



REINING

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

Acknowledgements:

The 4-H Alberta Program would like to extend a special thank you to Dan Duckering of Stony Plain for reviewing the Alberta 4-H Reining Member Guide.

Cover Photo by:

Digital Sports Photography

Graphic Design by:

Perpetual Notion Inc www.perpetualnotion.ca

Revised June 2005

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INTRODUCTION

Assessment Tools

The reining horse project is for 4-H members who want to train horses and ride in reining competitions. It is recommended that members and their horses have some advanced riding skills and lots of experience before enrolling in this project. Horses used in this project should be athletic and have a willing attitude combined with training so that it allows a rider to handle it, controlling all of its working parts. Reining patterns are made up of very specific components that the horse and rider will be expected to do.

It is important for Western riders to develop the ability to ride properly with one hand and to use a leverage bit correctly. Members are encouraged to develop the ability to ride with one hand using a transitional bit, then a leverage bit. Levels 1 and 2 may be completed with two hands with either a snaffle or transitional bit. By Level 3, they should be using a transitional bit and begin using one hand, though some maneuvers (such as lateral movements) may still require two hands (depending on the training of the horse). By Level 4, members should be performing all of the assessments with one hand using a leverage bit. This is not a strict requirement, as it will depend on both the horse and the rider safety first!! In some instances it is better to complete a task well with two hands than to complete a task poorly using one hand. This requires some discretion, but with the recognition of the importance of Western tradition using one hand.

Project Resources

The following resources are recommended for members enrolled in this project. It is not necessary for each member to have all the materials. We suggest that clubs build a reference library for the members' use.

“Reining to Win” and “Reining & Training”: by Dell Hendricks (VHS & DVD)

“Good as Gold Reining” Series: by Craig Schmearsal and Shawn Florida (VHS)

“Reining Patterns – Volumes 1 & 2” : by Todd Bergen and John Slack (VSH)

The Reining Horse Project

A reining horse is an athlete and should have a body that boasts strength and agility. They are a working horse, expected to make quick, fast turns, smooth sliding stops and travel with collection. They must also possess a disposition that readily accepts training and responds well to control.

Basic Training

The horse's body must be supple to perform the basic reining maneuvers: circle, stop, spin, roll back, change leads and back up. With a supple body, a rider should be able to control their horse's every movement with their fingertips and legs. The horse should move easily with light aids. The suggested resources have many excellent suppling exercises that a rider can work with on their horse. The more you work at it, the more easily you will be able to control your horse with light aids.

EQUIPMENT

Riding Surfaces

As with any riding, it is important that the rider be concerned about the riding surfaces they expect their horse to perform on. An ideal arena for reining horses would have a level and well packed base with 8 to 10 cm of loose sand. This would provide a safe and effective surface for reining horses to perform their required maneuvers. If the base is too loose and too deep, there is a risk of strain to the horse's tendons and ligaments. And, if the base is too shallow and hard-packed, it is hard on the horse's bones and joints.

The ideal riding area would be 35 by 70 meters.

Horseshoes

Horseshoes and properly trimmed feet are an important consideration for reining horses. Their feet should be in balance with their conformation. Special shoes (sliding plates) are shoes specifically designed for reining horses. Shoes with trailers (extensions of the shoe beyond the normal shoe) on the rear feet can also help to guide the flight of the rear foot during a sliding stop. Such shoes can help the horse to perform the maneuvers asked of them in a reining pattern. These shoes help to ensure that the horse will land level on the ground and be able to slide.

Spurs

Spurs are aids to enhance signals to your horse. Riders should learn to wear and ride with spurs so that the spurs become a natural extension of their heels. Spurs should not be too severe. They should have enough rowels with dull points so that the horse will move off without being scared. Spurs should never be used to inflict pain or make the horse scared. Spurs should be used as an aid to develop respect for the rider's leg.

Saddles

The reining horse performs very athletic maneuvers. A saddle should allow the rider to adjust their body position to stay in balance with their horse. The rider also wants to be able to easily cue their horse with their legs, so less bulk in the sides and fenders of a saddle will maximize the leg aids. The stirrup leathers should also be flexible to allow forward and backward leg motion. The seat in the saddle should keep you away from the cantle and position you with your feet underneath you. This will help you to feel the movement of the horse underneath you.

