

Western Performance Divisions

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210. All Western Classes - shall be shown in western attire and equipment.

- A. Western hat, belt, western boots, long sleeve shirt with sleeves down and fastened. Authentic suspender pants shall be worn with suspenders. Shirts shall be tucked in; unless they are designed to be worn out. No bare midriffs are to show. Long pants are required.
- B. Western saddle and approved western bits for class that is ridden. See [Appendix A](#).

211. Western Pleasure - Bridled, Green, Open, Amateur and Youth - Must be shown in western bridle without nosebands or training type equipment. Green mules to be in snaffles or bosal hackamore.

- A. Mules to be shown at the walk, jog, and lope both ways of the arena on a reasonable loose rein without undue restraint.
 - 1. Judge may ask for an extended walk, jog, or lope one or both ways of the arena.
 - 2. No more than 10 mules shall extend the lope at one time.
- B. Mules should stand quietly and back willingly.
 - 1. Mules shall be penalized for opening their mouths while backing or resisting to back when asked.
- C. Mules must reverse to the inside of the arena (away from the rail) at a walk or jog at the discretion of the judge, never to reverse at the lope.
- D. Western Pleasure judged on:
 - Performance 70%
 - Conformation 20%
 - Appointments 10%

212. A Good Pleasure Mule - has a free and easy stride of reasonable length according to his conformation.

- A. Mule should carry head and neck in a relaxed position with the poll level, or slightly

above the point of the withers. (See [Rule 107](#).)

- B. Head should be carried slightly in front of the vertical, with an alert and pleasant expression.
 - 1. Head should not be behind the vertical nor nosed out, appearing to be resistant. (See [Rule 108](#)).
- C. Traveling with a reasonably loose rein, with light contact and control.
- D. When transitions are called for, he should respond quietly and willingly.
- E. He should move out with the same flowing motion at the extended gaits, not just faster strides, but noticeably longer strides.

213. Faults of the Western Pleasure Mule - to be penalized according to severity.

- A. Excessive speed at any gait, including prancing or jiggling, as well as overly slow or loss of forward motion.
- B. Being on the wrong lead for five or more strides.
- C. Failure to take called for gait, or not a true gait (See [109-A, B, C](#))
- D. Head carried too high or excessively low (poll well below withers for five or more strides).
- E. Carrying head over flexed so nose is behind the vertical for five or more strides.
- F. Opening mouth excessively, or resisting the bit.

214. Faults - shall cause elimination or be severely penalized at the discretion of the judge:

- A. Disqualification if using both hands on the reins or changing hands, unless showing a green mule or a donkey in a snaffle or bosal or class calls for change of hand as in trail to negotiate an obstacle.
- B. Being on the wrong lead for more than five strides.
- C. Disqualification-more than one finger between the reins, or any finger between romal reins or split reins being used like romal reins. May only have index or first finger between split reins that fall on the reining hand side of mule or donkey.
- D. Break of any gait or failure to perform any gait.
- E. Head carried excessively below the withers more than five strides.
- F. Over flexing at the poll so that nose is behind the vertical for more than five strides.

215. Western Trail - Bridled, Green, Amateur, Youth and Donkey.

- A. Trail mules are required to work over, around, or through obstacles in a willing, quiet and alert manner.
 - 1. Failure to negotiate obstacles in the prescribed order will result in elimination.

