



RANCH HORSE

Project Guide

The 4-H Motto

“Learn To Do By Doing”

The 4-H Pledge

I pledge:

My **head** to clearer thinking,

My **heart** to greater loyalty,

My **hands** to larger service,

My **health** to better living,

For my club, my community,

my country, and my world.

Published by 4-H Alberta for the 4-H community.

For more information or to find other helpful resources,
please visit the 4-H Alberta website at www.4hab.com.

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INTRODUCTION

The 4-H Ranch Horse Project is for 4-H members who are planning to follow in their parent's footsteps and help out on the ranch, as well as those aspiring to become ranch hands. What better way to learn these skills than through experience? This project is designed to complement Horsemanship Levels 4 - 7.

To be good ranch hands, riders must have good horsemanship skills. Likewise, a working ranch horse should be considered an athletic machine that must be cared for properly to accomplish its job.

Ranch horses must be safe and sane, and they must have more reining ability or "handle" than the average horse. They must walk and jump out and move when necessary. They must possess "cow savvy" (ability to outthink a cow).

These horses also need to have good stamina or "bottom," and be extremely sure-footed.

The Ranch Horse project brings together aspects of a trail horse, a reining horse, a working cow or cutting horse, and a rope horse. In addition, those enrolled in the project will learn the basics of cow psychology.



**4-H Branch
Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development**

Ranch activities are not confined to the “pen,” so one of the first objectives is to teach the riders to handle the outdoors. Riding uphill, downhill, in the timber, in the open, and around water are skills that can only be developed by doing.

Correct body position, trusting your horse, riding in a group, “cowboy etiquette”, and many other lessons can be taught, while emphasizing safety in the saddle. Any open area can become your “working pen” to develop and work on maneuvers or basic horsemanship skills.

Most riders may want to develop their skills to compete in team penning or the working cow horse competition. To begin this learning process, the rider and the horse must develop a basic command of “cow psychology”. This should be done first with slow, quiet cattle in a small pen. Have the rider get their horse used to cattle by just riding around, and then through a bunch. Then, when the horse and cattle are calm, have the rider move the cattle around the pen where directed. All the while the rider is moving in, around, and through the herd, he or she will be learning what makes a cow move and what position allows them to stop.

Learning the basics of positioning in a cow’s space and the reactions the cow makes is the first step in learning to handle cattle. Working with cattle can be made easy by watching the position of the cow’s head and “reading” their intent. Then, encourage movement in the desired direction and discourage any thought of movement in the opposing direction (through the position and speed of your horse). The key is to go slowly and observe, then slowly try to get the reaction the rider wants.

Once the rider and horse are confident in a small pen, move to a larger pen or arena and start over. Ride through and around the herd and observe, then move the whole herd slightly in the direction you want, then a little farther and work up to moving them around the arena. After the rider is confident and competent in working the herd, you can start cutting an animal from the herd and moving it around a little at a time until you work up to controlling a single animal away from the herd in any area of the arena. When starting cutting, it is easier for both the horse and rider to stay balanced if the rider uses two hands on the reins.

