

Cowboy Dressage®



Rules & Guidelines

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COWBOY DRESSAGE® RULES AND GUIDELINES

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RULES AND GUIDELINES

Riding “The Court” with *Simple* Rules, Objectives & Requirements

Appointments and Attire

1. Western tack must be used in all classes. Entries shall be shown with stock saddle but silver equipment will not count over a good working outfit. All saddles, with exception to side saddles, must have horn to qualify as a western or stock type saddle. Anyone not showing in this type of saddle will be disqualified.
2. There is no discrimination against any standard Western bit. A standard Western bit is defined as having a shank with a maximum length overall of 8 1/2” The mouthpiece consists of a metal bar 5/16” to 3/4” in diameter as measured one inch in from the shank. The bars may be inlaid but must be smooth or latex wrapped. Nothing must protrude below the mouthpiece (bar) such as extensions, prongs or rivets designed to intimidate the horse. Rollers attached to the center of the bit are acceptable, and may extend below the bar. Jointed mouthpieces are acceptable and may consist of two or three pieces and may have one or two joints. A three piece mouthpiece may include a connecting ring of 1 1/4” or less in diameter or a connecting flat bar of 3/8,” to 3/4” (measured top to bottom with a maximum length of 2”), which lies flat in the mouth, or a roller or port as described herein. The port must be no higher than 3 1/2” maximum with roller(s) and covers acceptable.
3. Jointed mouthpieces, half breeds and spade bits are standard. Slip or gag bits, rigid donut mouthpieces and flat polo mouthpieces are prohibited. Roping bits with both reins connected to a single ring at center of cross bar must not be used. Reins must be attached to each shank. Any rein design or other device which increases the effective length and thereby the leverage of the shank of a standard western bit is prohibited. Anything that alters the intended use of equipment as provided for in the description of appointments for a given class is considered to be an artificial appliance.
4. A standard snaffle bit is to have smooth bars that have no less than 3/8” diameter. The 3/8’ measurement is taken 1” from the snaffle ring. The bars may graduate to a smaller size near center of bit. The rings may be from 2” to 4” outside diameter of either the loose type, O ring, eggbutt or dee or center mounted without cheeks. If a curb strap is used it must be attached below the reins. At this time the snaffle bit can be single or double jointed.
5. A hackamore includes a bosal rounded in shape and constructed of flexible braided rawhide or leather and must have a flexible nonmetallic core attached to a suitable headstall with maximum diameter of 3/4” at the cheek. Attached reins may be of hair, rope or leather. Other material of any kind must not be used in conjunction with a bosal, i.e., steel, metal or chains (Exception: Smooth plastic electrical tape is acceptable). Loping hackamore is allowed.
6. Horses must not be shown with artificial appliances that would tend to alter their performance; no material of any kind, including tongue ties, may be placed in the horse’s mouth other than a standard Western bit or a snaffle bit. Curb chains and leather chin straps may be used but must be flat and at least 1/2” in width and lie flat against the jaws of the horse. Wire, rawhide, metal or other substance must not be used in conjunction with or as part of the leather chin strap, or curb chains. Rounded, rolled, braided or rawhide curb straps are prohibited.

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Horse and Rider Status Definitions

1. Open Rider is defined by:
18 years or older rider **who does** make a living or receive income from training, teaching/lessons or clinics
2. Amateur Rider is defined by:
18 years or older rider **who does not** make a living or receive income from training, teaching/lessons or clinics
3. Junior or Rider is defined by:
17 years and under rider
4. Silver Rider is defined by:
Any rider 60 years or older
5. Lead Line rider is 7 years and under.

Recommendations for Showing the Younger Horse.

It has always been our goal to have as few rules as possible. The topic of showing 3 year olds under saddle is an issue that keeps coming up. In a world of high end competition, futurities and high dollar pay outs the horse often suffers.

Because Cowboy Dressage does honor the horse, here is what we wish from our exhibitors. Choose the moral high ground. Do what is best for your horse. The walk/jog divisions, walk/ jog/ lope #1 and #2 and partnership tests are more appropriate for a young horses. The more advanced tests are not.

Be patient, be kind, be thoughtful. Your horse will thank you.

Horse and Rider Status Definitions

Age of the horse - The Cowboy Dressage Horses age is based on January 1 of that calendar year, regardless of the month foaled. For example - a horse foaled anytime in the year 2010 is considered one year old on January 1, 2011 and two years old on January 1, 2012.

The Cowboy Dressage World Partners want its Handshake members to consider the age and performance level when choosing tests levels.

REMEMBER - HONOR YOUR HORSE WHAT EVER THE AGE.

Age of the rider - The Cowboy Dressage Riders age is based on January 1 of that calendar year, regardless of the month foaled. For example - a rider foaled anytime in the year 2010 is considered one year old on January 1, 2011 and two years old on January 1, 2012. This rider may show lead line till December 31, 2012, January 1, 2018 this rider is now eight years old. This rider may show in the junior division till December 31, 2017, January 1, 2018 this rider is now eighteen years old. This rider may show in the amateur and open divisions.

REMEMBER - WHAT AN HONOR IT WILL BE IN JANUARY 1, 2070 WHEN YOU BECOME A SILVER RIDER.

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GENERAL

1. Voice commands are allowed as long as softly spoken.
2. Two hands allowed with a curb or a snaffle.
3. No extra points given for one hand.
4. If a rider chooses to ride one handed, they may not switch to two hands at any time during the test. To do so will cause an error each time. Three errors in one test will cause elimination from the class.
5. Rider must sit the working jog.
6. Posting at the free jog is an option.
7. Caller may use microphone.
8. Riders are allowed to pet their horses as a reward.
9. Judges are allowed to have an early morning meeting with exhibitors before the tests begin.
10. You must be 18 years old or over to ride or manage a stallion in any class or on the show grounds.

