



MARYLAND 4-H HORSE PROGRAM



Horsemanship Standards

4H 292-Revised 2005





The Maryland 4-H Horsemanship Standards



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The Maryland 4-H Horsemanship Standards contained herein supersedes all previous editions of 4H publication #292 and is effective as of January 1, 2006. Please check the Maryland 4-H Horse Program website (www.4hhorse.umd.edu) for any updates to this document.

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The Maryland 4-H Horsemanship Standards were developed by A. Burk, Ph.D. and R. Cosden, and approved by the Maryland 4-H Animal Science Curriculum Committee, October 2005.

Rev. 07/05/06

I. Overview

The Maryland 4-H Horsemanship Standards are designed to help 4-H members progressively develop horsemanship skills throughout their participation in the Maryland 4-H Horse Project. The Standards have been developed to foster learning for individuals that may or may not have access to horses on a regular basis and for those that ride English and Western.

The Horsemanship Standards are divided into Knowledge, English Riding, and Western Riding Standards each containing six levels. The Knowledge Standards are designed to help members develop proper horse handling and husbandry skills. The Knowledge Standards are adapted to both English and Western Disciplines (K1-K6), but are not all-inclusive. The Riding Standards encourage members to become safe, effective and confident riders with a sound knowledge of equipment and tack. The Riding Standards are specific to the English-on the flat or non-jumping (ER1-ER6), English-jumping (ERJ1-ERJ6), or Western (WR1-WR6) disciplines. While not required, members are encouraged to become familiar with all disciplines. While it is realized that not every 4-H member would want to master all levels, all members are encouraged to complete the first two levels of the Knowledge and Riding Standards so that they may become familiar with the basics of horse safety, care and riding. Also, certain levels may be required for participation in state horse programs and events in the future including the state fair horse show.

Level achievement will be judged through tests conducted by approved examiners. These tests will be held at the club or county level for Levels 1 and 2, at the county or district level for Levels 3 and 4, and at the state level for Levels 5 and 6. Age requirements may be imposed if deemed necessary by each county.

All 4-H members should be given the opportunity to participate in the Horsemanship Standards, but the decision to participate is strictly that of the 4-H member's and is not mandatory.

II. References and Resource Materials

Educational resource materials will be made available as references without expressed or implied warranty or endorsement and are not intended to be either restrictive or all-inclusive. Study guides are available for Knowledge Levels, which include suggested references (see page 15).

III. Maryland 4-H State Horsemanship Committee

A Maryland 4-H State Horsemanship Standards Committee will consist approved testers, MCE volunteers, MCE staff and faculty, and 4-H members who are at least 14 yrs of age and have earned Level K-IV and R-IV or higher. Members of the Maryland 4-H State Horsemanship Standards Committee shall serve two-year terms.

1. The Horsemanship Standards Committee should meet at least once a year to evaluate the success of the program and to make recommendations to the Maryland 4-H State Office if changes are necessary.
2. Maryland 4-H will offer educational opportunities to MCE staff, volunteers, and 4-H members to educate them about the Maryland 4-H Horsemanship Standards.
3. Copies of the Horsemanship Standards materials will be available online and in limited quantities in hard copy at the County Extension Offices.
4. Copies of written tests and answer keys will be distribute to County Extension offices by the Maryland 4-H State office.
5. MCE volunteer leaders will distribute the Horsemanship Standards materials to 4-H members participating in the Maryland 4-H Horse Project.
6. MCE volunteer leaders will assist 4-H members in becoming knowledgeable and skillful in the areas covered in each level through various learning activities including talks by invited speakers, study sessions, activities, and clinics.