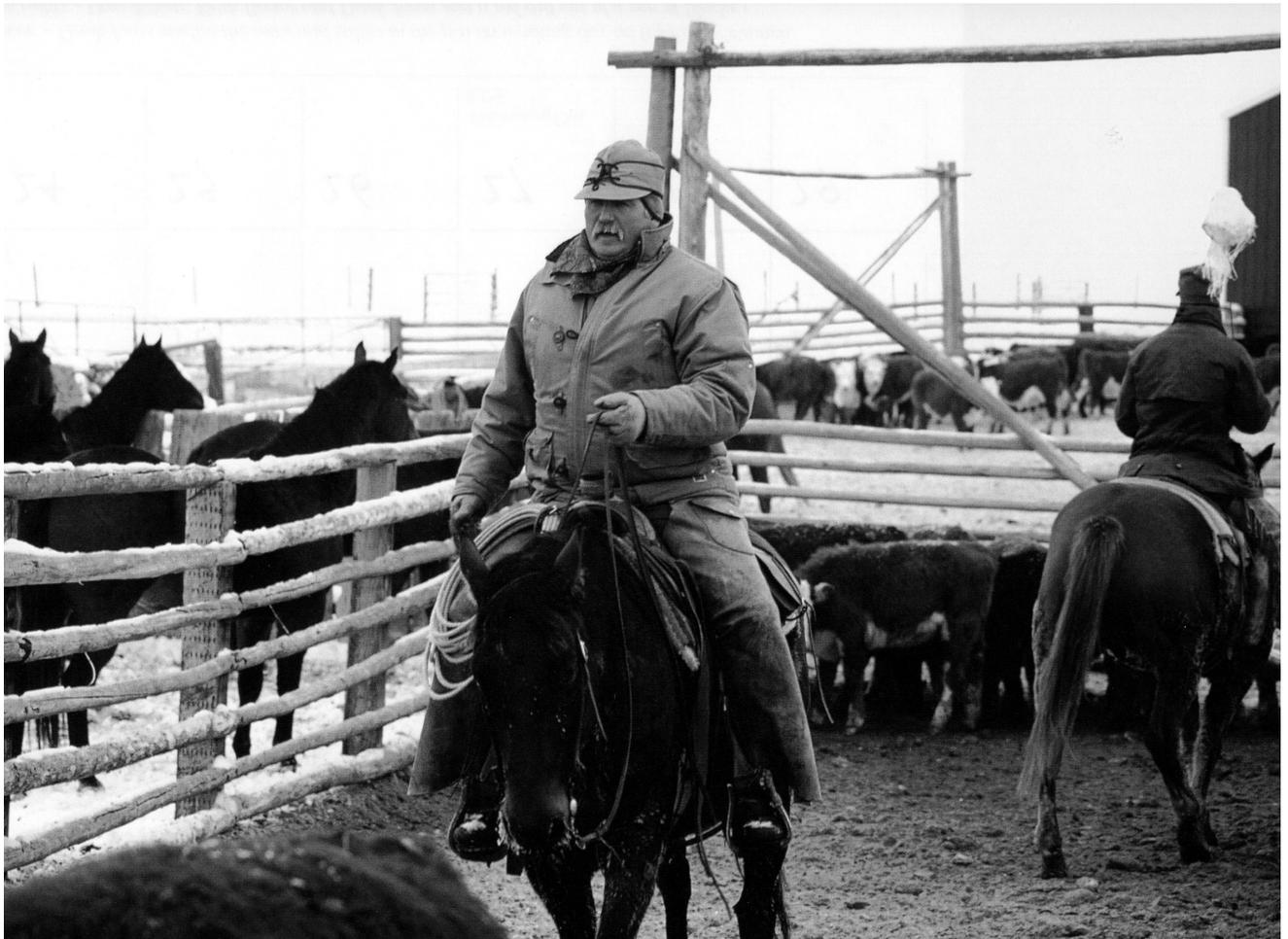
Most horses we work with today have no experience with cattle, so this step-by-step approach is critical for their development as well as the riders.

Roping is another aspect of the ranch horse project that takes more preparation to achieve. This is a good subject for meetings when it is too cold or too wet for horseback activities. No member should be allowed to handle a rope on a horse until they are comfortable and somewhat accomplished on the ground. The basic head loops for horned and polled cattle as well as heel loops will take time and lots of practice on the ground, so starting early will make everyone happier when it comes time to be on horseback in the spring.

A basic rule of thumb is that before a rider handles a rope from their horse, they must be able to catch the dummy 10 times in a row. This allows for learning and becoming comfortable with basic rope handling, coiling and building a loop. “Flagging” (first from the ground, then from the horse’s back), can help prepare the horse for the introduction to the rope. Before ever handling a rope from a horse, we must know if the horse is comfortable with a rope. Starting from the ground, be sure the horse is comfortable with a rope being rubbed over its body and around its legs. Working in a confined area or round pen once we are satisfied with our horse being comfortable with the rope, we need to determine if it is comfortable with a rope being swung on the ground before we proceed to try from a mounted position. When we are certain our horse is “rope broke,” we can move on to mounted dummy roping.

Proper rope handling, without interfering with our horse, and proper dally procedures are our next obstacles. The more natural and instinctive this becomes while practicing on the dummy, the more success with safety can be expected when we start on live cattle.

A good ranch horse must be able to go through a gate, ground tie or hobble, stand while the rider is mounting or dismounting (from both sides), be dependable and allow its rider to efficiently care for the livestock on the ranch.