2. Three refusals at each obstacle or 60 seconds only, then move on.
- B. Class to include a jog and lope of suitable duration so that the judge may determine the way of going.
1. If mules worked at all gaits between obstacles, no rail work is needed.
 2. It is suggested that the mules work their rail work between obstacles.
- C. Courses should include a minimum of four and a maximum of eight obstacles.
- D. At the judge's discretion the following obstacles shall be used:
1. Logs, gate, wooden bridge, and backing.
 2. Optional obstacles will include performing over any reasonable conditions encountered along the trail.
 3. Unnatural or unsafe obstacles or exotic animals should not be used.
 4. Llamas and alpacas may be used as they are no longer considered exotic since they are commonly used in the mountains as pack animals.
 5. Ground tying only permitted within a closed arena.
- E. Trail shall be judged on the performance of the mule over obstacles, with emphasis on manners, willingness, and response to cues. Gaits considered part of performance.
- F. Mules entering the trail arena before the class is called or while course is being set up shall be disqualified. **NO PRACTICE RUNS ALLOWED.**
- G. Judges suggested scoring and penalty system for each obstacle: Scoring will be on the basis of 0-infinity, with 70 denoting an average performance. Each obstacle will receive an obstacle score that should be added or subtracted from 70 and is subject to a penalty that should be subtracted. Each obstacle will be scored on the following basis, ranging from plus 1 1/2 to minus 1 1/2: -1 1/2 extremely poor, -1 very poor, -1/2 poor, 0 correct, +1/2 good, +1 very good, +1 1/2 excellent. Obstacle scores are to be determined and assessed independently of penalty points. Penalties should be assessed per occurrence as follows:
- One-half (1/2) Point
- Each tick or contact of a log, pole, cone, plant, or any component of an obstacle.
- One (1) Point
- each hit, bite, or stepping on a log, cone, plant or any component of the obstacle.
 - Incorrect or break of gait at walk or jog for two strides or less.
 - Both front or hind feet in a single-strided slot or space at a walk or jog.
 - Skipping over or failing to step into required space.
 - Split pole in lope-over.
 - Knocking down an elevated pole, cone, barrel, planet, obstacle, or severely disturbing an obstacle.

- Falling or jumping off or out of a bridge or a water box with one foot once the mule has got onto or into that obstacle.
- Stepping outside of the confines of an obstacle with designated boundaries (i.e. back through, 360 box, side pass) with one foot once the horse has entered the obstacle.
- Missing or evading a pole that is a part of a series of an obstacle with one foot.

Five (5) Point

- Dropping slicker or object required to be carried on course.
- First or second cumulative refusal, balk, or evading an obstacle by shying or backing.
- Letting go of gate or dropping rope gate.
- Use of either hand to instill fear or praise.
- Falling or jumping off or out of a bridge or a water box with more than one foot once the mule has got onto or into that obstacle.
- Stepping outside of the confines of an obstacle with designated boundaries (i.e. back through, 360 box, side pass) with more than one foot once the mule has entered the obstacle.
- Missing or evading a pole that is a part of a series of an obstacle with more than one foot.
- Blatant disobedience (including kicking out, bucking, rearing, striking).
- Holding saddle with either hand.
- Faults, which occur on the line of travel between obstacles, scored according to severity: -head carried too high -head carried too low (tip of ear below the withers) -over-flexing or straining neck in head carriage so the nose is carried behind the vertical -excessive nosing out -opening mouth excessively.

0 (Zero) - Score

- Performing the obstacle incorrectly or other than in specified order.
- No attempt to perform an obstacle.
- Excessively or repeatedly touching the horse on the neck to lower the head.
- Entering or exiting an obstacle from the incorrect side or direction.
- Working obstacle the incorrect direction; including overturns of more than 1/4 turn.
- Riding outside designated boundary marker of the arena or course area
- Third cumulative refusal, balk, or evading an obstacle by shying or backing.
- Failure to ever demonstrate correct gait between obstacle as designated.
- Failure to follow the correct line of travel between obstacles.

- Excessive schooling, pulling, turning, stepping or backing anywhere on course.

Disqualification

- Use of two hands (except green mules in snaffle bit or hackamore) or changing hands on reins; only one hand may be used on the reins, except that it is permissible to change hands to work an obstacle
- Equipment failure that delays completion of pattern.

216. Mandatory Dimensions of Trail Obstacles

A. Walk-Over's:

- Singles 16" max. height.
- Multiples 10" max. height.
- Width between 20" min. width (20"-24" recommended.)
- No rolling poles to be used.