IV. General Requirements

1. Each 4-H member must start out at Level I, regardless of age or previous experience, and they must pass all Levels in sequential order.
2. All 4-H members attempting the Horsemanship Standards must carry a Maryland 4-H Horse Project filed with their County Extension 4-H Educator.
3. A horse may be borrowed or leased for the testing, but may not be shared by two (2) individuals at a testing unless permission is obtained from the official examiner at least 1 week prior to the testing.
4. A 4-H member's Knowledge Level may exceed their Riding Level at any time. However, a 4-H member must pass the Knowledge Level IV before their Riding Level can be exceeded. This is to encourage a sound knowledge of horse care and management as well as riding in the Maryland 4-H Horse Program.
5. The Riding and Knowledge Standards are separate tests and must be administered separately, at different times. However, they may be administered on the same day. Each level testing should be completed in its entirety in one day.
6. The Knowledge Standards testing will contain a written test provided to the examiners by the state 4-H office. The information covered in the tests should not be covered again by the examiners during the oral testing portion. Candidates should be given at least 45 minutes to complete the written examination.

7. Candidates can meet their Dressage test requirements for the English Riding Levels by scoring a 60% or higher on the required test ridden at a dressage show judged by a rated dressage judge. A copy of the candidate's completed test must be provided to the examiner at the time of testing.

Levels 1 & 2:

1. A 4-H member may be tested at their home riding stable by an approved examiner that may be their instructor or trainer.
2. Levels 1 and 2 may be taken at the same time and location tested by the same examiner.
3. It is recognized the English-on the flat and Western Riding Levels 1 and 2 are similar with the exception of the tack used. Therefore, a candidate who passed either Levels 1 or 2 in either discipline may change to the other discipline for Level 3. However, once Level 3 is passed in a particular discipline, the candidate must test within that discipline in sequential order. An example would be a candidate who passed WR1, ER2, and then WR3, and WR4. If a candidate chose to, they may attempt to pass all Levels within all disciplines, but each Level must be passed in sequential order within each discipline.

Levels 3 & 4:

1. Testings are countywide with locations and times to be announced by the County Extension 4-H Educator.
2. Each county is responsible for arranging an approved examiner to administer the test.
3. No family members or instructors/trainers of a 4-H member will be allowed to serve as their Horsemanship Standards examiners for Levels 3 and 4.
4. A 4-H member may attend a Horsemanship Standards testing in a county other than their own, with approval from the Examiner within the host county.
5. One month must pass between a 4-H member testing for Level 4 after passing Level 3. This is to encourage the 4-H member to practice and train for the next level testing.

Levels 5 and 6:

1. Levels 5 and 6 are coordinated and held at the state level. Counties may sponsor a testing when a group of candidates and a location have been identified and an approved examiner has been identified by the state office.
2. No family members **or** instructors/trainers of a 4-H member will be allowed to serve as their Horsemanship Standards examiners for Levels 5 and 6.
3. The 4-H member must provide all tack and equipment for all testing requirements (i.e. lunging and bandaging), in addition to providing a suitable horse.

4. Two months must pass between a 4-H member testing for Level 6 after passing Level 5. This is to encourage the 4-H member to practice and train for the next level testing.
5. Registration for Level 5 and 6 testing will be made available online at www.4horse.umd.edu. A 4-H member can only be tested for one riding discipline on the day of testing and must indicate that discipline on the registration form.

V. Pass/Fail Information

1. A 4-H must meet or exceed standards for all sections tested to pass that Level.
2. When a level is passed, the 4-H member will receive a Certificate of Achievement. In addition, 4-H members who earn Level 5 and 6 will be recognized at the Annual Maryland 4-H State Leadership and Learning Recognition Lunch.
3. A 4-H member is considered to have “failed” a section if they did not meet the standard for that section.
4. If a 4-H member fails one or two sections of either a Riding or Knowledge Level, the examiner may allow them to retest only the areas that were failed after spending at least one (1) month learning the needed skills or knowledge. The retest must be scheduled between the examiner and the 4-H member.
5. If a 4-H member fails 3 or more sections of the material tested they can retest the entire level after at least one (1) month of study and preparation.
6. Examiners must document reasons why the 4-Her did not meet expectations on the examinations test sheets and discuss the decision with the candidate at the testing. All examiner comments and test sheets will be copied and mailed to the County Extension 4-H Educator and 4-H member upon completion of a testing for Levels 1-4, or to the State 4-H Office for Levels 5 and 6.