APPOINTMENTS

1. Two fingers must fit between flat leather or chain curb strap and jaw of horse.
2. Loop and any type western rein is allowed. Rommel reins must be ridden with one hand on the reins, and one hand on the romel – (reins may not be split and ridden two-handed). For “two-rein” Vaquero style horses, please refer to the Vaquero division for the correct way to manage and hold the mecate and romel reins. (added 10/9/15). **The judge should ring the bell to inform the rider that the reins must be ridden one-handed and the judge will post a 10 point deduction under penalties/errors at the bottom of the score sheet, in addition to any other penalties incurred.**
3. Western type saddle with horn to be used. Saddles without a horn are not allowed.
4. Hackamores allowed on any age horse.
5. No bitless bridles, sidepulls, halter or similar devices.
6. One crop or whip is allowed, not to exceed 42 inches in length, including lash. Excessive use will be penalized.
7. Spurs allowed but **excessive use will be penalized.**
8. Cavesons (a nose band) allowed with bit or snaffle. Caveson must be western type, no crank or flash type allowed. Two fingers must fit between caveson and jaw of horse.

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ATTIRE

Mandatory

1. Riders must wear suitable western hat or protective headgear.
2. Long-sleeved shirt with any type collar. Sleeveless or short sleeve attire is not permitted and will receive a penalty of 6 points off their score as stated in #6
3. Trousers, pants, or riding skirt (a one-piece long-sleeved equitation suit is acceptable, provided it includes a collar).
4. Necktie, kerchief, bolo tie or pin (At show committee discretion: in very hot weather the kerchief or scarf may excluded.)
5. Boots are required, no riding type shoes allowed.
6. Any rider not wearing mandatory attire will receive a penalty of 6 points off their score.
7. Any side saddle rider's attire must have a "Western Theme" and Appearance.
8. Approved Safety Riding Helmets are mandatory for all junior riders while competing or riding on the show grounds.
9. No Junior may ride a Stallion.

Optional

1. a vest, jacket, coat and/or sweater may also be worn.
2. Chinks or Chaps
3. Gloves
4. **For Partnership on the ground only** - Adults (18 yrs and older) may choose to wear tennis shoes or other appropriate Equestrian light weight footwear. All juniors (17 and under) must wear boots or Equestrian footwear. No tennis shoes.

OBJECTIVES

Judges will be looking for a horse and rider combination that executes the tests in harmony and partnership. They will be looking for and rewarding the "**soft feel**" between rider and horse. Preparation, Execution, Release, and Relax will be the main criteria that judges will be scoring. Precision, Balance, Cadence, Carriage, Control, and Performance will be of substantial importance but Harmony, **Soft Feel** and Partnership is the goal of Cowboy Dressage® and will be scored accordingly. Any rider who hangs or bangs on a horse's mouth or rides with horse's head behind the vertical or with over flexion will be penalized.

CLARIFICATION ON LIGHT/SOFT CONTACT

1. Light or soft contact does not mean throwing or pitching the reins away and allowing the horse to carry himself on the forehand. It means what is says, Light/Soft contact.
2. **Soft Feel** is achieved when the seat, hands and aids are used correctly. **Soft feel** is the end result of all aids in proper use, balance, rhythm and partnership.

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COWBOY DRESSAGE® FREESTLYE RULES

INTRODUCTION

The Cowboy Dressage® Freestyle truly represents the freedom loved by the western rider, exemplifying the spirit of the American Cowboy.

Cowboy Dressage® maneuvers originate from moves a working western horse must use in performing its duties and have been refined to the high level of competition existing today.

Freestyle Cowboy Dressage® not only provides an opportunity to use these maneuvers creatively, but also to expand them to music by means of choreography. Riders are encouraged to use musical scores to showcase the athletic ability of the horse in a crowd appealing way.

GENERAL RULES

1. All Cowboy Dressage® Rules apply to the Freestyle test – please read the Cowboy Dressage® Rules thoroughly.
2. It is customary to stop and salute the judge at the beginning and end of the Freestyle.
3. The rider must supply 2 CD's with up to 4 minutes of music to show management, along with a list of props, labeled with name, ride time or order of go and entry number. Music and prop list must be left at show office when number is picked up or entries are made.
4. Exhibitors are encouraged to discuss any special equipment with show management prior to the class as to its suitability.
5. Cowboy Dressage® Freestyle may offer an Open and Amateur/Youth Freestyle Division. Show management will reserve the right to run them concurrently or separately.
6. **Use of whips/crops** – only one whip may be carried during a ride. A crop or standard dressage whip may be used. Excessive use of the whip will be penalized.
7. The horse's vision cannot be obstructed by props in anyway at any time.
8. Two riders may show in a freestyle test. Only one will have a number and be judged. The other rider is considered a “prop.”

REQUIREMENTS

Walk Jog Required Maneuvers:

1. A minimum of one (1) 10 Meter circle Working Jog to the left and right.
2. A minimum of one (1) 20 Meter circle Free Jog to the left and right.
3. A minimum of one (1) stop, back 4-6 steps.
4. 20 Meters of Working Walk
5. 20 Meters of Free Walk

Walk Jog Lope Required Maneuvers:

1. A minimum of one (1) turn on the haunches to the left and right.
2. A minimum of one (1) half turn on the forehand to the left and right.
3. A minimum of one (1) stop, back 4-6 steps.
4. A minimum of one (1) lead change at the lope through jog from right to left

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5. A minimum of one (1) lead change at the lope through jog from left to right

Mounted: Exhibitors are only judged astride

Reins: Exhibitors are allowed to use two (2) hands (as well as one or no hands) and any bit or bosal approved by Cowboy Dressage® Rules.

Additional Maneuvers: Additional maneuvers are allowed in a Freestyle and shall be given appropriate credit: rollbacks, speed variations, half pass and leg yield, passage, piaffe, pirouette and tempe changes, etc. Additional repetitions of required maneuvers are permissible, but will only add or subtract from the existing scores already given for the required maneuvers, not as additional scores.

The fact that circles are not required maneuvers does not diminish their importance in providing the exhibitor a method to demonstrate a horse's ability to guide and willingness to be controlled.

