

2026 Will County 4-H Horse Show

General Rules, Information and Class Descriptions for the 2026 Will County 4-H Horse Show

Updated April 30th 2026

Superintendent Toni Opyt

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- Entry deadline for the 4-H show is **July 1st 2026** Entries are being taken through FairEntry. Families will need to find the Will County 4-H Fair and create an account to be able to register.
- Show is open to current year 4-H members enrolled in ***WILL COUNTY*** Horse project ONLY!
- Only Will County 4-H exhibitors may ride or drive animals on the showgrounds during the 4-H show.
- Only Will County 4-H members and judges are allowed in the ring while a class is showing.
- Western tack will be required to show in gaming classes
- Helmet ***REQUIRED*** for all **riding, liberty and/or driving classes** All 4-H members are required to wear a properly fitted ASTM or SEI standard F1163 (or above) certified equestrian helmet whenever mounted or driving at all 4-H horse and pony events, shows, activities, or practices. Original tags must be present in all approved helmets. The 4-H member is responsible to see that this specified head gear is properly fitted with the approved harness fastened in place.
- Proper horse show attire required (Helmets, riding boots, jeans/chaps/breeches, long sleeve collared shirts)
- No riding bareback during the 4-H show
- No Stallions
- No loud coaching from the rail except during gaming classes.
- For additional rules see General Livestock Rules and Regulations.
- ***To get a stall for the week, you must register with the Will County Fair Office!*** All horses, ponies and other equine must stay on the grounds for the duration of the fair August 20-24 2025, comply with the fair rules and have paid the stall fees for the fair week by entering through the fair office before August 4th 2025. Fair books can be found on their website at willcountyfair.org. ***Stalls are limited and not guaranteed so register early with the Will County Fair!***
- Music chosen for class #133 Liberty Class and class #134 Freestyle Liberty Routine **must not have profanity or be vulgar in any way** and all music must be approved and arranged by superintendent prior to show starting on Friday afternoon.
- Enter all classes you would like to/think you'd like to show in. We cannot add exhibitors in classes the day of the show.
- Judge's decision is final.
- Arena is ag lime, not sand, and can get slick at times. We will do our best to work the ground during the show.
- Stalls do not have fronts, so you may need to provide your own gates for the week.
- Stall decorating/clean pen contest will also be judged for 4-H Horse Project!

-Performance Division Championships: You must enter and compete in all qualifying classes for that division to qualify. Division champions will be determined by placings and points accumulated in their classes. The exhibitor with the highest placings and scores will be champion and second highest will be reserve. In the Speed division, it will be the lowest times combined between the three qualifying classes. In case of a tie, there will be a written quiz for the exhibitors as a tie breaker. The champion from each division will be asked back to compete for Overall Performance Champion in a command class. This will be the Champion Western Performance, Champion English Performance and Champion Speed in each age division.

2026 Will County 4-H Horse Show Classes

- 101. Mini Horse Halter, All Ages
- 102. Halter Mares, All Ages
- 103. Halter Geldings, All Ages
- 4-H Championship Halter
- Champion and Reserve in classes 101,102, and 103 asked back
- 104. Junior Showmanship 8-13
- 105. Senior Showmanship 14-18
- 106. English Walk/Trot 8-13
- 107. English Walk/Trot 14-18
- 108. English Pleasure 8-13
- 109. English Pleasure 14-18
- 110. English Equitation 8-13
- 111. English Equitation 14-18
- Break
- 112. Costume Class, All Ages
- 113. In Hand Trail, All Ages
- 114. Trail 8-13
- 115. Trail 14-18
- 116. Western Walk/Trot 8-13
- 117. Western Walk/Trot 14-18
- 118. Western Pleasure 8-13
- 119. Western Pleasure 14-18
- 120. Horsemanship 8-13
- 121. Horsemanship 14-18
- 122. In Hand Egg and Spoon, All Ages
- 123. Egg and Spoon, All Ages
- 124. In Hand Barrel Race, All Ages
- 125. Barrel Race 8-13
- 126. Barrel Race 14-18
- 127. Flag Race 8-13
- 128. Flag Race 14-18
- 129. Dash for Cash 8-13
- 130. Dash for Cash 14-18
- 131. Straight Barrel Race, All Ages
- 132. Liberty Class, All ages with music
- 133. Freestyle Liberty Routine, All Ages with music, * no bareback riding*

Class Descriptions

Halter Class: The halter class is shown in halter where the horse is judged based upon its conformation, overall appearance, and usefulness. Conformation is defined as the physical appearance of a horse due to the arrangement of muscle, bone, and other body tissues.