VI. Responsibilities of the 4-H Member

1. Request testing from club, county, or state indicating which Level and what discipline they will be riding.
2. Provide proof of preceding level completion through one of the following:
 - a. A completed Performance Level Book at a preceding level (for 4-H members “grandfathered” into program) or,
 - b. A copy of a passing test sheet from an approved examiner at the preceding level or,
 - c. A copy of their Certificate of Achievement from the previous level

3. Provide safe, appropriate, and correctly fitting tack and attire for horse and rider. Note: Any unsafe or unsuitable tack or attire may be grounds for dismissal from testing at the examiners discretion.
4. Bring an appropriate horse to the testing. The conditioned mount(s) must be capable of completing appropriate levels. Horses that the examiners consider unsafe to the rider or others will be excused from the testing.
5. Provide all equipment needed for testing by examiner.
6. Come prepared to discuss and or demonstrate any and all of the study requirements and be willing to accept criticism and or suggestion with an open mind.
7. Acknowledge that the examiner has full authority to pass or fail any candidate at the testing and that the examiner's decision is final.

VII. Responsibilities of the Examiner

The examiner must:

1. Be MCE volunteers or submit a Short Term Volunteer Agreement and submit to the County Extension 4-H Educator prior to the testing.
2. Be approved by the County 4-H Extension Educator when testing for Levels 1 and 2 or by the Maryland 4-H Horsemanship Standards Committee when testing for Levels 3 through 6.
3. Be familiar with all aspects of the 4-H Horsemanship Standards and subject material.
4. Act as a role model for 4-H members including:
 - a. Dressing appropriately.
 - b. Utilizing and following all safety equipment and guidelines.
 - c. Acting professionally and diplomatically at all times.
5. Be prepared to demonstrate correct techniques when asked.
6. Establish communication and rules with parents and 4-H members at the onset of a testing.
7. Insist upon good sportsmanship and safety at all times.
8. Be sensitive to young people and able to conduct the test in a positive, educational framework. They should make notes of positive and negative critiques as well as share those with the candidates in a kind, positive, and well-communicated way. Examiners should notify candidates when they have not met a requirement and provide the candidate with one more additional opportunity to meet that requirement. Candidates that have not

met requirements on three or more sections of a test may be given the option by the examiner to go on or discontinue the testing.

9. Understand that the safety of 4-H members, examiners, horses and all others involved with the Horsemanship Standards is of primary importance at all times. Any activity or practice posing a threat to the safety of those involved may result in dismissal from the testing at the discretion of the examiner.

As examiners it is your responsibility to:

1. Excuse/disqualify any unsafe or unsuitable horses or tack from the testing.
2. Excuse/disqualify any 4-H members or parents acting in an unsafe or unsportsmanlike manner.
3. Ensure the overall safety of riding areas, jump courses, and weather conditions. No riding is permissible during thunderstorms, excessive rain, unsafe footing, or other extreme circumstances.
4. Cancel a testing should the facilities or weather prove to be unsafe.
5. Provide written comments on test sheets, including reasons why a candidate may have been dismissed, to the County Extension 4-H Educator after testing is complete for Levels 1-4 or to the State 4-H Office for Levels 5 and 6..

Additional comments for Examiners:

1. The examiner's decision is final and will be adhered to at the testing.
2. Understand that testings can be highly stressful for horses and 4-H members and be aware of signs of distress, overriding, or overfacing by horses and riders.
3. Written and oral comments should be balanced between positive and negative. Give 4-H members points on which they need to improve on or note when a 4-H member exceeds expectations.
4. Parents and 4-H members may disagree with your evaluation. Give explanations for why a 4-H member was excused or marked down on the testing sheet and reinforce it with a verbal explanation.

VIII. Reasons to Excuse a Horse or Rider From a Testing

Horse

1. Obvious unsoundness of leg or wind.
2. Unsuitability (i.e. unsafe or dangerous to spectators, other riders or horses at testing).
3. Overfaced by the nature of the testing (especially young or green horses).
4. Unconditioned or otherwise physically strained by work required at the Level being tested.