Equipment: Equipment used in the Freestyle must adhere to the following standards:

1. All equipment must meet general guidelines regarding Cowboy Dressage® equipment rules.
2. *Exception:* A bridle-less presentation with a neck rope or reins, as long as the neck rope is smooth and loose.
3. Other non-traditional equipment is allowable at show management's discretion.

Time limit: A maximum of four (4) minutes including any Introductions. The time limit begins when the music or introductions starts (whichever is first) and ends when the music stops and salute is given.

Costumes: are permitted but not required. Emphasis is placed on performing the Cowboy Dressage® maneuvers to music. Show management will reserve the right to rule whether a competitor's music or dress may be inappropriate or offensive to the spirit and nature of the show. Show management may also determine the use of special lighting and equipment.

JUDGING

Required Maneuvers:

Required maneuvers in the Freestyle will receive a separate score from 0 - 110 based on Technical Merits utilizing judge's Cowboy Dressage® score sheets specifically designed for the Freestyle.

If a required maneuver is not performed, the resulting score for the Required Maneuvers section will be 0.

Artistic Impression:

Cowboy Dressage® judges score the artistic impression of a performance from 0 - 50 using the following criteria:

1. **Choreography:** The planning and arranging of movements, steps and patterns for dancing in rhythm with the music.
2. **Originality:** Determination if the presentation brings "anything new" to the development of Cowboy Dressage® Freestyle, such as new moves, maneuvers, ways of presenting the required maneuvers, increased difficulty.
3. **Musicality:** how music is used in the presentation to develop the theme or "mood" of the performance. Judged by the presentation's appeal to the senses and the emotional aspects of the

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ride, whether it is serious, humorous, or romantic.

4. **Harmony:** The heart of horse and rider beats as one. Magic occurs between horse and rider that sets them apart. Harmony is more than just function; it is when the pair becomes artistic partners in movement and thought.

Penalty Application:

In any instance where a judge is uncertain as to whether or not a penalty has occurred, the benefit of doubt should always go to the rider.

Eliminations:

The following shall result in a score of 0:

1. fall to the ground by the horse or rider
2. dismount of the rider
3. balking
4. running away where it is obviously not part of the performance
5. equipment failure that delays the pattern even if the failure is part of the costume or a prop, and exceeding the four (4) minute time limit.
6. leaving the Cowboy Dressage® court

The following are allowed and will not be penalized:

1. use of two hands on the reins
2. changing of hands on the reins
3. use of no hands on the reins
4. inclusion of non- traditional, cued, or trained responses. For example, a horse taught to bow as part of the performance is not to be considered a fall to the ground. Since no set pattern is specified in Freestyle, inclusion of maneuvers not required must not be considered a penalty situation.

Breaking a Tie:

1. In the case of a tie for high point awards:

- The highest scoring test of the tied riders will be reviewed and the person with the highest "soft feel" score will prevail.
- If there is a tie with "soft feel", the Harmony and Partnership score will break the tie.
- If a tie continues to exist, the highest scoring test will break the tie.
- If this remains a tie, there will be a TRUE TIE for High Point Award.

2. Example:

- Rider A on Horse A – rides 8 total classes and achieves potential maximum score of 40 points
- Rider B on Horse B – rides 10 total classes and achieves potential maximum score of 40 points
- The highest scored obtained of both riders is selected – (let's say Rider A is 75.023 and Rider B is 79.345)
- The Soft Feel of that highest scoring test is obtained and the tie is broken by that highest score (Rider A 8.0 and Rider B 9.0) – Rider B is the Champion and Rider A is the Reserve

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- If the Soft Feel is a tie, then the Harmony and Partnership Score is utilized to break the tie process as for Soft Feel – should this remain a tie
- Horse/Rider “B” would be awarded by virtue of highest scoring test, and should this remain a tie
- True Tie is awarded.

Equipment:

Judges are asked to apply more liberal guidelines in deciding what equipment or tack is allowable in the Freestyle.

1. All equipment must meet general guidelines regarding Cowboy Dressage® equipment rules.
2. *Exception:* A bridleless presentation with a neck rope or reins, as long as the neck rope is smooth and loose. A judge is encouraged to stop any ride when safety and control becomes a concern.
3. Other non-traditional equipment is allowable at show management’s discretion.

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COWBOY DRESSAGE® GAITED RULES

All gaits show freedom, regularity, suppleness, and activity, with looseness and balance.

The hindquarters are active responding to the subtle aids of the rider, thereby giving life and spirit to the whole of the horses' body. The horse displays a natural and harmonious balance emotionally, mentally and physically. The horse responds with calmness, ease and precision, resulting in lively impulsion and flexibility.

Cadence is the natural result of harmony between horse and rider showing balance, impulsion and fluid yet distinctive steps. Cadence is shown in all variation of gaits and throughout exercises and movements.

The Walk The walk is a marching gait in a regular four time beat. Each foot both leaves and strikes the ground independently. The footfall sequence is left hind, left front, right hind, right front. To create the proper timing, a hind foot is always one-half stride ahead of the front foot. (When the left hind foot first hits the ground the left foreleg is half way through its stride putting the left foreleg hoof even with the right foreleg when the right foreleg is vertical.) The rear legs track straight over the tracks of the front feet. The back foot may reach the track of the front foot on the same side (capping or tracking up) or over step the track of the front foot (over stride). There is a pronounced vertical head nod that begins in the vicinity of the shoulder and involves the whole neck and head, not just the head alone. The regularity combined with full relaxation must be maintained throughout all walk movements.

Working Walk: Four-beat gait with forward reaching steps. The head and neck should swing naturally as a result of a relaxed back and free shoulders. The horse maintains a light contact with the bit with his nose slightly in front of the vertical.

Free Walk: Four beat gait with forward lengthening of steps. The horse is relaxed and allowed by the lengthening of the reins to lower his head and neck and to stretch forward, down and out.

