

Oklahoma 4-H Horse Project Member Self-Evaluation

Horse Shows: How I Handle Mishaps

4H-ANSI-414

Showing at competitive events is one of the most popular horse activities that people enjoy. As with any group event, participating with others can be challenging and sometimes downright scary! It is likely that you have had mishaps at shows. Problems will happen at group events. Horses are in strange environments, around unfamiliar horses and may be doing unfamiliar activities. Activities, facilities and management differ from show to show. These differences require quick and sometimes uncomfortable adjustments to your desired routines. It takes a lot of effort to avoid situations and actions that are unsafe, or cause problems with your or your horse's behavior. The following questions are provided so you can reflect on how you handle mishaps at shows. It is hoped by answering them that you will reflect on what you do, and evaluate how well it works for you and your horse. Also, if this is done with a group, you will be able to compare your observations with others.

Has it Happened to You?

It happens to most people, and can be very scary, unsafe, frustrating and embarrassing. Can you think of an example of a time that your horse threw a fit, became unruly or uncontrolled at a show? Thinking back, could it have been avoided, or were you simply in the wrong place at the wrong time? Was there something that you could have done or currently do differently when practicing before or participating at shows to help avoid a future episode?

What is Your Horse Thinking?

Horses are big animals. It is amazing that they allow us control of their movements, especially in group situations that can be scary or intimidating to them. When they act up, the rider is the responsible member of the team. Have you ever thought about what they might be thinking about a situation and what is a natural response for the horse? Has your horse given you warning signs that were displayed before a mishap? What actions have you taken to help avoid an all out episode of bad behavior when you sensed an impending problem? Have your efforts been successful?

'Evaluating Myself'

Being able to objectively evaluate your actions is an important skill for success. This guide contains a list of questions to help you develop self-evaluation skills. Some questions may not have a single, correct answer. Some follow-up questions for your own thought and possible group discussion are provided for each question.

By completing this guide you will learn more about yourself and your actions to help in future decision making. Completing this with a group will allow you to learn from others experiences. Group discussions should be positive, encouraging and non-judgmental, so you and others will feel comfortable speaking with one another. Remember, different methods and actions are not necessarily wrong, and there isn't necessarily only one right or wrong answer to all the questions.

How do You Respond When It is Someone Else?

Horse shows attract exhibitors and horses with a wide range of experiences and abilities. Exhibitors that have show experience with horses that accept the showing environment will be participating with exhibitors will little experience and less broke or accepting horses. It is likely you'll be a victim of a mishap. Are you more likely to become angry or feel embarrassed for the guilty party? If you have been the guilty party, what emotions are you most likely to display, i.e. anger, fear, embarrassment? If you see someone having to deal with a mishap, are you most likely to leave the area, watch from a distance, offer help, talk about the incidence to others, or ...? How would you like to be treated if you were having a problem with your horse's actions?