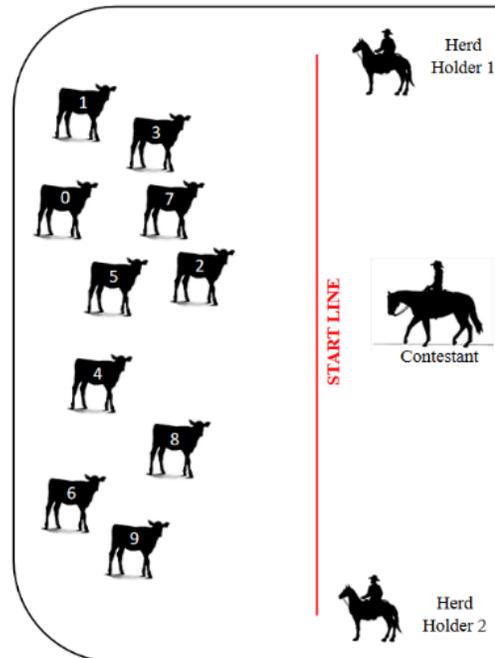
Participants will demonstrate their skill of roping out of a herd in a quiet and efficient manner as well as their ability to set up and execute roping shots of their choice. Emphasis is on the rider's ability to demonstrate stockmanship, horsemanship, and roping techniques. Mishandling stock or unnecessary stress to stock and horse will result in major deductions and could result in disqualification.

The pen will be designed to allow for two herd holders. The herd holders can be a family member, 4-H leader, other contestant, or acquaintance. Contestants will be provided herd holders, if needed.

Because this class will be judged as if the cattle belonged to the judge, any type leather, latigo, mule hide, etc. are legal horn wraps. These types of horn wraps allow the dallies to slide as the roper demands, which help facilitate lower stress handling on cattle and saddle horses alike by offering greater control over pressure and release. Rubber covering on any saddle horn will be penalized.

Heading

- This is a judged event with a 2½ minute time limit. The contestant must start with their horse at the opposite end of the pen from cattle. Time will start when the contestant starts the horse walking towards the cattle.
- The contestant will attempt to head two animals. The rope must be thrown (released from the hand) and the contestant may throw as many loops as needed within the time limit.
- The honda on the rope used must be of a breakaway design.
- The contestant must make a legal head catch of the calf and dally up. The animal's head must pass through any legal catch. A legal catch consists of the following: a head, one horn and head, a head and one leg, a head and two legs figure eighted, or two horns.



- The contestant does not have to separate his/her cow from the herd and should not receive credit for separation from the herd. If a cow is separated from the herd there should be no excessive running or cutting of the cow.
- Galloping a horse will not be permitted when entering or working in the herd. Galloping is permitted to shorten the rope after it has been headed, if needed.

Heeling

- This is a judged event with a 2½ minute time limit. Time will be started when the header brings the animal from the herd. Time will end when a heel catch is completed, and the ropers have dallied and stretched the animal or the breakaway has broke.
- The contestant can choose their header or one will be provided. The header can be a family member, 4-H leader, other contestant, or acquaintance. The contestant will not be penalized for the header's performance.
- Heelers may use a regular honda. However, a breakaway is strongly encouraged if the contestant is less experienced with handling a rope.
- Galloping of horse will not be permitted when entering or working in the herd. Horses may be trotted or galloped to hold the herd or to heel after the head has been caught.

Refer to the Int-Senior Working Ranch Roping Scorecard for penalties and credits.

RANCH SORTING

Ranch sorting is a demonstration of the common chores involved in sorting cattle for doctoring, weaning, branding, sifting, and sorting for market. The contestant should demonstrate their knowledge of cattle and how to influence cattle movements with the help of a quiet and responsive horse.

Ranch sorting is an individually judged event with a 2.5 minute time limit. This event is a judged event, excessive speed is discouraged. Contestants will sort up to three head of cattle in a run.

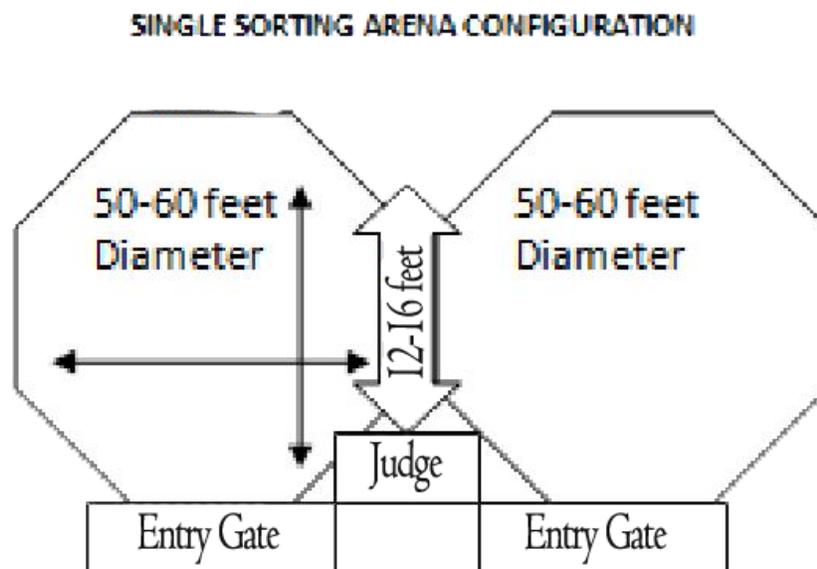
No extra credit will be given for finishing early and each cow will be scored separately on degree of difficulty and the contestant's ability to handle the cow.