The Intermediate Gait: Each gaited breed has an individual intermediate gait. The intermediate gait of all gaited breeds is a four beat gait. The intermediate gait should show free, active and regular steps. The quality of the intermediate gait is judged by freedom and steadiness. The quality of the intermediate gait originates in a supple back and well engaged hindquarters combined with the ability to maintain the same rhythm and natural balance. The following intermediate gaits are recognized: Intermediate Working and Intermediate Free.

Working Lope: Three beat gait with forward reaching balanced steps. Right Lead- Left Hind, Right Hind and Left Front and Right Front the leading leg. Left Lead - Right Hind, Left Hind and Right Front and Left Front the leading leg. The back is relaxed and the shoulders free with the hind legs stepping forward under the horse. The horse maintains on light contact with the bit with his nose slightly in front of the vertical.

Free Lope: Three beat gait with forward and more lengthening of steps. Right Lead- Left Hind, Right Hind and Left Front and Right Front the leading leg. Left Lead - Right Hind, Left Hind and Right Front and Left Front the leading leg. The horse is relaxed and should be allowed by the lengthening of reins to lower his head and neck but still maintain balance, light contact with the bit with nose slightly in front of the vertical.

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Back (or Reinback): The horse moves backwards in a straight line by moving his legs in diagonal pairs. The horse is backed using light aids and maintains a round, soft outline.

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COWBOY DRESSAGE® PARTNERSHIP ON THE GROUND

Groundwork is the foundation for all horses and riders. Maneuvers on the ground, as in riding maneuvers, are based on straight lines and circles, thus helping to create a lasting partnership. The Youth/Amateur Partnership on the Ground Tests are designed to promote this partnership. As in all of the Cowboy Dressage tests, SOFT FEEL is our mission, encouraging harmony, balance, precision, and relaxation, which should be the end result of our endeavors. Cowboy Dressage World is looking forward to our Youth/Amateur program as it grows and expands in the coming months and years.

- Handlers will be asked to walk and jog their horses on both circles and straight lines.
- Handlers will be expected to guide their horse from both sides and to be able to change sides smoothly, while changing the lead from one hand to the other.
- Each handler/horse combination will be judged on the horse's gaits, soft feel (refer to definition), harmony and partnership, and the handler's guidance and use of the aids.
- ***For Partnership on the ground only*** - Adults (18 yrs and older) may choose to wear tennis shoes or other appropriate Equestrian light weight footwear. All juniors (17 and under) must wear boots or Equestrian footwear. No tennis shoes.

Equipment: Rope halter and lead, or leather halter and lead (no shanks or chains allowed)

Attire for handler: Refer to Cowboy Dressage rules regarding attire for under saddle classes.

Acknowledging the judge: the handler may salute with their free hand, or nod - either is acceptable.

Alignment: The body of the horse is on the line of travel. Example, when coming up center line, the horse is straddling the center line with the handler to the left of the line.

Slack in rope: The handler should have approximately 16 inches of slack in the rope, except when leaving arena after pattern is completed, then the slack can be approximately 3 feet.

Placement of horse in relation to handler: The handler should be next to the horse near where the base of the neck attaches to the shoulder with a respectful distance between the horse and handler. The horse should transition willingly and stay alongside the handler with only voice and subtle body cues.

Lead Line

Lead Line is open to all children aged 7 and under. Each child is allowed one "leader" and one "spotter." A spotter may walk alongside the rider for additional support. Spotters are allowed to touch the rider if needed. Horses must be lead from a halter under the bridle, not from the bit. All riders must wear a helmet. Patterns will be posted at show office 2 hours before the class. If a chin strap is used it is recommended that it be loose. The patterns are to remain simple and safe. All riders will receive a blue ribbon!!!

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COWBOY DRESSAGE® VAQUERO GEAR REQUIREMENTS

SNAFFLE/HACKAMORE. – see photos 1 - 1c



Photo 1



photo 1a



Photo 1b



photo 1c

The snaffle/hackamore will be used with a mecate rein.
No split reins, must be one continuous rein to be traditional.
Snaffles should have slobber straps to connect the reins to the bit.
Hair rope, cotton, sisal, hemp, maguey, etc., are encouraged.

Mecate is approximately the same diameter of the bosal to be appropriate.
If using the snaffle or hackamore, the test may be ridden one handed but must remain either one or two handed for the entire test, or penalties will be incurred. Remembering that this horsemanship is about finesse, splitting the reins with fingers will be permissible and a hammer grip is not required.

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TWO-REIN. - see photos 2 - 2d



Photo 2



photo 2a



Photo 2b



photo 2c



photo 2d

An integral element in the process of making a finished Vaquero bridle horse, the two-rein stage is used as a transition between bosal and straight-up in the bridle.

During this stage, the bridle reins (the romel reins that are attached to the bit) are ALWAYS both in one hand. However, the rider may split the mecate reins so that one mecate rein is in the left hand and the other is held in the right hand. The rider may carry the bridle reins, together, either in the left or right hand. But, the bridle reins MUST stay together and in the same hand. See correct sample photos below: The rider may use both the mecate reins and the bridle reins in one hand from the start of the test, but all MUST remain together in one hand for the duration of the test. See correct sample photos below:

The rider may use both the mecate reins and the bridle reins in one hand from the start of the test, but all MUST remain together in one hand for the duration of the test.

However, rein hand must be closed and fingers cannot be between reins. If you enter the test with all reins in one hand, you must ride the entire test with the reins in that same hand.

See correct sample photos below:

In addition, the rider may NOT begin the test riding with all reins in one hand and switch to splitting the mecate reins to two hands.

We would like to see that no horse UNDER the age of 5 compete in this section.

A bosal and mecate used at this stage would be no more than ½" diameter.

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The same as with the hackamore, the rein configuration that the rider begins the test with must remain for the duration of the test and rider will be penalized for touching either set of reins between the hand and the bosal & bit with their free hand.

BIT REQUIREMENTS

Solid or loose cheek bits may be used, depending upon the rider's preference.

A leather curb strap only will be allowed with a bit in this division.

Romel style reins are to be used.