Bits

The bit you use and the way it is adjusted influences the pressure points on the horse's mouth and face. However, your hands on the reins have the greatest effect on the bit in your horse's mouth. Don't use a bit that is too harsh on the pressure points of your horse if you do not have the ability to use it with sensitive enough hands. A snaffle may be a good idea for starting out with two hands as you and your horse learn the reining maneuvers.

Protective Leg Gear

Because of the work that reining horses do, protective leg gear can be important for their comfort and safety. Splint boots, bell boots, skid boots and knee guards are recommended equipment for any reining horse enthusiast.

RULES AND SCORING

Rules

(National Reining Horse Association (NRHA) Handbook, 2002 edition, page 63)

To rein a horse is not only to guide him, but also to control his every movement. The best-reined horse should be willingly guided or controlled with little or no apparent resistance and dictated to completely. Any movement on his own must be considered a lack of control. All deviations from the exact written patterns must be considered a lack of/or temporary loss of control and therefore a fault that must be marked down according to the severity of deviation. After deducting all faults, set here within, against execution of the pattern and the horse's overall performance, credit should be given for smoothness, finesse, attitude, quickness and authority of performing various maneuvers, while using controlled speed which raises the difficulty level and makes him more exciting and pleasing to watch for an audience. The official guideline for the application for the rules for judging shall be as specified in the NRHA Judges' Guide.

Scoring

(National Reining Horse Association (NRHA) Handbook)

The scoring will be on a basis of zero (0) to Infinity, with 70 denoting an average performance. The individual maneuvers are scored in ½ point increments from a low of – 1½ to a high of + 1½ with a score of zero (0) denoting a maneuver that is correct with no degree of difficulty.

For specific rules and penalties, a copy of the National Reining Horse Association Rule book is at www.nrha.com

BASIC MANEUVERS OF A REINING HORSE

The following is quoted from the National Reining Horse Association (NRHA) Handbook

Judges are required to score a reining horse based on its execution of the maneuver groups required in each pattern. All NRHA patterns are divided into seven or eight maneuver groups. The maneuvers required of a reining horse are as follows:

Walk-in

The walk-in brings the horse from the gate to the center of the arena to begin its pattern. The horse should appear relaxed and confident. Any action, which may create the appearance of intimidation, including starting and stopping, or checking is a fault which shall be marked down according to the severity in the first maneuver score.

Stops

Stops are the act of slowing the horse from a lope to a stop position by bringing the hind legs under the horse in a locked position, sliding on the hind feet. The horse should enter the stop position by flexing the back, and bringing the hind legs further under the body while maintaining forward motion and cadence with the front legs. Throughout the stop, the horse should continue in a straight line while maintaining ground contact with the hind feet. The horse should not have his head thrown out in front of him or be gapping his mouth. He should show a good expression with respect and trust for the riders' hands.

Spins

Spins are a series of 360° turns, executed over a stationary (inside) hind leg. Propulsion for the spin is supplied by the outside rear leg, body weight and front legs, and contact should be made with the ground and a front leg. The location of hindquarters should be fixed at the start of the spin and maintained throughout the spins. It is helpful for a judge to watch for the horse to remain in the same location, rather than watching for a stationary inside leg. This allows for easier focus on other elements of the spin (i.e. cadence, attitude, smoothness, finesse, and speed).

Rollbacks

Rollbacks are the 180° reversal of forward motion completed by running to a stop, rolling (turning) the shoulders back to the opposite direction *over the hocks* and departing in a canter, as one continuous motion. The NRHA Handbook states no hesitation; however, a slight pause to regain footing or balance should not be deemed hesitation. The horse should not step ahead or backup prior to rolling back.

Circles

Circles are maneuvers at the lope, of designated size and speed, which demonstrate control, willingness to guide, and degree of difficulty in speed and speed changes. Circles must at all times be run in the geographical area of the arena specified in the pattern description and must have a common center point. There must be a clearly defined difference in the speed and size of a small, slow circle, and a large, fast circle. The speed and size of small slow right circles should be similar to the small, slow left circles. The speed and size of the large, fast right circles should be similar to the large, fast left circles.

Backups

A backup is a maneuver requiring the horse to be moved in a reverse motion in a straight line a required distance; at least 10 feet with cadence and fluidity.

Hesitate

To hesitate is the act of demonstrating the horse's ability to stand in a relaxed manner at a designated time in a pattern. In a hesitation, the horse is required to remain motionless and relaxed. All NRHA patterns require a hesitation at the end of the patterns to demonstrate to the judge(s) the completion of the pattern.