Rider

1. Injury or illness while unmounted or mounted that impairs the ability to safely control a mount.
2. Obvious disregard for safety or welfare of horse.
3. Excessive use of natural aids or corrections using artificial aids.
4. Disregard for or refusal of examiners instructions or requests.
5. Unsportsmanlike behavior at any time.

Tack

1. Lack of an approved ASTM–SEI safety helmet or an improperly fitting helmet.
2. Lack of safe and appropriate riding apparel including long pants, sleeved shirt, and hard soled, heeled riding boots.
3. Tack that is in poor condition including, but not limited to frayed stitching, cracking leather, or rotting.
4. Inappropriately fitting tack that cannot be corrected at the testing through the use of a hole punch or replacement of leathers or other pieces of equipment.

IX. How to Organize Horsemanship Standards Testing

Knowledge Standards Testing – Testing for the Knowledge Standards will consist of a written exam provided by the Maryland 4-H State Office or County 4-H Educator, an oral exam, identification of equipment, and handling or demonstration involving horses where appropriate.

Riding Standards Testing – Testing for the Riding Standards consists of presentation of horse and rider, riding exam, oral exam, identification of equipment, and handling or demonstration involving horses where appropriate..

Contact an Approved Examiner – A list of approved examiners may be obtained from the Maryland 4-H Office or online (www.4horse.umd.edu) or from a county’s 4-H Educator. The examiner need not be from the county that is hosting the testing. Please contact examiners as early as possible to allow for scheduling.

Determine A Testing Location and Date – Finding an appropriate facility for the Standards testing and prep clinic is one of the most important aspects of organization. Several considerations should be made including:

- ◆ Parking availability and space for trailers and unloading
- ◆ Flat areas for riding on the flat, over fences, and/or lunging (these may include outdoor or indoor rings or other open areas)
- ◆ Footing suitability and fencing conditions
- ◆ Availability of jumps, cavaletti, and/or ground poles
- ◆ Area and seating for written exams and discussion
- ◆ Bathroom facilities and water availability
- ◆ Overall safety of facility (no holes, foreign objects, etc)
- ◆ Weather conditions and forecast (Heat Index, Temperature, Humidity, Availability of Shade)

Also note that if a private facility is used the owners may require an additional release forms or paperwork to be completed.

Get Tests from County Office – At the beginning of each year, the Maryland 4-H State Office will send written tests and keys for the Knowledge Standards to the County Extension Offices to be used for Level testing.

Paperwork – MCE Health Forms and Releases must be signed and turned in for all participants (riding or not) and be available to the volunteer in charge. Accident/Incident Guidelines and Report Forms should also be handy and can be found online at www.maryland4h.org . Additionally, if a private facility is used, participants may need to complete additional releases or paperwork. 4-H members are reminded that when transporting horses anywhere in the state of Maryland they are required to carry proof of a negative Coggins test (Equine Infectious Anemia test) and will be asked to produce it at the testing.

Provide Volunteers – This is a vital aspect of the testing as it will be necessary to move jumps or set up courses, etc. Volunteers to direct traffic, run a food stand, help the examiner, or hold/supervise horses and 4-H members are a good idea. The examiner cannot be everywhere at once and volunteers may be 4-H parents or leaders.

Food/Water - Organizers should also make arrangements for lunch or food if the testing runs all day. It can be suggested that 4-H member bring their own food or that food will be provided. Water in coolers or other fluids should be made available to 4-H members by the organizing person/club/county and should be available all day.

Spectators/Pets – Parents, family members, non-testing 4-H members, and other spectators should be encouraged to watch the testing. Dogs and other animals (including horses that are not being ridden in the testing) should not be allowed on the grounds unless they are stabled there. If a testing is held at a private facility please adhere to any additional requests made by the owners.

