



## ***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. Additional opportunities are needed for 4-H members who do not own or lease horses to participate in horse shows and other events. The primary purpose of these guidelines is to facilitate more opportunities for members who do not have horses and to provide guidance for use at the county, district and state level.

### **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.
- To allow Therapeutic and Beginner riders the opportunity to compete at the county, district, and state levels for a period of time, without the obligation of ownership.

### **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. To meet this goal, there are opportunities for sharing horses in state show qualifying classes at the county, district and state level. Additional shared horse activities at county and district events may be implemented to provide more opportunities for horseless youth.

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- 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 the Beginner Division (Walk-Trot classes) at the county, district, and state level. See current *Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Show Rule Book* for detailed rules for the Beginner Division. The horse’s owner retains the right to participate in state show qualifying classes. However, a horseless member and horse owning 4-H member may *not* show in the *same* state show qualifying class.
- Immediate family members and those competing in the Beginner Division may also share horses in state show qualifying classes as noted in the current rule book.
- A horse may be shared by two unrelated exhibitors, but exhibitors may not show the animal at the same qualifying or state shows. For example, a horse may be shared by unrelated riders, one at the Junior Show and one at the Performance Shows. Another example, a horse may be shared by unrelated riders, one at the Junior Show, one at the Dressage Show.

### **Important Points to Remember (continued)**

- Additional opportunities through a shared horse program are *optional* at the county and district level. 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.
- 4-H members may also share horses in *non-qualifying state show classes* designed for shared horse members that *may* be offered at county and district shows. 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.
- 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.

All participants 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.
- 4-H members may share and exhibit a horse owned by another 4-H member in the Beginner Division at county, district, or state shows, *as well as* in other non-qualifying state show classes that *may* be offered at county or district shows. *If* non-qualifying state show classes are offered, they 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.
- A horse may be shared by two unrelated exhibitors, but exhibitors may not show the animal at the same qualifying or state shows. For example, a horse may be shared by unrelated riders, one at the Junior Show and one at the Performance Shows. Another example, a horse may be shared by unrelated riders, one at the Junior Show, one at the Dressage Show.
- 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.

## Options and Suggestions for Use of Shared Horses (continued)

- *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 example statement, "The horse, *I Am a Superstar* is owned by 4-H member, *Johnny BeGood*."
- 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.

For additional information, contact your county office of Penn State Extension, or see the 4-H Horse Program website: [extension.psu.edu/4-h/projects/horses](http://extension.psu.edu/4-h/projects/horses)

To contact your local extension office go to:

[extension.psu.edu/counties](http://extension.psu.edu/counties)

**[extension.psu.edu](http://extension.psu.edu)**

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