Horse Evaluation

Rule years 2027–2030 · Revision 1 · Published October 10, 2026

0. General Rules & Eligibility

Career Development Events are governed by the NAEA CDE Committee. All events follow CDE General Rules and Eligibility.

Qualification for this event

District qualification	All schools (open enrollment)
Students per team	3–4
Grades	7–12 (Junior 7–10; Senior 9–12)
National qualifying event?	Yes (Senior Division only)
Timeframe	Spring (Typically May)
Host	NECC Animal Science Dept.
Event Superintendent	Abby Hitchler

1. Overview

The purpose of the Horse Evaluation Career Development Event is to develop the ability to evaluate equine animals. Students will work to evaluate various classes of animals and provide sound reasoning for their decisions while also answering equine industry questions. Teams will work together to solve problems and answer questions related to the horse industry.

The Horse Evaluation CDE contest primarily relates to Animal Science courses. A unit about horses and horse evaluation could be completed within an Animal Science class. If a school offers Equine Science, then the Horse Evaluation contest directly relates to any and all aspects of this course.

Objectives

- Develop decision-making skills by evaluating classes and placing them based on industry and breed standards for each class.
- Evaluate classes of four halter horses of similar age and gender, placing them from first through fourth according to conformation (muscling, soundness, balance) and appropriate breed standards.
- Evaluate performance classes consisting of four horses and place them from first through fourth according to class standards from the American Quarter Horse Association and the National Reining Horse Association.
- Develop oral communication skills by presenting oral reasons that explain and defend their placings of halter and performance classes.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the equine industry and equine management by answering questions and completing an objective assessment.
- Identify breeds, colors, markings, and/or tack and equipment.
- Collaborate as a team to complete multiple-choice and/or problems related to nutrition, management, anatomy, marketing/current trends, health and animal welfare (care and wellbeing), and reproduction.

2. Eligibility & Team

Open to students in Grades 7–12 (Junior 7–10; Senior 9–12). Teams are 3–4 students, of which the top 3 scores count toward the team total. All schools (open enrollment) advance. Only the Senior Division is national-qualifying — the Junior Division is not. Divisions: Junior Division, Senior Division.

- The contest is open to agricultural education students in grades 7 – 12 based on the previous/current school year.
- There is no limit to the number of participants a school may bring.
- If more than four individuals in one division register, the teams must be specified at the time of registration.
- A team consists of three or four members, with the top three scores used to calculate the team score.
- All individual students may compete for individual awards.
- **Junior Division** - Each team consists of three or four individuals who are currently 7th, 8th, 9th (freshmen), or 10th graders (sophomores). High school juniors and seniors are not eligible for this division.
- **Senior Division** - Each team consists of three or four individuals who are currently 9th (freshmen), 10th (sophomores), 11th (juniors), or 12th (seniors).
- Substitutions may be made the day of the contest.
- National Opportunities:
  - The top senior team will be forwarded to the Nebraska FFA Association for representation at the National FFA Horse Evaluation Career Development Event.
  - The first, second, and/or third place senior teams will have the opportunity to pursue additional national judging opportunities, including but not limited to: American Quarter Horse World Show, American Quarter Horse Association Youth World Show, Quarter Horse Congress, and National Western Stock Show. Teams will be responsible for seeking out these opportunities and taking the necessary steps to compete.

3. What to Bring

Attire

- Students should wear either FFA Official Dress or professional equine attire. Western professional equine attire may include, but is not limited to: jeans, slacks, long-sleeve button up shirts, blazers, boots. English professional equine attire may include, but is not limited to: breeches, collar shirt, jacket, boots.
- Students should refrain from wearing hoodies, sandals, shorts, or other non-professional clothing or clothing that is not safe and/or appropriate around horses.
- Up to five points may be deducted during oral reasons for lack of appropriate attire.

Supplies

- Contestants should bring writing utensils, clipboards, and paper or notebooks to take notes on for oral reasons.
- No other materials are required.
- **No resource materials** or prepared notes may be used during the contest.

4. Event Format

Timing

A. Registration and Check-In

I. Submit event registration to the event coordinator by email about one week before the event.

II. Team check-in begins at 8:30 am the day of the contest.

III. The contest begins at 9:00 am and will conclude by mid-afternoon, with awards shortly after.

B. Times for classes and activities

I. Halter classes will be the first classes evaluated. Contestants will be allowed **15 minutes per halter class**.

II. Contestants will be allowed sufficient time to evaluate performance classes; the **time allowed per class is based on the maneuvers performed**.