Safety – Safety is of the utmost importance. It is the examiners responsibility upon arrival to ensure that the facilities are adequate and safe. If for any reason the facilities or weather are not sufficient, the examiner may cancel the testing. All 4-H members are expected to adhere to the Maryland 4-H Horse Show Rule Book safety guidelines and other conduct rules. Helmets and appropriate attire must be worn at all times when mounted. There will be a safety inspection at the beginning of the testing for all 4-H members. Additionally, if any 4-H member or spectator is observed acting in an unsafe manner it should be reported to the examiner. Ignoring safety guidelines will be grounds for dismissal from the testing. Consider securing an EMT or nurse for onsite first aid.

Preparation Clinic – If possible, plan a “mock” testing or prep clinic several weeks in advance of the actual testing for 4-H members to demonstrate their knowledge and to give them sufficient time to work on any weak skill or knowledge areas. Prep clinics may be subject oriented (ex. bandaging or jumping) or may be run exactly as a real testing would. Local MCE volunteers or horse club leaders may run prep clinics.

Specific Equipment Required by Levels – Some Knowledge and Riding Levels require that 4-H members identify such specific things as horse colors, breeds, conformation faults, pieces of tack, blankets, etc. Discuss and arrange with the examiner the sources and person responsible for bringing said objects.

Candidates with Disabilities – In the event that a 4-H member has a disability, parents and approved examiners must discuss the needs of the 4-H member and all attempts to meet the special needs of the candidate should be done in accordance with the University of Maryland policy.

Sample Schedule – (Knowledge and English Jumping Level Testing held on same day)

8:30 a.m. – Orientation/Scheduling and Introduction of Examiner

9:00 a.m. – Written Examination

10:30 a.m. – Practical Demonstration of Knowledge (May include loading, bandaging, lunging, etc.)

12:00 p.m. – Lunch Break

1:00 p.m. – Turnout and Safety Inspection

1:30 p.m. – Riding on the Flat

2:00 p.m. – Riding over Fences/In the Open

3:00 p.m. – End of Test

X. Rider Turnout Checklist

1. As you prepare for the testing day make sure you have all of the necessary equipment and appointments required for the Level you are attempting. You may borrow equipment to be tested but it must be arranged beforehand.
2. All tack and apparel should be clean, safe, and well-fitted. Boots and tack should be cleaned and polished. Take pride in your appearance!
3. Hair should be neatly kept and out of the way.
4. No excessive jewelry or dangling earrings shall be allowed for safety reasons.

XI. Required Apparel (unless otherwise noted)

1. ASTM-SEI approved riding helmet (English or Western)
2. Sleeved shirt (long sleeve, polo, or traditional riding shirt with stock tie/collar and pin)
3. Jodphurs, breeches, or jeans
4. Chaps (Optional)
5. Gloves
6. Belt
7. Hard soled, heeled riding boots (Field, dress, paddock, roping, or cowboy)
8. Spurs (optional)
9. Hair net (optional)
10. Proof of previous passing previous Horsemanship Standards Level

XII. Horse Turnout Checklist

Horses or ponies should be well conditioned and groomed appropriately for whatever discipline they are being ridden in. Clipping or braiding is not necessary although it would enhance the appearance of the horse. Check the study guide to be sure all necessary equipment has been accounted for.

All Riding Levels Should Have Prepared:

1. Halter
2. Lead rope or shank (no chains will be allowed)
3. Grooming tools and kit (hoof pick, mane and tail comb, curry comb, variety of brushes, wipe cloth)
4. Fly spray or mask when appropriate
5. Saddle
6. Saddle Pad
7. Girth
8. Bridle
9. Any other boots, pads, or gear necessary for safety
10. Proof of a negative Coggins test for all horses being ridden by 4-H member

In addition to these basics, the Levels listed below will also need:

Level 2 -

1. Two (2) Shipping wraps (may be the Velcro, pre-fabricated kind)
2. Two (2) Stable bandage materials (padding, wraps)

Level 3 –

1. Two (2) Protective Boots (may be splint, ankle, bell, or other)
2. Clippers
3. Thermometer

Level 4 –

1. Horse Blanket (could be provided)

Level 5 –

1. Tail Wrap or Bandage
2. Lunging Equipment (may include cavesson, lunge line, lunge whip, boots)

Level 6 –

1. Specialty Bandage Materials (spider, figure 8, exercise, or hoof)
2. Lunging Equipment (may include cavesson, lunge line, lunge whip, boots)

