

August 28, 2008

Guidelines for Shared Horse Activities

Pennsylvania 4-H Program

The 4-H Horse Program in Pennsylvania has long provided opportunities for young people to develop both horsemanship skills and life skills through participation in a variety of activities. However, additional opportunities are needed for 4-H members who do not own or lease horses to participate in horse shows and other events. In an effort to create more opportunities for members who do not have horses, the 4-H Horse Program Development Committee has developed these Guidelines for Shared Horse Activities.

Objectives of Shared Horse Activities:

- To provide additional opportunities for youth who do not own or lease horses to participate in the 4-H Horse Program.
- To develop leadership, teaching, and mentoring skills in 4-H members and families who share their horses with horseless youth. The program is also designed to build a sense of teamwork and team accomplishment among horse-owning and horseless youth.
- To develop safe horsemanship skills and life skills in both horse-owning and horseless youth.
- To increase the number of youth participating in the 4-H Horse Program. The shared horse program is designed to encourage participation by members who cannot provide their own horses, including (but not limited to) urban and suburban youth.

Important Points to Remember:

The shared horse program is designed to allow non-horse-owning (or “horseless”) youth to participate more fully in the 4-H Program. It could involve some changes in your county and district events in order to provide new opportunities for horseless youth. The following are important points to consider when implementing a shared horse program or introducing it to clubs, leaders, members, and families:

- The shared horse program is *optional* at the county and district level. However, counties and districts are encouraged to consider options for sharing horses and/or increasing opportunities for *all* youth to participate in more hands-on horse activities.
- The shared horse program is meant to serve as a bridge to greater 4-H and equine involvement. It is intended to introduce horseless 4-H members to safe horse handling and riding skills, as well as to help them to become familiar with the responsibilities of caring for a horse. It is not intended to replace owning or leasing a horse as the standard for complete, traditional 4-H involvement.
- A horseless 4-H member who shares a horse may participate in classes at county and district shows designed for shared horse members. He or she may also participate in 4-H Horsemanship Skills clinics and testing, trail rides, club shows and clinics, and any other opportunities that he or she, the horse owner, and their respective families deem suitable.
- The horseless member is *not* eligible to participate in classes that qualify for the State 4-H Horse Show; *Exception: Immediate family members may share horses.* The horse’s owner retains the right to participate in state show qualifying classes.
- It is recommended that county and district show managers implement classes to accommodate shared horse program participants. (See recommendations under *Options and Suggestions for Use of Shared Horses.*)

Shared Horse Agreement and Supervision:

A shared horse agreement is a totally voluntary, mutual agreement involving a horse-owning 4-H member, a horseless 4-H member, and their respective families. The specific details of the shared horse agreement are determined *entirely* by these parties and are *not* determined in any manner by the Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Program.

It may also be possible to share leased horses or horses owned by a riding stable or other entity. Specific details of the agreement involving such horses should be determined by the parties involved.

Volunteer liability insurance covers extension volunteers and 4-H members while they are working in the 4-H program. Parents/guardians of children sharing horses and horse owners are not covered by 4-H volunteer liability insurance. They should remember the following when children are sharing a horse:

- Safety should be *the* primary concern at all times when youth share horses.
- Youth should be properly supervised during all shared horse activities.
- Youth should be carefully evaluated to ensure that horse and rider are a safe, suitable combination.
- Evaluation and supervision of shared horse program participants are the responsibilities of the parties involved in the shared horse agreement.

Options and Suggestions for Use of Shared Horses:

- Safety should be *the* primary concern at all times when youth share horses. Safety should be carefully considered when planning and conducting horse show classes and other shared horse events.
- A horseless 4-H member may share and exhibit a horse owned by another 4-H member at county or district shows *only* in those classes that do not qualify for the PA State 4-H Horse Show. (The horse owner may show the same horse in state show qualifying classes.) Shared horse classes should be conducted as a *separate division* from state show qualifying classes.
- County and district show managers and show committees should determine the specific classes they plan to offer for shared horses and should set class or event rules accordingly. Classes should be appropriate for the skill level of the participating youth. Examples of shared horse classes include (but are not limited to): Walk-Trot Equitation, Walk-Trot Pleasure, Showmanship, Novice English or Western Pleasure, Novice Equitation, Novice Trail, etc.
- Shared horses may be used in the Horsemanship Skills Program, with participating youth becoming eligible for program awards. (A horseless member who participates in the Horsemanship Skills Program with a shared horse must ride that same horse for each successive Horsemanship Skills test. If the member changes horses, he or she must begin at Level 1 with the new horse.)
- Shared horses may also be used in the Safety Program, with participating youth becoming eligible for Safety Awards.
- *Both* the horse owner and the horseless member should be recognized whenever possible. Recognition opportunities include horse shows, county 4-H recognition programs, and other events involving shared horse program participants. One simple recognition method is to bring horse owners into the ring to stand with their partner horseless members when shared horse classes are placed. When results are announced, the horseless member's name, horse's name, and placing could be announced, followed by the statement, "*Horse's name is owned by 4-H'er's name.*"
- Counties and districts may develop other guidelines, options and activities for shared horse programs. These should be developed in cooperation with the respective county extension educators and county or district volunteers and professionals as appropriate. Safety of all participants must be a primary concern and the objectives as outlined above should be included.