PROJECT MATERIALS

Several resources are available for members enrolled in this project. Each resource has valuable information for certain phases of the horse's schooling. It is not necessary, however, for each member to have all the materials. By this time, you should have put sufficient work into your horse project to consider starting a reference library for the future. We suggest that clubs build a reference library for their members' use.

- Breaking and Training the Stock Horse - O.O. Williamson
- The Cowboy at Work - Fay Ward
- Cow Sense - video by Day Break Films
- There's Roping To Do - video by Joe Walters
- Ranch Roping Video - 3 video series by Buck Brahnaman
- Western Horseman Books - well shod team roping, reining, calf roping, health problems of the horse, cutting.
- Local veterinarians, agriculturists, cowboys and farriers

This project can be enhanced by:

- Completing each level of this project.
- Participating in your Ranch Horse show.
- Giving a demonstration about some part of this project.
- Helping younger members become more proficient ranch hands with dependable ranch horses.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Boxing

Holding a steer at one end of the pen without letting it run down the fence.

Breakaway Roping

Using a breakaway honda or having the lariat tail secured to the horn with a breakaway string.

Burner

Leather, plastic or rawhide cover over the end of the honda to prevent wear on rope.

Coils

The loops of rope in your non-throwing hand.

Dally

The action of wrapping your rope around the saddle horn to secure a hold.

Drag

The position you ride while moving a herd of cattle. Located at the rear of the herd, pushing the herd forward.

Flank

The position you ride while moving a herd of cattle. Located at the side of the herd towards the rear keeping the herd moving and together.

Flagging

Procedure used to desensitize the horse to movement, sound and touch.

Tied Hard and Fast

Tying, not dallying, your rope to the saddle horn so there is no give.

Honda

The eye at the end of the rope in which the other end of the rope is threaded through to form a loop.

Intramuscular

An injection that is given deep into the muscle.

Logging

The dragging of an object (for example, log, post, tire, etc.), to accustom your horse to pulling. Starting with a light object and increasing the weight.

Point

The position you ride while moving a herd of cattle. Located at the side of the herd towards the front setting the herd's pace or speed, direction and keeping the herd together.

Slack

The extra rope between you and the animal you just roped.

Slip or Running Rope

Allowing your rope to slip through your dallies to release the amount of tension on the animal.

Spoke

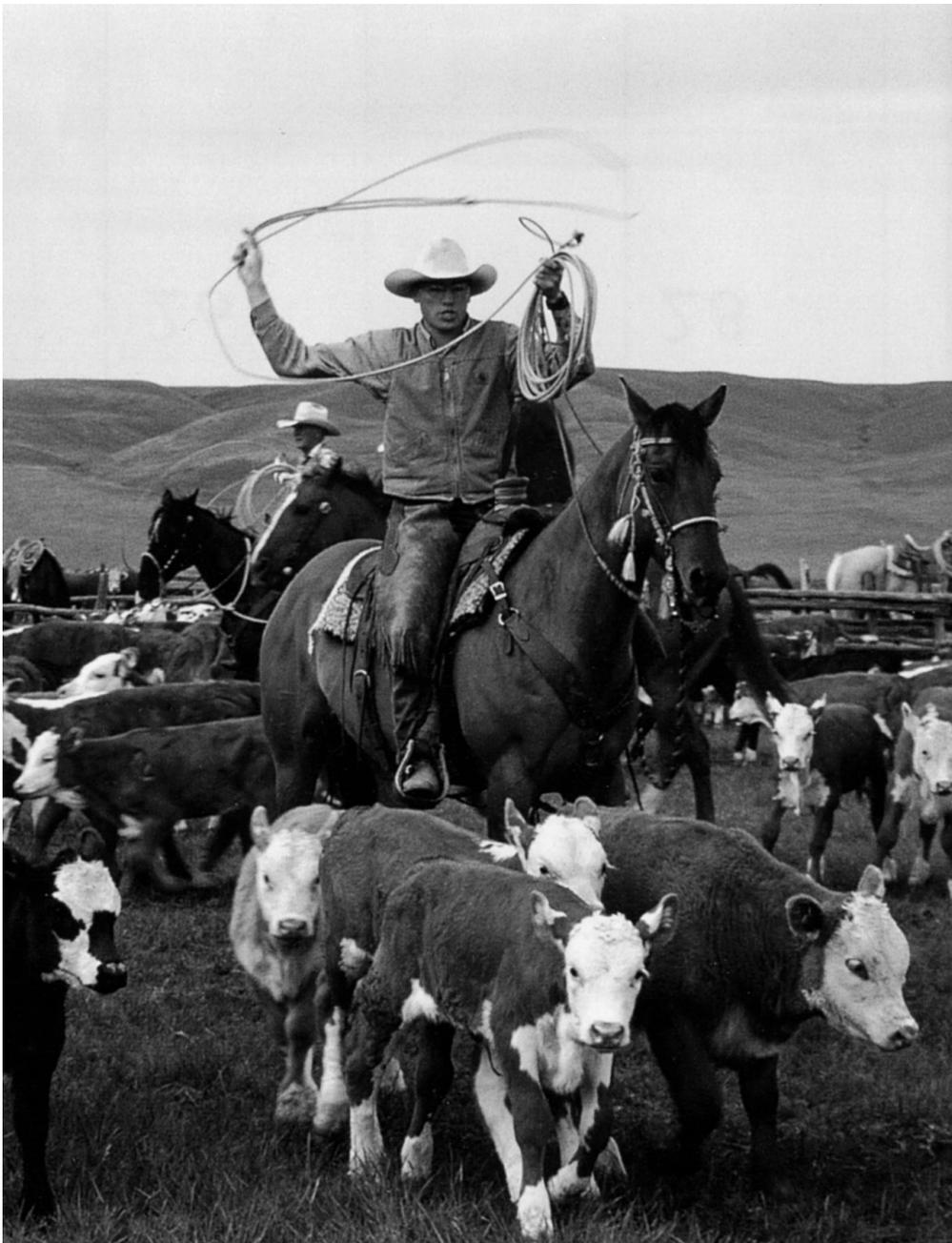
The distance between the honda and your hand.