III. Teams will be allowed a maximum of **30 minutes to complete the team activity**.

IV. Individuals will be allowed a maximum of **30 minutes to complete the individual test**.

Format

The contest has four parts: **class evaluation**, **oral reasons**, an **individual test**, and a **written team exam/ problems**.

A. Individual Components

I. Students will **evaluate 3-4 halter classes.** Possible halter classes could include, but are not limited to, Aged Mares, Aged Geldings, Two-Year-Old Mares and/or Geldings.

II. Students will **evaluate 3-4 performance classes**. Performance classes may include, but are not limited to, Western Pleasure, Hunter Under Saddle/English Pleasure, Western Horsemanship, English Equitation, Reining, and Showmanship. For classes using patterns, students will be provided a written pattern before the contest begins.

III. **Senior Division participants** will complete **3 sets of oral reasons**, which will be a combination of halter and performance classes.

IV. **Junior Division participants** will complete **2 sets of oral reasons**, which may be halter and/or performance classes.

V. Individuals will complete a **written test** related to equine science and management. Topics may include: nutrition, management, anatomy, marketing/current trends, health and animal welfare (care and well-being), reproduction, and identification of breeds, colors, markings and/or tack and equipment.

B. **Teams** will work together to complete a **multiple-choice test and/or problem(s)** on equine knowledge and current equine industry issues.

I. All students will take the team test, regardless of whether or not they have a full team.

II. If there is only one student from a school, and they **do not** have a team, they will complete this portion individually.

III. If there are only two students from a school, they will work as a pair to complete the test/problem.

5. Scoring & Tiebreakers

Individual Scoring

Senior Division

Component	Detail	Points
Placing Classes	6 to 8 Classes × 50 Points	300–400
Oral Reasons	3 Sets × 50 Points	150
Exam	Individual Exam	100
Grand total		**550–650**

Junior Division

Component	Detail	Points
Placing Classes	6 to 8 Classes × 50 Points	300–400
Oral Reasons	2 Sets × 50 Points	100
Exam	Individual Exam	100
Grand total		**500–600**

Individual Tiebreakers

Individual tiebreakers are resolved in this order:

A. Individual tiebreakers in divisions (halter, performance):

I. 1st tiebreaker: Reasons score in division classes

II. 2nd tiebreaker: Placing score on reasons classes

III. 3rd tiebreaker: Overall reasons score

B. Individual tie-breaker - Overall

I. 1st tiebreaker: Reasons score

II. 2nd tiebreaker: Placing score on reasons classes.

1. Lower placing scores with higher oral reasoning scores indicate that a student presented better reasons with incorrect placings.

Team Scoring

Senior Division

Component	Detail	Points
Sum of Individual Scores	3 Students × 550–650 Points	1,650–1,950
Team Practicum	10 Questions × 10 Points	100
Grand total		**1,750–2,050**

Junior Division

Component	Detail	Points
Sum of Individual Scores	3 Students × 500–600 Points	1,500–1,800
Team Practicum	10 Questions × 10 Points	100
Grand total		**1,600–1,900**

Team Tiebreakers

Team tiebreakers are resolved in the order listed below:

A. Team tiebreakers in divisions (halter, performance)
   I. 1st tiebreaker: Reasons score on division classes
   II. 2nd tiebreaker: Placing score on reasons classes
   III. 3rd tiebreaker: Overall reasons score

B. Team tiebreaker - Overall
   I. 1st tiebreaker: Reasons score
   II. 2nd tiebreaker: Placing score on reasons classes
   III. Team test/problem

6. Study Resources

Approved study resources

- **UNL CDE Study Materials Folder (OneDrive)** — Practice materials and examples for this CDE.

Judging Resources:

- **Horse Judging Website** — Online practice horse judging classes from real contests (placing, keep/cull) for training judging teams.
- **Texas A & M University** — Texas A&M AgriLife online horse judging course for learning to evaluate and place horse classes.
- **American Quarter Horse Association** — AQHA horse judging resources; request the AQHA Horse Judging Manual at the link.

- **University of Nebraska - Lincoln, Horse Judging** — UNL Extension horse judging resources: conformation, oral reasons, and discipline-specific judging guides.
- **American Youth Horse Council** — American Youth Horse Council horse judging resource page with equine publications and links for contest prep.
- **National Reining Horse Association** — 2026 NRHA Handbook with reining scoring, penalties, and judging guide for evaluating reining classes.
- **Kentucky Horse Academy Level 2** — University of Kentucky 4-H Horse Academy Level 2 manual covering horsemanship knowledge and skills.
- **OSU Breeds of Horses** — Oklahoma State University breeds of horses guide with photos and descriptions for breed identification.
- **Teskey's – English Tack & Equipment** — Teskey's shop listings of English tack, saddles, and equipment, useful for identifying horse tack.