Rein Chains are traditional and are used between the romel reins and the bit (chains are optional).

Solid mouthpieces are traditional to Vaquero training.

Most traditional spoons on a spade bit are minimum 3 ½" and do not exceed 4 ½"

STRAIGHT-UP BRIDLE HORSE. - see photos 3 - 3b



Photo 3



photo 3a



Photo 3b

A horse straight-up in the bridle must be ridden one handed.

You may NOT switch hands at this stage and the bridle reins MUST remain in the same hand for the duration of the test.

Switching hands as well as using two hands on the bridle reins will result in penalties.

All riders riding straight up bridle horses in Cowboy Dressage, please note: You are not allowed to put fingers between the reins. The fingers may be open and fanned, but may not slip down between the reins. Judges will treat it as an error each occurrence.

We would like to see that no horse UNDER the age of 6 compete in this section.

A bosalito (3/8" or smaller) with a get-down (lead rope) is permissible, but must be loose enough around the muzzle so as not to function as a caveson.

Chinks, chaps, ropes and hobbles are strongly encouraged, as they are all common working gear for the Vaquero.

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COWBOY DRESSAGE® EXECUTION AND JUDGING OF TESTS

Calling Tests: All Cowboy Dressage® Tests may be called during the competition (with the exception of the Freestyle). If a test is called, it is the responsibility of the competitor to arrange for a person to call the test. Unless an exception is made by the judge, the calling of the test must start with the first movement. Lateness and errors in calling the ride will not excuse the rider from “error penalties”. Calling the test is limited to reading the movement as it is written. A microphone is an option and can be used.

Salute: At the salute riders must take the reins in one hand while giving a salute to the judge. A gentleman rider has the option to remove his hat.

Voice: The quiet use of the voice or clicking the tongue once or repeatedly is permitted.

Errors:

When a competitor makes an “error of the course” (e.g. takes the wrong turn, omits a movement, etc.) the Judge alerts the rider by sounding the bell. The Judge instructs the rider where he must take up the test again and the next movement to be executed.

1. Every “error of the course” whether the bell is sounded or not, must be penalized:
 - first time by 2 points;
 - second time by 4 points;
2. the third time results in elimination. At the discretion of the judge, the rider may be allowed to finish the ride, but will still be considered an elimination.
3. When the competitor makes an “error of the test” (at the salute does not take the reins in one hand, etc.) he must be penalized as for an “error of the course”.
4. If the judge has not noted an error the competitor has the benefit of the doubt.
5. The penalty points are deducted on each judge’s sheet from the total points obtained by the competitor.

Correct Use of Reins:

1. If a rider begins a test with two hands, the rider must complete all required maneuvers with two hands.
2. If a rider begins a test with one hand, the rider must complete all required maneuvers with one hand.

Lameness: If the judge determines the horse has marked lameness, the competitor is excused/eliminated from the class. There is no appeal against the judge’s decision.

Judging a Test:

1. The mark for each movement should first establish the fact of whether the movement is marginal (5 or below) or higher. The judge should state the reason for his judgment, at least when giving marks of 6 and below.
2. If a problem appears once it may be treated lightly by the judge; if it appears successively he will score it more harshly each time, i.e., nodding, stumbling, shying, etc.
3. Grinding of the teeth and wringing of the tail are signs of tenseness or resistance on the part of the horse and should be considered in the marks for each movement where they appear, as well as in

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the Collective Marks. Horses with tongues over the bit or perform with an open mouth shall be marked down.

4. Any rider who hangs or bangs on a horse's mouth or rides with horse's head behind the vertical or with over flexion will be penalized.
5. The levels of Cowboy Dressage® are offered as a means of evaluating a horse that is progressing. The purpose of each test is printed on the cover and the horse shall be considered in light of the degree of training it should have achieved to be shown at that level.
6. In the case of a fall of horse and/or rider the competitor will be eliminated.
7. If all four feet of the horse leave the arena with or without rider (if there is a rail around the court), the rider is eliminated.
8. A test begins with the entry at A and ends after the final salute. The competitor should leave the arena at "A" at a free walk, on a long or loose rein.
9. Horses that enter the arena with their tongues tied down shall be eliminated.
10. The judge may stop a test and/or allow a competitor to restart a test from the beginning or from any appropriate point in the test if, in his discretion, some unusual circumstance has occurred to interrupt a test. Time-outs are not permitted in the Cowboy Dressage® division.
11. If the judge or rider notices an equipment malfunction, either has the option to stop the ride and correct the situation, if possible. However, a penalty will be incurred. The rider has 2 minutes to correct the malfunction. If it cannot be corrected within 2 minutes, the rider is eliminated.
12. After the sound of the bell, the competitor should enter the arena at A as soon as possible. Exceeding 45 seconds before entering the arena after the bell has sounded will entail elimination. No competitor can be required to ride prior to his scheduled time.
13. Any resistance, which prevents the continuation of the test longer than 20 seconds is punished by elimination. However, resistance that may endanger the rider, horse, judge or the public will result in elimination for safety reasons earlier than within twenty (20)seconds.
14. All movements and certain transitions from one to another that have to be marked by the judge are numbered on the judge's sheets. They are marked 0 to 10.

Scale of Marks (half points are utilized when judging Cowboy Dressage®. e.g. 6.5):

- | | |
|----|-------------------------------|
| 10 | Excellent |
| 9 | Very Good |
| 8 | Good |
| 7 | Fairly Good |
| 6 | Satisfactory |
| 5 | Marginal |
| 4 | Needs Improvement |
| 3 | Multiple Minor Mistakes |
| 2 | Significant Mistakes |
| 1 | Multiple Significant Mistakes |
| 0 | Not Executed |

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Collective Marks are awarded (from 0 to 10, including half points) after the competitor has finished his performance.