B. Cavaletti

- Jog Over's 3' to 3'6" apart (between.)
- Lope Over's 6' to 7' apart (a 7' average mule.)

C. Jumps

- Mounted or lead over
 - 18" max. height allowed.
 - 4' min. between standards.
- Combinations
 - 12' for one stride, 6' for no stride (Bounce.)
- Box Jump and "L" Jump
 - Poles 12' min. length.

D. Back through

- On ground 30" min. width between.
- Elevated 34" min.
- Barrels 36" min.

E. Side Passes

- Single pole Up to 24" high.
- Parallel poles Never closer than 24".

F. Serpentines

- Jog-Around Pylons 10' min. base to base Guard rails 4' to either side of pylons.
- If standards are used, dimensions should be looser.

G. Gates(Rope gates may be used)

- Approximately 60" high with latch available at that height. Width minimum 6'.

H. Bridges

- 36" min. width.

I. All other maneuvers, figure mule's wheelbase at 5' front hooves to back

217. Gambler's Choice Trail - To be shown in western equipment and attire. Mules to work over/through a maximum of 8 obstacles in a course of unnumbered, un-related obstacles, each with its own point value. Preferably the course is different from the regular trail course. Ideally obstacles should be re-arranged. Example: obstacles with higher or similar points should be arranged on opposite sides of the show area.

- A. All mules shall have the same amount of time to negotiate obstacles before "time is up" and double whistle sounds. May work at own pace between obstacles. Obstacles requiring a specific gait (such as lope over poles or jog over poles) will be adhered to. Failure to maintain required gait for obstacle will result in no points awarded.
- B. Each obstacle may be ridden twice, but not in succession.
 - 1. If ridden a third time, no points will be awarded.
- C. No points shall be awarded if an obstacle is disturbed (unless designed to be disturbed), or re-ridden after it is disturbed. Judge shall declare obstacle dead by means of a single whistle. Show management is encouraged to use some measure to determine if the obstacle has been disturbed during each ride.
- D. Obstacles that are refused or missed may be reworked if not disturbed.
- E. Signal will sound when time is up, double whistle.
 - 1. Riders may finish obstacle they are working then proceed through the finish marker and total time on course will be recorded.
 - 2. If the rider works an obstacle on the way to finish line that they were not committed to, they will receive no points for it.
 - 3. Whether they were committed or not is left to the judges' discretion.
- F. The placing (s) are determined by high score. Total time on course will decide ties. If tie remains with score and time, judges may set up a ride off.
- G. To be shown in western equipment and attire. Protective boots allowed.
- H. If a mule steps out/off of an obstacle (i.e. Back through, box, or off the side of a bridge when entered on the end), a zero score for this attempt will be given and the contestant should move on. If undisturbed it can be worked again but only after another obstacle has been attempted.

218. Western Riding - Bridled, Green, and Open.

- A. Judged on riding qualities of the gaits (walk, trot, lope and backup) change of leads, response to the rider, manner, disposition and intelligence.

- B. Bridled mules to be shown in regulation bits and green mules in regulation snaffle or bosal.

219. Pattern - The following patterns and routine are prescribed. It is essential that the judge and exhibitors adhere to it.

- A. The eight small circles represent markers (cones, barrels, etc.)
 1. These should be set equal distances apart. On the side with five the distance should be a minimum of 30 feet but not more than 50 feet apart.
- B. The rectangle represents an obstacle (small log or pole recommended) just high enough to break the animal's stride.