Showmanship: Pattern to be posted. The horse is the means by which the exhibitor demonstrates their ability to show a horse at halter. The ideal showmanship performance consists of a poised, confident, neatly attired exhibitor leading a well-groomed and conditioned horse that quickly and efficiently performs the requested patterns with promptness, smoothness and precision. The exhibitor will show the horse in the posted pattern. If showing English, a bridle may be used to show. *Will County 4-H Jr. and Sr. Showmanship Rules: If you win Jr showmanship you have to move to senior showmanship the following year, if you win senior showmanship you have to take the following year off from showmanship. *

In Hand: Classes shown on the ground with the horse in halter unless showing English then an English bridle may be used.

Walk Trot/Pleasure: Rail Class. Can be shown in any tack. To be shown at a walk, normal trot or jog and easy canter or lope; not to gallop; light contact to be maintained or on a reasonable loose rein without undue restraint. Should be a “pleasure to ride”

English Equitation/Western Horsemanship: Pattern to be posted. Riders will be judged on seat, hands ability to control and show horse. Results as shown by performance of the horse are not to be considered more important than the method used by the rider. The judge will ask each rider to work individually on the pattern. Judge may ask questions concerning horsemanship, anatomy of the horse, tack stable management and any others.

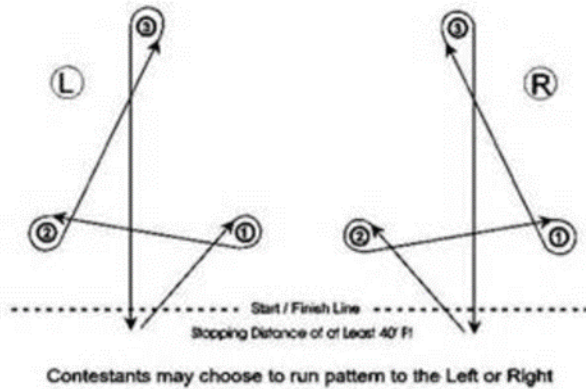
English Pleasure/Western Pleasure: Rail Class. To be shown at a walk, normal trot or jog and easy canter or lope; not to gallop; light contact to be maintained or on a reasonable loose rein without undue restraint. Should be a “pleasure to ride”

Trail Class: Pattern to be posted. Trail is a competitive class where horse and rider navigate a series of obstacles. Contestants ride the course one at a time. The horse and rider must maneuver through the course with speed in a safe manner. Designed to resemble situations a horse and rider might actually encounter when on a trail.

Costume Class: The class will be judged on the ability of the exhibitor to create costumes that are interesting, entertaining, and creative for their horses and themselves.

Egg and Spoon: Riders must carefully balance an egg on a spoon while moving their horse forward. The game begins with riders in a circle at a walk. As the game progresses the leader calls out trot, canter or stop. Proper gait must be achieved without losing the egg in this game of concentration. Game goes till the last person remains with the egg.

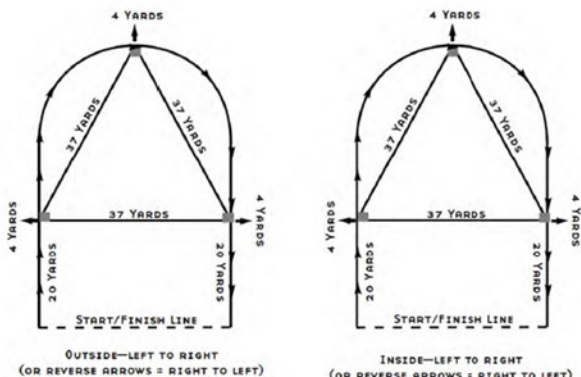
Barrel Race: Timed event in a clover leaf pattern. Knocking over a barrel carries a 5 second penalty. Failure to follow the course shall cause No time. A contestant may touch the barrel with his/her hands in the race as long as it doesn't fall over. Must be shown in western tack.



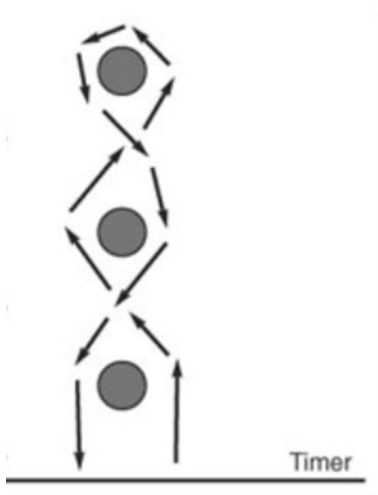
Dash for Cash: Timed event where a rider on top of a horse runs a predetermined distance in a straight line, turns a barrel and then runs across a finish line without knocking over a barrel as fast as they can. If they knock the barrel over, it will be a 5 second penalty. Must be shown in western tack.



Flag Race: Timed event. The contestant must race toward the first barrel remove a flag from the first bucket, run around the arena around the second barrel, then the contestant must race to the third barrel and place the flag in the bucket. Finally, the rider must race back to the finish line. Flag must remain in the bucket, otherwise it's a 5 second penalty. Must be shown in western tack.