Lead Changes

Lead changes are the act of changing the leading legs of the front and rear pairs of legs, at a lope, when changing the direction traveled. The lead change must be executed at a lope with no change of gait or speed and be performed in the exact geographical position in the arena specified in the pattern description. The change of front and rear leads must take place within the same stride to avoid penalty.

Run Downs and Run-Arounds

Run downs are runs through the middle of the arena, and run-arounds are run along the side and ends of the arena. Run downs and run-arounds should demonstrate control and gradual increase in speed to the stop.

LEVEL ONE: **DISMOUNTED ABILITIES**

Assessment Tools

- Describe the equipment needed for a reining horse project.
- Describe a safe riding surface and explain the importance of this.
- Explain what a balanced and level hoof should be like and how this helps a horse.
- Describe the horseshoes used for reining and how they help a horse with the maneuvers of a reining pattern.
- Describe a first aid kit for a horse.
- Describe how to identify the source of lameness in a horse.

Evaluator's signature

Date

LEVEL ONE: MOUNTED ABILITIES

- Demonstrate that you can ride safely with spurs at a walk, jog, lope and gallop.
- Demonstrate lateral (horizontal) flexion by flexing your horse's head to the side, while still facing straight forward, at a halt and walk.
- Demonstrate longitudinal (vertical) flexion by tucking your horse's head into its chest at a halt and walk.
- Demonstrate leg yielding at a walk with hands stationary.
- Demonstrate basic collection at a lope in a circle.
- Demonstrate smooth transitions from a walk to lope to walk, picking up specified leads.
- Back in a straight line 6 paces with collection and fluid two-beat movement.
- Identify the lead of your horse at a lope by feel (not looking down).
- 180° turn over the haunches and 180° turn on the forehand in both directions (basis for 360° turn).
- Demonstrate a collected stop.
- Walk forward 10 paces, stop, then back 4 paces and turn 180° over the haunches.

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LEVEL TWO: **DISMOUNTED ABILITIES**

Assessment Tools

- Describe the desirable conformation traits of a reining horse.

- Explain what a “supple” horse is and describe two exercises that can help develop this quality.

- Explain what “counter canter” means.

- List the eight main maneuvers of a reining pattern.

- Explain what “speed control” means and why it is important to develop this in a reining horse.

- Describe how a desirable back up is performed.

- Explain the nutritional and energy requirements of a performing reining horse compared to maintaining an idle mature horse, and describe how you feed your horse.

- Explain the routine a horse owner might follow when introducing their horse to any change of feed (such as grass in the spring).

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LEVEL TWO: MOUNTED ABILITIES

Assessment Tools

- Lope a large fast circle and 2 large slow circles (demonstrating speed control).
- Execute a 360° turn on the haunches and forehand in both directions.
- Execute a rollback, entering at a walk, pause, back 2 steps, rollback and exit at a jog.
- Demonstrate riding a counter-canter by executing a figure 8 at a lope without changing leads.
- Either lope in a large circle and execute a half-pass in (or out), to a halt.
- Ride a two-track in both directions.

Evaluator's signature

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LEVEL THREE: DISMOUNTED ABILITIES

Assessment Tools

- Identify the major penalties for a reining competition.
- Explain the scoring system for a reining competition.
- Explain how to clean and care for leather equipment.
- Demonstrate how to apply leg bandages to a horse.
- Describe the symptoms of colic and explain what to do if you suspect your horse has colic.

Evaluator's signature

Date

LEVEL THREE: MOUNTED ABILITIES

Assessment Tools

- Lope one large fast circle and two small slow circles in both directions (circles must be centered in the arena).

- Execute a lead change (from a left to a right, or right to a left) counter canter (in the centre of a figure 8). Drop to a halt after completing the figure 8.

- Execute a two-foot slide stop and back 5 paces, with no hesitation.

- Execute two 360° turns on the haunches, in both directions with some speed (basis for the spin).

- Enter at a jog, execute a rollback and exit at a lope.

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LEVEL FOUR: **DISMOUNTED ABILITIES**

Assessment Tools

- Draw and describe NRHA pattern 5 or 6.
- Explain how to prepare your horse for a competition.
- Explain how horses can develop navicular.
- List the 5 yearly vaccinations that a horse should receive.
- Identify where a horse can be given an injection and describe how to give a horse a needle.

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Date

LEVEL FOUR: **MOUNTED ABILITIES**

Assessment Tools

- Execute NRHA pattern 5 or 6 with no major (5 point) penalties.

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Date