220. Proceed On The Course - as indicated by the pattern. Not following exact pattern causes elimination

- A. It is important that the mule correctly change leads at the lope (flying changes). Simple lead changes shall be penalized, but are not cause for elimination.
- B. Judges may require an entry to repeat or reverse any part of routine.
- C. Only one hand may be used on reins of bridled mules and must not be changed, except with opening the gate, if it is in such a position to justify a change of hands.
 1. Hand to be around reins. One finger between reins is permitted with split reins, but not with romal joined reins.
 2. Green mules may be shown with two hands.
 3. Free hand shall be clear of mule and saddle.
- D. Spurs, reins, or romal used forward of the cinch will cause disqualification.
- E. Contestant shall be penalized for:
 1. Releasing gate due to mules' disobedience, unable to complete the gate.
 2. Using freehand to insult fear in the mule.
 3. Breaking gait at the lope, including simple lead changes.
 4. Failure to change a designated lead.
 5. Hitting the log at either the jog or the lope.
- F. Opening mouth; anticipating or early lead changes; stumbling, unnecessary talking, petting, spurring, or jerking shall be judged accordingly.

221. Western Dressage

- A. Requirements for rider attire and mule equipment are the same as all western performance classes.
- B. Judges shall follow current USEF/WDAA scoring and procedures.

- C. Tests: Current WDAA tests shall be used. Show premium shall state which tests will be used for all classes. Novice shall use any Introductory test, Green mules shall use any Basic level test, Bridled mules shall use Basic level test 3 or 4, or Level 1 or 2 test. Amateur shall use Basic level test 3 or 4, or Level 1 test 1 or 2. Youth shall use any Basic level test.
- D. Show management shall draw for ride time prior to show date and make them available to competitors.
- E. Competitors may have a "reader". Readers will only be allowed to read the instructions once, they are not allowed to repeat a directive or communicate with the rider.
- F. Voice: Quiet use of the voice including soft "clucking" is permitted.
- G. Definition of gaits
1. The walk is a well-marked four time beat marching gait in a regular cadence and with equal intervals between each beat. This regularity combined with full relaxation must be maintained through-out all walk movements. The following walks are recognized: Collected walk, Working walk and Free walk. There should always be a clear difference in the attitude and tracking in these variations.
 2. The jog is a two beat gait of alternate diagonal legs (left fore and right hind leg and vice versa) separated by a moment of suspension. Excessive speed or slowness will be penalized. The following jogs are recognized: Collected jog, Working jog, Lengthening of Strides and Free jog.
 3. The lope is a gait with three equal, regular beats with time of suspension after the third beat. One stride equals 3 beats, or three footfalls. This gait may be demonstrated on right or left lead. The following lopes are recognized: Collected lope, Working lope, Lengthening of Strides and Counter lope.
- H. Faults: Faults of gaits include crookedness, loss of rhythm; tight and tense back with short stiff neck; horse on forehand and/or leaning on the bit; nose consistently behind the vertical; raising of the head to avoid collection, changing tempo; and evasion of contact which can come from improper training, too harsh a bit, or bad hands. In all cases faults will be penalized.
- I. Tack and Equipment
1. Western type headstall must be used.
 2. A western cavesson (pencil bosal, braided or plain) is allowed.
 3. Hackamores (Bosal) are permitted on a mule of any age at any level. Mechanical hackamores are not allowed.
- J. Reins
1. Romal reins may only be used with a curb bit and can only be ridden with one hand.
 2. A rider can ride with two hands only with split reins, connected reins, or mecate

type reins (without the popper such as in Romal reins).

K. Bits

1. Bits must be AMA approved western curb bit or snaffle bit. Snaffle bits may be used on a mule of any age being ridden at any level.
2. Kimberwicke bits are not allowed.

L. Saddle

1. A standard western or stock saddle, national, working saddle, Aussie, native or western side saddle is to be used but silver equipment will not count over a good working outfit.
2. A horn is not required but western style fenders are required.

M. Whips: One whip no longer than 47.2 inches (120 cm) including lash, is permitted in all tests.

N. Illegal Equipment

1. Martingales and tie downs.
2. Mechanical hackamore.
3. Kimberwicke bit.
4. Flash, figure 8 and dropped nosebands.

O. All tests can be found at [Western Dressage Association](#). It is the competitor's responsibility to obtain current tests

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