Subcutaneous

An injection that is given under the skin but not into the muscle.

Calf Cradle

A squeeze for calves that flips on its side for branding or treating, also known as a “calf table”.



4-H RANCH HORSE COMPETITION

Mandatory requirements for the Ranch Horse competition are as follows:

- Open and close a swinging gate
- Flying lead changes
- Logging
- Walking over obstacles
- Balanced stop
- Roll back
- Back up
- Dismounted dummy roping
- Riders must ride with one hand (unless switching hands for gates or roping)

Optional:

- Slicker
- Cattle work
- Cattle roping
- Mounted dummy roping
- Trailer loading
- Ground tying and/or hobbling
- Time limits
- Any other maneuver left to the discretion of the judge or committee.

The Ranch Horse Competition is an optional activity, but will enhance the Ranch Horse project.

LEVEL ONE: DISMOUNTED ABILITIES

- Describe basic nutrition to maintain an idle horse.
- Describe basic facilities for a horse.
- Describe the equipment necessary for a ranch horse and their proper adjustments.
- Describe proper western attire.
- Describe the care of equipment; cleaning leather, saddle pads, cinches, etc.
- Open, walk through and close gates properly while leading your horse.
- Describe where you would be and what you would be doing if you were riding drag while moving cattle.
- Demonstrate simple equipment replacement and repairs: reins, latigos, halter, cinch, etc.
- From the ground, rope heading and heeling dummies (for example 4/5 or 9/10 times).
- Explain what is meant by "logging" and when it would be used.
- Accustom your horse to the rope while dismounted.
- Describe what you would pack in an emergency fencing kit.

Evaluator's signature

Date

LEVEL ONE: MOUNTED ABILITIES

- Execute a proper lead in a left circle and a right lead in a right circle.
- Demonstrate a simple lead change while loping in a figure 8.
- Execute right and left 90 degree turns on the haunches, demonstrating proper leg aids.
- At a walk, demonstrate a figure 8 pattern using one hand on the reins and proper leg aids.
- Using your indirect rein and your supporting direct rein (if needed) and proper leg aid, circle both directions at a jog.
- Help bring in a herd of cattle (10 or more) riding drag.
- Quietly follow a steer (or a cow / calf pair) around the pasture.
- Accustom your horse to the rope by swinging, throwing and walking over the loop.
- Rope a dummy from the horse while standing (do not dally).
- Demonstrate the aids to have your horse leg yield left and right (turn on the forehand and two track).
- Back your horse 8 - 10 steps, showing a fluid two-beat diagonal gait.
- Ride a straight line across the pasture, away from fences.
- Execute an extended trot while posting with proper diagonals (both directions).

