

Oklahoma 4-H Horse Project Member Self-Evaluation

Horse Shows: Preparing and Showing in Speed Events

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Showing at competitive events is one of the most popular horse activities that people enjoy. You and your horse are a team, and it is rewarding to lead the team to victory in competitions. As with any competitive event, success requires practice and preparation. Speed events are some of the most enjoyable type of classes at shows. Exhibitors compete by executing a pattern around obstacles, and those who finish the quickest are deemed class winners. While enjoyable, these classes require a high level of horsemanship due to the advanced nature of maneuvers required while traveling with speed. This 4-H member guide provides questions for you to answer about how you prepare and participate in speed events. Hopefully, you'll have the chance to discuss your answers with others to compare your knowledge of and preparation for Speed Event classes.

The Events

List all the speed events you have participated in or observed at different horse competitions.

- Compare the differences in classes offered by different sport and breed organizations.
- Which speed events tend to attract the most entries?
- Which one's do you enjoy participating in or watching the most?

Rules

Test your knowledge on rules of various speed events by answering the questions below. You will need a rulebook for the organization in which you participate, as rules may change from group to group.

- a. In barrel racing, what is the time penalty for knocking over a barrel?
- b. In the Figure 8 Stake race, what is the penalty for knocking down a pole?
- c. In calf roping, what is the penalty for running through or breaking the barrier?
- d. Is a tie down a legal piece of tack to use in barrels, poles, stakes and calf roping?
- e. Is a mechanical hackamore a legal piece of tack to use in speed events?

Thoughts and discussion: Can you list different ways that a participant might be disqualified in different speed events? What types of equipment are specifically identified as illegal in the speed event category of the shows in which you participate? If you participate in speed events, what type of bit do you use? Do you use a particular bit only when you are competing in speed events?

'Evaluating Myself'

Being able to objectively evaluate your actions is an important skill for success. The first step is being able to identify your actions and ideas, then reflect on how your actions and ideas worked. By doing so, your future actions and ideas become more effective in reaching your goals.

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 thoughts and possible group discussion are provided for each question.

It is hoped that completing this guide will help you learn more about yourself and your actions, and help in future decision making. If this is done with a group, you will be able to learn from experiences of others. Group discussions should be positive, encouraging and non-judgmental. Otherwise, you and others won't 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 the questions.

Practicing

Exhibitors in speed events will vary how and how often they practice for speed events. Practice schedules take into account how experienced the horse is, how experienced the rider is, the level of physical conditioning of the horse and how the horse is behaving. Which of the following describes your current routine for practicing during the competition season?

- a. I don't work much on patterns; I just exercise my horse so he/she is in good physical condition.
- b. I vary my practices, sometimes working specifically on patterns, sometimes working on other techniques.
- c. I find that my horse's behavior gets worse when I practice too often.
- d. I find that my horse becomes hard to manage if I don't work him/her before competitions.
- e. I usually have to vary up my practices so my horse's behavior stays positive.
- f. I usually try to do the same tasks in the same order when practicing so my horse's behavior stays positive.

Thoughts and discussion: Speed events require the horse to do advanced maneuvers with speed, and as such can cause some horses to become unruly and resistant. If you have experienced this with your horse, what have you tried to do differently in your preparation and practicing? To what level of success have you had with changing your practices to help your horse's behavior?

Safety First

Speed events can be stressful on horse and rider, which can quickly lead to unsafe situations. Describe some of the unsafe behaviors that you have seen (or personally experienced) with speed horses? If you find yourself in similar situations, what actions would you take to correct the problems?

Thoughts an discussion: How can your tack and attire improve your security and safety during speed events? Do you wear a safety helmet when performing?

Cueing During a Performance

Because of the high degree of difficulty, excelling in speed events requires excellent horsemanship ability. Otherwise, the rider becomes the weak member of the team, the rider can't concentrate on improving the horse's trust and confidence, and the rider and horse perform in an unsafe manner. Describe how you alter your hand, leg and body cues as a horse performs a barrel, pole or stake race pattern.

Thoughts and discussion: How secure do you feel on your horse during an actual performance? Are there certain portions of the pattern that the horse seems out of control from your cues? How would you rate your ability to perform the necessary cues at the correct times during a performance: very consistent and secure; sometimes insecure and/or at the wrong time; not secure at all; or more like you are 'just along for the ride' and the horse is in control?

Your Horse's Position During a Performance

Truly accomplished speed event horses are excellent at using their body position to perform patterns smoothly and with speed. Describe what the ideal body position of a horse would look like as the horse completes the various portions of a barrel pattern. Include the position of the horse's head, neck, body and hind quarter. What leads should the horse take at different portions of the pattern? Compare your horse's position during a normal performance to the ideal. Do the same exercise for other speed events in which you participate.

Thoughts and discussion: If you break down the amount of time a horse takes to perform different parts of a pattern, which parts require the most time? For example, break down the barrel pattern to the following parts: Run to first barrel, first turn, run to second barrel, second turn, run to third barrel, third turn, and run to finish line. In a group, review some video of speed events and record the time it takes to complete each part of the pattern. If a particular run takes more time than average on a particular part, what is the horse or rider doing that slows the performance down? What needs corrected?