Each of the collective marks listed below will be given a score, then multiplied by the corresponding coefficient:

1. Gaits (Freedom and Regularity) - coefficient of 2
2. Soft Feel (Please refer to definition of Soft Feel) – coefficient of 3
3. Harmony and Partnership– coefficient of 2
4. The rider's position and seat, correctness and effect of the aids – coefficient of 2

Judges Pre-show meeting: Cowboy Dressage® will request each judge meet with exhibitors approximately 20 minutes before the first tests begin and introduce themselves and answer any questions. The meeting should be posted on the entry form and/or the premium list as well as announced.

Unauthorized Assistance or Coaching is forbidden under penalty of elimination.

Timing: The execution of the tests is not timed.

Scoring, Classification and Prizes:

1. After each performance and after each judge has given his Collective Marks which must be done with due consideration, the judge's sheets pass into the hands of the scorers. Scores and comments must be written in ink. The judge having made the correction must initial any corrected score. The marks are multiplied by the corresponding coefficient where applicable and then totaled. Penalty points incurred for errors in the execution of the test are then deducted on each judge's sheet.
2. The total score for the classification is obtained by adding the total points. Total final results must be published in marks as well as in percentages with numbers to three places after the decimal point. Scores must be posted on a public scoreboard as soon as possible after each ride. The public scoreboard may be in either paper or electronic format. The name of the judge must be posted.
3. Individual Classification. In each test the winner is the competitor having the highest total points for that test, the second placed competitor is the one with the next highest total points and so on. In case of equality of points the competitor with the highest marks received under Soft Feel shall be declared the winner. When the scores for Soft Feel are equal, the competitor with the highest Harmony and Partnership shall be declared the winner. When the scores for Soft Feel and Harmony and Partnership are equal the competitors must remain tied. Errors on a test may not be used to break ties.
4. Final results for each class must be posted as soon as possible after the class is completed and all results must include total points and percentages with numbers to three places after the decimal point.
5. Video tape may not be used to dispute a judge's decision.
6. In classes that involve prize money, if a tie cannot be broken, the moneys for that placing, and the one below will be added together and divided by two. Each tied competitor shall receive the same amount of money.
7. If a mathematical error on the score sheet is discovered, it must be brought to the attention of competition management within 1 hour of the official posting of the scores from the last class of that competition day. Competition Management must announce said posting, and must make test sheets available to competitors immediately.

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8. After the awards for a class have been presented, the judge's score sheet should be given to the competitor. The competitor's privacy should be respected.
9. It is recommended that score tabulator not be a competitor, or an owner, coach, trainer or family member of a competitor/horse in the class(es) in which they are scoring.

Elimination from Competition or Event:

1. Misrepresentation of entry or inappropriate entry
2. Horse's tongue tied down
3. Abuse and/or neglect of the animal
4. Inappropriate conduct
5. Non-payment of fees

Elimination from a class:

1. Use of illegal equipment
2. Unauthorized assistance
3. Three errors of the course or test
4. Horse's tongue tied down
5. Abuse and/or neglect of the animal
6. All four feet of the horse leave the arena with or without rider if there is a rail around the court
7. Resistance of longer than 20 seconds
8. Concern for the safety of rider, other exhibitors or their entries
9. Evidence of blood on a horse in the competition arena shall be cause for elimination from the class by the judge at "C". Evidence of blood on a horse outside the competition arena shall be cause for elimination by competition management
10. Any situation where a direct rule violation can be cited
11. Not entering the court within 45 seconds of the bell ringing

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COWBOY DRESSAGE® JUDGING GUIDELINES

Definition of Soft Feel (or Fresh Rein):

Soft feel is the guiding principle of Cowboy Dressage®. It is a wordless, intimate communication within the partnership between horse and rider. Soft feel is not only sending messages but having the sensitivity and awareness to feel the message the horse sends back.

The timing and use of the release, relaxation, preparation and execution are the basic fundamentals of soft feel.

Since “soft feel” is the mission of Cowboy Dressage®, it will be scored with emphasis on lightness, harmony, finesse, and partnership as a priority. Balance, cadence, carriage, control, and performance are additional areas the horse and rider will be judged and scored.

Scoring scale of marks for Cowboy Dressage®:

- 10 Excellent
- 9 Very Good
- 8 Good
- 7 Fairly Good
- 6 Satisfactory
- 5 Marginal
- 4 Needs Improvement
- 3 Multiple Minor Mistakes
- 2 Significant Mistakes
- 1 Multiple Significant Mistakes
- 0 Not Executed

It is important to know the word assigned to the number as it helps you to determine the basic score, before adding or subtracting the modifiers.

It is important to understand the difference between a marginal (5) score and an insufficient (4) score.

Coefficients at bottom of score sheet:

1. Gaits (Freedom and Regularity) - coefficient of 2
2. Soft Feel (Please refer to definition of Soft Feel) – coefficient of 3
3. Harmony and Partnership – coefficient of 2
4. The rider’s position and seat, correctness and effect of the aids – coefficient of 2

Judging Methodology for Cowboy Dressage®

In order to place a class in the proper order, a judge must have a system by which he/she arrives at scores consistently throughout the day. This system is called “methodology”.

In determining the score for each movement it must first be established that the correct basics are being demonstrated.

Basics include the following:

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1. **Gaits:** Is the gait of that movement free and regular? Gaits must remain pure in the footfall as pertaining to the definitions of Walk, Jog, and Lope. (refer to rulebook for definitions)
2. **Soft Feel:** Is soft feel being demonstrated within the movement? (refer to definition)
3. **Harmony and Partnership:** Is harmony and partnership being demonstrated within the movement?
4. **Rider Position:** Are correct rider biomechanics and effective, soft aids being demonstrated within the movement?

The judge arrives at a score for a movement by considering the **Basics (gaits, soft feel, harmony and partnership, rider's position)**, then the **criteria for the movement (the directives on the score sheet)**, and then the **modifiers - positive or negative**. This eventually becomes an almost automatic process.

Since the basics have been considered in each movement, the collective marks at the bottom of the score sheet become a reflection of the body of the test.