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LEVEL TWO: DISMOUNTED ABILITIES

- Describe a basic first aid kit and emergency treatments for two types of wounds or illness of a horse.
- Demonstrate ways of safely tying a horse in a pasture or range.
- Demonstrate safe and secure ways of carrying equipment and supplies.
- Describe subcutaneous injections and the locations they would be administered.
- Describe intramuscular injections and the locations they would be administered.
- Identify basic tools and equipment for doctoring livestock and demonstrate their proper use.
- Condition your horse to accept a rain slicker.
- At a branding, work on the ground. If using a calf table, push the calves up to the chute. If dragging calves in with horses, wrestle and hold calves.

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LEVEL TWO: MOUNTED ABILITIES

- Help round up large herd (50+) for branding or fall work.
- In a large open field or pasture lope a large fast circle and a small slower circle in both directions, showing correct leads.
- Lope in a circle in both directions using indirect rein (and supporting direct rein if needed) and using proper leg aids.
- At a walk drag a log, tire or railway tie.
- Drag a log, tire or railway tie while backing at least 10 feet.
- Head rope the dummy while riding at a walk, trot and lope, then heel rope the dummy at a walk, trot and lope.
- Execute right and left 180 degree turns on the haunches, demonstrating proper leg yielding.
- Dally and undally under load (using a person pulling on the rope).
- Demonstrate your ability to breakaway rope the head and breakaway rope the heel (but don't dally).
- Execute a rollback on a fence using indirect and supporting direct reins with proper leg aids.
- Demonstrate safe riding on steep hills, side hills, boggy areas, muddy areas, through brush and shallow water.
- Ride quietly through a herd of cows.
- Side pass, both directions.
- Demonstrate how to make quiet and smooth transitions from walk to lope to walk.
- Open and close a swinging gate while mounted.

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LEVEL THREE: DISMOUNTED ABILITIES

- Explain proper nutrition for the working ranch horse.
- Explain basic hoof care.
- Describe when to shoe a ranch horse and describe at least two types of shoes used.
- Explain and demonstrate how to make an emergency rope halter.
- Demonstrate reading brands and brand locations and fill out a manifest for both horses and cattle.
- At a branding or fall round up, inoculate calves or steers, etc.
- Describe how to hobble train your horse.
- Explain where you would be on a cattle drive if you were riding point and what your job would be.
- Safely load and unload your horse from a trailer.
- Control and box a steer (or cow) at the end of the arena while dismounted.

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LEVEL THREE: MOUNTED ABILITIES

- Run a straight line, stop square, back up straight.
- Complete flying lead changes, loping fast and slow, both directions.
- Lope a circle both directions using one hand.
- Put on and take off rain slicker while mounted.
- Safely lead another horse from your horse.
- Execute a rollback, using the fence and using one hand.
- Round up a large herd (50+) while riding point.
- Drag a log while backing and side passing left to right.
- Control and box a single steer (or cow) on the end wall of the arena and hold for 30 seconds.
- Head a steer that is loose in an open arena, dally and hold, then release dally.
- Heel a steer for a header.

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LEVEL FOUR: DISMOUNTED ABILITIES

- Report on the humane treatment of livestock and the rights of the rancher.
- Describe problems in cattle that warrant cattle culling.
- Describe proper treatment and symptoms in cattle for foot rot, pink eye, bloat and pneumonia.
- Properly trim your horses feet.
- Describe at least four health symptoms you would routinely check your herd for while riding through it.

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LEVEL FOUR: MOUNTED ABILITIES

- At a branding, heel calves and drag them in (if available) or if using a calf table, demonstrate safe and proper knowledge of each job involved.
- Pasture rope for treating a sick steer (or cow) (heeling). Always pasture rope with an experienced partner.
- Pasture rope for treating a sick steer (or cow) (heading). Always pasture rope with an experienced partner.
- Cut and drive selected cows or pairs.
- Drive steer down the long wall of fence, run past, and turn animal in the opposite direction (complete maneuver once in each direction).

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