Contestants will choose their gate help. The gate help may be other contestants, leaders, or qualified adults. If needed, contestants will have gate help provided. The gate helper prevents unwanted cattle from passing through the gate. The contestant and the gate help are allowed to communicate and teamwork is encouraged; however, the contestant should do the majority of the sorting.

- Ten (10) head of cattle will be assembled in a pen. The cattle will be clearly marked with the numbers 0-9.
- Ranch Sorting will take place between two pens of approximately equal size with the show management's option of working cattle back and forth or only one way.

- Each herd will be settled prior to beginning.
- Recommended sorting area to be round pens 50'-60' in diameter.
- The start/foul line will be recommended as a 12' - 16' opening between the two pens.
- The judge will be positioned evenly with the foul line.
- All cattle will be bunched on the cattle side of the gate within the designated area before the time begins. At the conclusion of each run, the judge will designate the need to bunch cattle.
- The flag will drop when the nose of the horse crosses the start/foul line and the announcer will provide the number to be sorted first. Rider will begin riding from the pen that is to be sorted into.
- The rider will sort that number first, and then the next two numbers in ascending order. (For example: If five (5) is the number given, the contestant will sort number 5 first, followed by 6, and then 7.)
- All cattle must have approved back or neck numbers.
- The cattle are sorted in the proper order. If any part of a numbered cow crosses the start/foul line prior to its correct order, it is considered a dirty cow. The rider will receive a 5-point penalty per dirty cow and does not need to be corrected.
- A cow is considered sorted when the entire animal is completely across the start/foul line.
- If a numbered cow jumps the fence and either leaves the arena or ends up in the opposite pen, but did not pass through the gate, it will result in a re-ride for that contestant at the end of the herd, (assuming it was not caused by roughing).
- The run is considered complete when the appropriate numbers are sorted through the center gate or the time limit expires.

Refer to the Ranch Sorting Scorecard for penalties and credits.



REINING

A reined work will consist of the following maneuvers: circles, lead changes, rollbacks, well-balanced stops, spins, and a backup. A simple lead change will receive full credit if done correctly and flying lead changes will receive extra credit. Simple lead changes must be done in 3 or fewer trotting steps. Trotting more than three strides when making a simple lead change will be penalized.

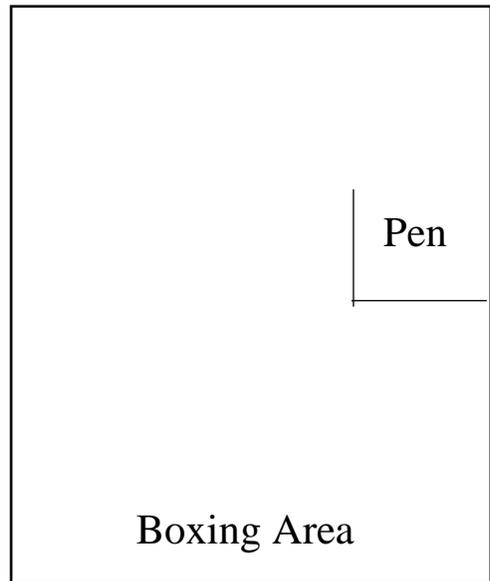
The horse shall be easily guided or controlled with little or no apparent resistance. Bad manners exhibited by the horse will be penalized. The reining pattern will be determined by the show management.

Refer to the Rein Work Scorecard for penalties and credits.

COW WORK (BOXING/PENNING)

Each contestant upon receiving a cow in the arena shall hold that cow on the prescribed end of the arena for 50 seconds, demonstrating the ability of the horse and rider to control the cow. Time shall begin when the gate closes behind the cow after being let into the arena. The announcer or judge will signal the completion of the 50 seconds with a whistle or horn, and the contestant will drive the cow down the fence demonstrating correct position and control around the corners and into the pen.

The contestant will be allowed two attempts to pen the cow. If the rider is unable to pen the cow, the rider will be called off and the run ended. The horse should exhibit superior cow sense and natural cow working ability without excessive reining or spurring.



If the judge determines the cow drawn is unreasonably difficult or unworkable the contestant should receive a new cow. The judge will indicate new cow by blowing his/her whistle twice - indicating the awarding of a new cow. Allowing the horse to quit working before the judge signals for a new cow will result in a zero score. If the judge awards a new cow, the exhibitor has the option to refuse the new cow by continuing to work. If the exhibitor intends to accept the new cow, he or she must pull up immediately.

Refer to the Int-Senior Cow Work Scorecard for penalties and credits.

(Updated July 2025)