Judges consider in their scoring **three basic categories of faults: Basic, Main, and Minor faults**. It is important when determining Main and Minor faults the judge keep in mind the purpose of the level being demonstrated (purpose of each level is stated at top of test sheet).

Basic faults: (Considered faults that demonstrate “ **wrong concept of the sport** ” and the rider is headed down an incorrect path in training of the horse) Basic faults are the most serious and are weighted most heavily. Some examples of basic faults: impure gaits, over bridling, a rider who is using excessive force, a horse that is so lacking in impulsion that it starts to lose the purity of the gaits - example, 4-beat lope. This type of ride typically will score lower than a 60%. (Do not confuse this with a ride that has errors and mistakes, thus receiving a low score).

Main faults: Considered not quite as serious but are pervasive throughout the ride. For example: unsteady head position, momentarily behind the vertical, poor transitions, insufficient or incorrect bend, lack of straightness, (This is all relative to the level being demonstrated).

Minor faults: These are treated lightly and can be any of the above main faults that only happen once or momentarily, but are not evident throughout the entire ride.

Positive and Negative Modifiers

Positive and negative modifiers are used to determine the final numeric score for a particular movement. E.g.: If all the Basic requirements are “fairly good”, and directives for the movement are “fairly good”, the score would be a 7. If the Basics were demonstrated really well and were “somewhere between Good and Very Good (8.5), and the movement had some minor geometry mistake (not quite following the directives) and was considered somewhere between Fairly Good and Good (7.5), then the score for the movement would be a score of 8 - Good. This takes into account both positive and negative aspects of the movement.

Matching comments to score:

It is important that the judge learn to use terms that match the comment to the score. It would not make sense to see a horse that is over bridled and give it a score of 8, saying: smooth, round circle, horse over bridled. Remember, over bridling is a Basic fault, so it carries a heavier penalty than a main

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or minor fault.

Judges should try to use the same terminology as used in the body of the score sheet so as not to confuse the rider. Many western riders are unfamiliar with traditional dressage terminology, so the comment would be hard for the rider to understand, therefore no benefit is derived from the comment.

It takes a lot of practice to be able to write relative comments to the score, without trying to give the rider a “riding lesson”. The judge is supposed to state what they see. Comments should be equivalent to the score given. It is up to the rider and their trainer (if they have one) to determine how best to prepare the horse for future classes.

Penalties are circled on the movement in which they occur and are deducted at the bottom of the score sheet under “penalties”.

Further Remarks (at bottom of score sheet)

Comments at the bottom of the score sheet should reflect the major “theme” of the ride. It is always a good idea to say something positive, as rider’s can easily feel discouraged if their ride had mistakes or didn’t go as well as planned. It is helpful to riders that are demonstrating basic faults to know what the judge is seeing, so that these can be corrected as they directly affect the training of the horse.

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COWBOY DRESSAGE® TERMS FOR JUDGES

In order to help riders improve, we have listed some common terms that most Western Riders will understand as comments on their score sheet. Please refer to these terms as much as possible. Riders will be using their score sheets to improve their skills. The more clear and concise the terms, the more helpful the score sheet will be.

Please also keep in mind that everyone deserves a “pat on the back” and try to give constructive comments along with what needs improvement. At no time should a rider feel defeated because of what a judge wrote on the score sheet. The judge’s job is to be helpful and to point out what he/she sees - both positive and negative.

When judging Cowboy Dressage®, many different breeds and types of horses will pass in front of the judge. It is important to judge each horse as an individual and base judgment on that particular animal’s individual merits regarding gaits and conformation. Think about form to function and ask, “Is that horse giving all he/she can with its particular type of conformation?”

Comments generally understood by Cowboy Dressage® Competitors:

When referring to straight lines, appropriate comments are:

- Drifting to right/left
- Missed letters
- Not at letter
- Not straight
- Horse crooked (head, shoulder, hip) left or right
- Line crooked
- Stop crooked
- Back crooked
- Straight, but not on c-line
- Wandering

When referring to bending lines and circles, appropriate comments are:

- Circle not round
- Too big/Too small
- Turned before/after letter
- More bend/Less bend
- Started before/after letter
- Unsteady rhythm
- Corner too deep/Corner too shallow
- Horse bent to outside (counter bent), haunches/shoulders falling in/ falling out.

When referring to other aspects of the ride:

- Pushing on bit
- Throwing head

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- Broke gait
- Unsteady rhythm
- Irregular (if horse is considered to be lame, the competitor should be eliminated)
- Mouth open
- No self-carriage
- Too fast
- Too slow
- Frame needs to be longer/shorter
- Needs more “giddy up” (more power from hindquarters)
- Tension in poll/neck/back
- Hollow back
- Above bridle
- More release in ____ (leg, hands, reins, etc.)
- Over bridled
- Not centered on entry
- Transition abrupt/slow/hesitant
- Not level behind/in front
- Leaning in/out on shoulder/haunches
- Horse late to rider’s aids
- Horse anticipating

Definitions for Judges:

- **Balance:** refers to lateral balance (side to side), or longitudinal balance (back to front). An easy term for lack of longitudinal balance is: on forehand. When discussing balance, a judge must be clear whether it is lateral or longitudinal. Appropriate terminology: falling on inside/outside shoulder, haunches falling in/out, on forehand, etc.
- **Cadence:** Is the marked accentuation of the rhythm that is a result of a steady tempo and a springy impulsion.
- **Self-Carriage:** refers to when the horse is able to carry itself in balance through the various maneuvers without any or very little support from the rider’s aids.
- **Control:** The riders ability to guide the horse through the various maneuvers
- **Rhythm:** Is the recurring characteristic sequence and timing of footfalls and phases of a given gait.

Cowboy Dressage® Terms for Judges Definition for judge of SOFT FEEL (beyond the written definition):

- Soft Feel is more about the rider’s ability to support and help the horse throughout the test - even if the horse is nervous or spooky. Soft feel comes from the rider and is felt by the rider from the horse, no matter what is going on with the horse. How well does the rider support the horse to develop trust and confidence in any situation?
- Preparation (the picking up of reins to adjust and help horse), use of the hands, legs, seat, voice (rider’s aids)
- Execution of maneuver (the result of preparation)

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- Release. The learning process or thank you for the execution.
- Relaxation. The partnership, harmony and lightness should be the goal.