XIII. Examiner's Checklist

1. **Facilities -**
 - a. Are emergency numbers and information posted or available?
2. **Introduction and Orientation –**
 - a. Introduce yourself and your qualifications.
 - b. Have 4-H members introduce themselves and give a brief background.
 - c. Verify 4-H member eligibility and negative Coggins test for each horse.
 - d. Explain the day schedule.
 - e. Go over the expectations and rules, emphasizing safety.
 - f. Note any potential hazards or facility rules (ex. The facility does not allow photography, the bathroom sink doesn't work, etc.)
3. **Turnout and Safety Inspection –**
 - a. Are all helmets ASTM-SEI approved?
 - b. Do all helmets fit properly?
 - c. Is the 4-H member neat and appropriately dressed?
 - d. Is the tack clean and in good condition, not showing signs of disrepair or rot?
 - e. Does the tack fit the horse and is it appropriate for the discipline?
 - f. Does the horse appear fit and well cared for?
 - g. Is the horse sound?
4. **Riding and Knowledge Work –**
 - a. Are all 4-H members safety conscious and sportsmanlike?
 - b. Do the horses appear suitable and prepared for the work?
 - c. Do any 4-H members appear to be having difficulty with the work?
 - d. Do the 4-H members meet the Standards as listed on test sheets?

XIV. Bandaging and Lunging Guidelines

Bandaging –

1. 4-H members should have enough material to bandage at least two (2) legs.
2. If flannel is used, the nap goes to the inside, and the backing to the outside
3. Fasteners should go on the outside of the leg, and may be Velcro or pins, pins should not be placed across tendon area.
4. Materials may be borrowed, but it is up to the 4-H member to provide them at the testing.
5. Standing bandages should demonstrate correct cupping of joint, have long enough wraps (Recommended: 18 in. horse, 16in.pony) and padding (knee to ergot plus one inch), and have thick enough padding to prevent tendon bowing.
6. Shipping bandages should touch the ground, have long enough wraps (Pony Club suggestion 24 in. horse, 22 in. pony) and enough padding to cover from behind the knee or below the hock to the bulbs of heel.
7. All wrapping should appear even and smooth.
8. Examiner should not see any pulling across the tendons.
9. A 4-H member should not sit on the ground or kneel behind the leg to wrap.

Lunging –

1. The 4-H member should be dressed appropriately, including gloves and helmet.
2. Note the 4-H member's use of voice (tone, clarity, and timing).
3. Note whip control and usage (triangle maintained and direction as needed) also note that the 4-H member tucks the whip under the arm during changes of direction.
4. Note the body position of the 4-H member (may pivot or parallel lunge). The taking-up of slack as necessary, correct hand position and grip (as riding), corrections made as necessary, body positioned correctly in reference to horse.
5. A 4-H member should utilize all available space and be aware of time spent to going to each direction, be considerate of age or training level of horse.
6. Horse should be suitable for lunging and maintain direction and way of going as asked.

XV. Safety Guidelines

1. All 4-H members should complete a Maryland 4-H Health form, available from the Maryland 4-H website, for each testing.
2. A 4-H Code of Conduct form should be on file at the County Extension Office for each participating 4-H member.
3. Examiner should complete safety checklists and ensure facilities and 4-H members meet all safety requirements.
4. Should an accident occur, prompt attention should be paid and all procedures followed including the completion of an accident report form. Available online at www.maryland4h.org
5. It is recommended that an EMT or nurse should be available on the facility grounds.
6. The weather should be monitored for approaching storms or unsafe conditions.

Should a fall occur:

1. Make sure the 4-H member is not hurt before he or she gets up. If you do not have first aid training wait until a trained person can check him or her out.
2. Take plenty of time before the 4-H member remounts. Assess the condition of 4-H member, horse, and tack.
3. Discuss the cause of the fall and prevention of other falls.
4. Notify the 4-H member's parent of the incident.
5. Complete an accident report from.