Test/Problem Resources:

- **Horse Industry Handbook - Link to purchase** — Purchase page for AYHC Horse Industry Handbook: 800+ pages on horse care, nutrition, health, genetics.
- **Any basic Equine Science textbook**
- **National FFA Horse Evaluation CDE prep materials found at:** — National FFA Horse Evaluation CDE preparation materials (Box folder) for contest study.

7. After the Event

Following the contest, the official judge will provide the placings and cuts and discuss each class.

A detailed score sheet, including individual class scores, reasons scores, etc. will be provided at the conclusion of the contest.

List of Appendices

- Appendix A: Identification Lists
- Appendix B: Oral Reasons Rubric

Appendix A: Identification Lists

Tack

A. Barrel/Roping reins	N. Flank cinch	AA. Polo wraps
B. Bell boots	O. Gag bit	BB. Romel Reins
C. Breast collar	P. Girth	CC. Saddle - English
D. Bridle	Q. Hackamore	DD. Saddle - Western
E. Browband headstall	R. Halter	EE. Saddle pad - English
F. Cinch	S. Hobbles	FF. Saddle pad - Western
G. Crop	T. Kimberwick	GG. Skid boots
H. Curb bit	U. Leadrope	HH. Splint boots
I. Curb chain	V. Loose ring snaffle	II. Split reins
J. Curb strap	W. Noseband	JJ. Stirrup - English
K. D ring snaffle	X. Offside latigo	KK. Stirrup - Western
L. Dressage pad	Y. One ear headstall	LL.Tie down
M. English headstall	Z. Pelham	

Breeds

A. Akhal-Teke	N. Haflinger	AA. Peruvian Paso
B. Andalusian	O. Hanoverian	BB. Pony of the Americas
C. Appaloosa	P. Icelandic	CC. Przewalski
D. Arabian	Q. Lipizzan	DD. Quarter Horse
E. Bashkir Curly	R. Miniature	EE. Saddlebred
F. Belgian	S. Missouri Fox Trotting	FF. Shetland Pony
G. Chincoteague Pony	T. Morgan	GG. Shire
H. Cleveland Bay	U. Mustang	HH. Suffolk
I. Clydesdale	V. Norwegian Fjord	II. Tennessee Walking Horse
J. Connemara Pony	W. Oldenburg	JJ. Thoroughbred
K. Dutch Warmblood	X. Paint	KK. Trakehner
L. Friesian	Y. Paso Fino	LL. Welsh Pony
M. Hackney	Z. Percheron	

Face Markings

A. Bald face	D. Snip	G. Star, stripe, and snip
B. Blaze	E. Star	H. Stripe
C. Facial	F. Star and stripe	

Leg Markings

A. Coronet	C. Pastern	E. Stocking
B. Half stocking	D. Sock	

Colors

A. Bay	E. Dun	I. Roan
B. Black	F. Gray	J. Sorrel
C. Buckskin	G. Overo	K. Tobiano
D. Chestnut	H. Palomino	

Leg Deviations

A. Bench-kneed	F. Camped out	K. Sickle-hocked
B. Bow-kneed	G. Cow-hocked	L. Toed-in
C. Bow-legged	H. Ideal	M. Toed-out
D. Buck-kneed	I. Knock-kneed	
E. Calf-kneed	J. Leg too straight	

Appendix B: Oral Reasons Rubric

Score	Criteria
45-50 points	Completely accurate, correct organization, excellent delivery
40-44 points	Mostly accurate, correct organization, adequate delivery
30-39 points	Inaccurate in places, improper organization in spots, needs more specific detail, average delivery
20-29 points	Completely inaccurate, prioritization unclear, marginal detail, poor delivery
< 20 points	Minimal effort, did not appear to care or be involved in the event

Subcommittee

Standing subcommittee for this event

Name	School / Organization	Role
Abby Hitchler	Boone Central	Chair
Abby Hitchler	Boone Central	Superintendent
Monty Larsen	UNL	Exec liaison
Liz Beach	Palmyra	Member
Toni Rasmussen	Wayne	Member
Amy Soll	Bancroft-Rosalie	Member
Adam Theer	Lawrence-Nelson	Member
Breann Zimmer	Nebraska Ag Academy	Member

What changed — 2027–2030 rev 1 EDITORIAL

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