Harmony and Partnership: Occurs when the horse and rider are working as a single unit (partnership), with communication going both ways. The horse and rider are communicating with each other and working harmoniously to reach a common goal.

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COWBOY DRESSAGE® GLOSSARY AND DEFINITIONS

Gaits

- **Working Walk:** Four-beat gait with forward reaching steps. The head and neck should swing naturally as a result of a relaxed back and free shoulders. The horse maintains a light contact with the bit with his nose slightly in front of the vertical.
- **Free Walk:** Four beat gait with forward lengthening of steps. The horse is relaxed and allowed by the lengthening of the reins to lower his head and neck and to stretch forward, down and out.
- **Working Jog:** Two beat gait and forward with even and elastic steps. The back is relaxed and the shoulder is free. The hind legs should step forward under the horse. The horse maintains a light contact with the bit and his nose slightly in front of the vertical. *Rider must sit the Working Jog.*
- **Free Jog:** Two beat gait with forward movement allowing lengthening of even and elastic steps. The horse is relaxed and allowed by the lengthening of reins to lower his head and neck and to stretch forward. The horse maintains light contact with the bit with his nose slightly in front of the vertical. *Posting is an option.*
- **Working Lope:** Three beat gait with forward reaching and balanced steps. The back is relaxed and the shoulders free with the hind legs stepping forward under the horse. The horse maintains a light contact with the bit, his nose slightly in front of the vertical.
- **Free Lope:** Three beat gait with forward movement allowing lengthening of even and elastic steps. The horse is relaxed and allowed to lengthen his frame and lower his head and neck. He should be balanced while maintaining a light contact with the bit, his nose slightly in front of the vertical.
- **Back (or Reinback):** The horse moves backwards in a straight line by moving his legs in diagonal pairs. The horse is backed using light aids and maintains a round, soft outline.
- **Cowboy Dressage® Turn on the Haunches:** The horse bends slightly in the direction of the movement and moves his front legs (the outside front leg crosses over the inside front leg) around the hind legs. The outside hind leg and both front legs move around the inside hind leg which forms the pivotal point of the turn. The horse should remain in the same location, by balancing his weight between the inside to the outside hind legs.



- **Cowboy Dressage® Turn on the Forehand:** The horse bends slightly in the direction opposite from the movement of the hindquarters, or away from the direction of travel and moves the hind legs around the front legs. The inside front leg is the pivotal point while the inside hind leg crosses in front of the outside hind leg moving the hind legs around the front legs.

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COWBOY DRESSAGE® TERMS

Collection: To shorten the frame of the horse. Move weight to the hindquarter and elevate the wither.

Rhythm: Is the recurring characteristic sequence and timing of footfalls and phases of a given gait.

Tempo: Is the rate of repetition of the rhythm, the strides or the beats.

Cadence: Is the marked accentuation of the rhythm that is a result of a steady tempo and a springy impulsion.

Adjustability: The ability to shorten or lengthen the stride and the topline of the horse within a gait without changing the tempo. An athletic horse shows this capacity naturally, and his ability to do so is further developed by correct training.

In other words, the horse must not rush when asked to lengthen, nor slow his tempo when asked to collect. The ability of a rider to show adjustability of the gaits while maintaining a steady tempo is a major proof of his/her skill.

Lack of regularity at walk, jog or lope is a fault that must be penalized in a Cowboy Dressage® horse. With correct training, however, the gaits can become amplified and more expressive. As the horse develops physically, he gains strength and can carry more weight behind; thus the forehead becomes lighter and the shoulders have more freedom, reach and mobility. Much of a horse's training is devoted to developing relaxation, so as to preserve the purity of the gaits.

A rider must always maintain a proper position and alignment in order to connect the horse correctly from back to front and to encourage him to carry more weight behind.

Change of lead through jog – The horse transitions from a clear, balanced 3 beat lope, with straightness, down to the jog while maintaining balance, straightness and a clear 2 beat gait for a few strides, then calmly, willingly transitions up to the opposite lead in lope. The entire change should be calm, willing, balanced, and smooth with straightness and completed within 5M.

Simple Change (Change of lead through walk) – The horse transitions from a clear, balanced 3 beat lope, with straightness, down to the walk while maintaining balance, straightness and a clear 4 beat walk rhythm for a few steps, then calmly, willingly, transitions up to the opposite lead in lope (no jog steps). The entire change should be calm, willing, balanced, and smooth with straightness and completed within 5M.

Shoulder In – The horse is slightly bent around the inside leg of the rider. The horse's inside foreleg passes and crosses in front of the outside foreleg; the inside hind leg is placed in the same track as the outside foreleg. The horse is looking away from the direction in which he is moving, with ears level. The horse must move his inside hind leg underneath his body, while lowering his inside hip. Caution should be taken that the outside hind leg does not step away from the original track. The horse will travel on 3 tracks – inside foreleg, inside hind leg with outside foreleg, outside hind leg (maintaining original track and not stepping out-away from the line of travel).

Counter Lope – This is a maneuver where the rider, for instance on a circle to the left, deliberately asks the horse to lope with the right lead (the right legs leading). The horse maintains his natural flexion at the poll toward the leading leg. The horse is slightly bent toward the leading leg. His spine does not bend to the line of the circle. There is no deviation of the hind quarters to the outside of the

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circle. The horse should be balanced, with slight bend toward the leading leg, while maintaining the inside hind leg (to the lead, not the line of travel) underneath the horse. On a straight line, the horse maintains his natural flexion at the poll toward the leading leg, the inside hind leg (to the lead) stays underneath the horse, with haunches neither falling to the inside or the outside of the front legs.

Flying change of lead – The horse changes leads after the 3rd beat of the lope stride, with straightness, balance, and consistent rhythm in the lope.