

National FFA Horse CDE helpful hints for competing teams

Pre-Convention

1. Make sure you review the scantrons for the competition with your team to make sure they are familiar with the layout and proper marking of the scantrons. Parts of the team activity will use a virtual scantron, but it is the same as a paper copy.
2. Please review the official dress code for competitions. While skirts are appropriate official dress, your team members may be more comfortable during the live judging to wear dress slacks.
3. There are lots of practice resources available, see the official handbook for our recommendations. There are plenty of valuable free videos on many of the classes on YouTube as well as the other practice resources.
4. Make sure you review the specific judging class rules with your students prior to the competition. Specifically, what is a disqualification/zero score/off pattern versus what are just penalties in the scored classes. One example is in reining 5 spins when the patterns say 4 spins is a zero score and must place below all other qualifying scores.
5. New since 2024, we will be slightly changing the written exam to be more horse knowledge inclusive versus just basic colors, breeds, markings, and equipment. See the handbook for more details on the written exam and scoring.
6. New since 2024, we removed two team activities and replaced them with two more individual video judging classes of “keep/cull or in more horse terms “advance to finals/don’t make the finals”. These classes in 2025 will be Working Cow Horse-Cow Work Only and Hunter Hack. We will show 8 video runs of each class and the students will be expected to select their top 4 runs to “keep/advance”. The classes are scored based on 50 points for selecting the correct top 4 runs where selected 1 or more of the runs that shouldn’t advance will result in a lower score than 50 points. AQHUniversity has some excellent video resources on both classes and there are numerous YouTube videos on them as well.

Convention

1. Remember that students are not allowed to bring rulebooks or any pre-printed materials into the competition. Blank paper and blank steno pads are acceptable. Any materials needed to evaluate the classes will be provided by the National FFA committee, i.e. (official scoresheets for scored classes like reining, ranch riding, etc.). Students are not required to use the official scoresheets, but they are provided for the teams that wish to use them.
2. Get your badges from the National FFA prior to the competition day. Security at the competition sites is usually very strict on having the badges, so it can delay getting to the competition.
3. Please review all locations for the event and plan for traffic to both the live judging and team activity portions as we have had teams miss the start of competition due to this issue.
4. Students that bring backpacks and cell phones to the competition will need to turn them in prior to the start of competition and they will be returned to them at the completion of the competition day. It is preferable to keep backpacks with the advisors for ease of handling at the competition.
5. We will provide a box lunch on the day of the live judging, but we do suggest having breakfast before the day starts as the timing of the boxed lunches will be after the video judging, live judging and written exam.
6. Many team are not properly prepared for the timing of the oral reasons presentations. Students are divided into 4 main groups and given instructions on the order of reasons that they will present. There are large whiteboards at the front of the preparation area so students can see the order of reasons and class order. Students are given approximately 40 minutes after all students have received their lunch before we start with the first student's oral reasons. We then rotate through all students in that group for the first set and after completion of that set of oral reasons, we immediately start listening to the second set of reasons. Students basically will have 35-40 minutes between each set of reasons to prepare the next set. Students will give 4 sets of reasons in a relatively short amount of time, so practicing that timing before convention will be very helpful.