Straight Barrel Race: Timed event. Three barrels are set in a row. Horse may either turn to the left going down, turning the end barrel to the left, then turn barrels to the right on the return trip, OR horse may turn barrels to the right going down, turning end barrel to the right, then turn barrels to the left on the return trip. Course shall measure 37' from starting line to first barrel and 50' between the next two barrels. The end barrel should be at least 20' from the end of the arena wall/fence. Pattern may be started from the right or left. Disqualification results for the horse turning barrel wrong way, or rider holding up barrel with hand. Knockdown of barrel is a 5 second penalty for each barrel knocked over. Must be shown in western tack.



Liberty Class: Two people permitted in ring 1 handler & 1 assistant (assistant is not required). They will have 2 minutes of music for horse to perform then handler has 2 minutes to catch horse. Assistant must be a Will County 4-H member taking an equine project. Whips may be used but cannot touch the horse. Handler and assistant must wear helmets and boots. Liberty is scored on the freedom of movement, soundness and desire to move forward, which is natural to that particular breed of horse. Horses should show all 3 gates. No penalty should be given for playful behavior. The selection of music should match the horse's style. At the first sound of music the handler lets go of the horse in the ring to show various gates. At no time during these two minutes can the handler or the helper touch the horse. Whips are allowed but may not touch the horse. The assistant may help keep the horse moving. The music will stop at two minutes. The exhibitor has 2 minutes to catch the horse. Consideration should be given on the willingness of the horse to perform during the exhibit. Did the exhibitor and helper need to push the horse or with moderate encouragement did the horse enjoy his liberty.

Freestyle Liberty Routine: Is to be judged on balance between pattern, maneuvers added, artistic impression (Music/ Costume/ Theme/ Props), difficulty of maneuvers, connection between horse and exhibitor and overall entertainment value. There will be a pattern required for exhibitors to perform for the first part of their routine while at liberty, after the pattern is complete, the exhibitor will go into their freestyle performance. They will perform maneuvers and/or tricks of their own in addition to complete the routine. Each exhibitor will have a limit of 4 minutes to perform the pattern and a limit of 5 minutes to perform their freestyle routine for a total of 9 minutes in the area from start to finish. A performance going over 9 minutes will be penalized. Timing for Freestyle Classes starts when the first person, prop or horse enters the arena.

-Judging starts when the music starts or when both the competitor and the horse are in the arena (whichever comes first).

-Judging ends when the competitor and horse have exited the arena.

Everything must be cleared from the arena by the end of the time limit to avoid a time penalty. The time penalty will result in a "no score" if you go over the 9-minute mark. Additional time allowances for extensive props, set-up and/or tear down may be made by the show superintendent, but all additional time allowances must be done and the Judges notified prior to the start of the Freestyle Performance Class.

- Music must not have profanity or be vulgar in any way and all music must be approved by superintendent prior to show starting on Friday afternoon.

-Exhibitors cannot ride bareback at any time during 4-H show, *this class will be performed on the ground only.* Approved and safe props and cones may be used. Administration of any treat or substance given orally either by hand, via a tool, or placed on equipment/props/ground during pattern or in the competition arena is prohibited. Clickers are allowed in the competition arena and may be used at any time. Liberty sticks, carrot sticks and whips

(lunge, dressage, carriage, etc.) are permitted to direct and/or guide horse(s). Bell boots, polo wraps, leg wraps or any form of lower leg or hoof protection/support is also permitted. *Helmet and boots are required for exhibitors.*

4-H Horse Show 2026 Championship Division Qualifying Classes

- **In Hand Division All Ages**
 - 113, In Hand Trail, All Ages
 - 122, In Hand Egg and Spoon, All Ages
 - 124, In Hand Barrel Race, All Ages
- **English Performance Jr. 8-13**
 - 106, English Walk Trot 8-13
 - 108, English Pleasure 8-13
 - 110, English Equitation 8-13
- **Western Performance Jr. 8-13**
 - 116, Western Walk Trot 8-13
 - 118, Western Pleasure 8-13
 - 120, Western Horsemanship 8-13
- **Speed Jr. 8-13**
 - 125, Barrel Race 8-13
 - 127, Flag Race 8-13
 - 129, Dash for Cash 8-13
- **English Performance Sr. 14-18**
 - 107, English Walk Trot 14-18
 - 109, Hunter Under Saddle 14-18
 - 111, English Equitation 14-18
- **Western Performance Sr. 14-18**
 - 117, Western Walk Trot 14-18
 - 119, Western Pleasure 14-18
 - 121, Horsemanship 14-18
- **Speed Sr. 14-18**
 - 126, Barrel Race 14-18
 - 128, Flag Race 14-18
 - 130, Dash for Cash 14-18