

EL PASO COUNTY 4-H MINIATURE HORSE DRIVING RULEBOOK

GENERAL RULES AND REGULATIONS

Introduction:

1. The purpose of the Rules and Regulations is to promote safety and provide standardization for the program and is intended to apply to all competitors.
2. In situations not covered specifically in this handbook or by direct interpretation of the rules, the spirit and intent of the rules must be upheld.
3. Competitions shall be conducted within the rules, regulations, and objectives of 4-H, HAC, and this rulebook.

DEFINITIONS

CIRCLING is any form of a circle which causes the driver to cross the original track between two consecutive obstacles. If a circle occurs during an attempt to retake an obstacle after a refusal or run-out it is NOT penalized as a circle.

DRIVER refers to the person controlling the reins and whip and brake.

ENTRY is a combination of horse, vehicle, and driver and is assigned a specific entry number.

HALT requires a complete square stop without abruptness or veering. The horse should stand attentively, motionless, and straight with the weight evenly distributed over all four legs and be ready to move off at the slightest indication from the driver.

HEADER refers to the assigned person capable of assisting in the event of difficulty. The header does not ride in the cart at any time.

OFF-COURSE occurs when the driver deviates from the set pattern and drives an obstacle out of order before correcting the deviation; taking an obstacle in the wrong direction; negotiating an obstacle from the wrong direction; negotiating obstacles in the wrong sequence; skipping an obstacle. Failing to follow a continuous line as shown in the pattern diagram is NOT considered off-course unless an obstacle is taken out of order.

OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE includes but is not limited to: use of communication devices between driver and anyone else; directing the driver in any way during a test or course, leading a turnout into the ring.

PROLONGED CANTER is one in which there are more than 6 full strides.

REIN BACK is defined as a backward movement in which the legs are raised and set down simultaneously in diagonal pairs with the hind legs remaining well in line. This is performed in two parts:

1. The horse moves backward at least four steps with head flexed and straight, pushing the cart back evenly in a straight line.
2. The horse moves forward to the former position.

REFUSAL is stopping and stepping back or sideways before an obstacle.

RUN-OUT is evading or passing an obstacle or start/finish line to be driven.

STRIDE is defined as the cycle of movements completed when the horse's legs regain their initial position. *LENGTH of STRIDE* is the amount of ground covered during an entire sequence.

TROT has a two beat gait.

SLOW TROT (also known as PLEASURE TROT) is slower and more collected. The horse should display a willingness to be driven on the bit while maintaining a steady cadence.

WORKING TROT (also known as EXTENDED TROT) is a pace between the strong and slow trot. The horse goes forward freely and straight on a taut, but light rein. The hind legs are engaged with good hock action.. The steps should be as even as possible. The hind feet touch the ground in the footprints of the fore feet.

STRONG TROT is a clear but not excessive increase in pace and length of the stride. Excessive speed will be penalized.

TURNOUT is defined as the combination of horse, driver, and vehicle.

WALK is a free, regular unconstrained walk of moderate extension. The walk should be energetic but calm with an even and determined pace. The walk is a four beat gait.

SAFETY

All persons involved: drivers, headers, stewards, HAC representatives, competitors, officials, spectators, etc. should place safety first.

1. The horse should be comfortable with and acceptable of all parts of the harness before a driver is allowed in any class in the arena.
2. The horse should walk, trot, halt, back, turn, and stand quietly for extended periods of time upon command before the driver is permitted to hitch the vehicle to the horse/harness.
3. Exhibitors should NEVER remove the bridle of a horse hitched to a cart and never hitch a cart to a horse not wearing a bridle and can result in elimination.
4. Exhibitors are to NEVER leave a horse, which is hitched to a cart, unattended, even for a very short time and can result in elimination.
5. Exhibitors are never to be tied into the cart. They should enter the cart with reins in hand.
6. Exhibitors shall maintain a safe distance from the vehicle/horse before and behind him.
7. Exhibitor shall not allow his/her horse to rush or become aggressive when passing or being passed by other participants.
8. Exhibitors are required to wear approved protective headgear at all times during participation, including harnessing. The headgear shall be fitted with a chin harness and shall be properly fastened during wear.
9. Exhibitors should be in full control of the horse without assistance in order to participate in competitions.

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. All officials, management, and participants should constantly be alert to unsafe actions by participants or unsafe harness or vehicles and report the problem to the HAC representative. The judge may excuse any unsafe vehicle, unruly horse, or driver out of control.
2. It is the responsibility of the driver to insure his/her harness and vehicle and all accompanying equipment are in good repair and structurally sound, clean, and fits properly.
3. It is the responsibility of the driver to insure his/her horse is physically fit and able to fulfill the tasks required.
4. In the event the driver needs to dismount (ie., to make minor adjustments) the driver **MUST** have the header in proximity to control the horse. Multiple dismounts for equipment adjustments could result in elimination.
5. Drivers should maintain a safe distance from other vehicles/horses during competition as well as during warm-ups and in the parking area.
6. It is the driver's responsibility to insure the bridle be adjusted to fit snugly to prevent catching on equipment or vehicles. A throatlatch and noseband or cavesson are mandatory. A bridle with a rein attached and passed through the saddle terrets must be in place whenever the horse is put to vehicle. Failure to comply will result in elimination.
7. Tying down of tongues is prohibited.
8. The horse must never be left unattended while put to vehicle. Failure to comply will result in elimination.
9. The driver is responsible for providing a header who is required to be in attendance and capable of rendering assistance at any time necessary. The header must be 16 years of age or older. The header enters the ring when the line-up is called and leaves when the class or driver is excused. Failure to comply will result in elimination.
10. The driver is responsible to display his/her assigned participant number for the turnout entering the ring. The number must be worn on the back of the participant.

TESTING AND LEVELS

1. Drivers will show in classes according to their accomplished level.
2. Drivers will be advised of times, dates, and locations of levels testing opportunities.
3. Testing for Level III or Level IV must be attempted with the same horse/handler combination as achieved for Level II. Handlers who have achieved Level II are not required to retest at that level if introducing a new horse.

THE DRIVER

1. The driver should be seated comfortably on the box to be relaxed and effective. The two

handed method should be used. Elbows and arms should be close to the body to allow a steady hand and consistent feel of the horse's mouth.

2. A driving whip of suitable style shall be carried in hand while driving. The tip of the lash must not reach past the shoulder of the horse and must reach at least the hind quarter of each side of the horse.
3. The driver shall use a whip salute to acknowledge the judge at start and finish of a required performance.
4. "Whip salute" may be either of the following: moving the whip (held in right hand) to a vertical position with butt end even with the driver's face OR moving the whip (held in right hand) to a position parallel with the ground, handle before the driver's face.
5. Only the driver may handle the reins, whip, or brake during a competition. Failure to comply will result in elimination.
6. Drivers receiving outside assistance during competition shall be eliminated.
7. Racing or otherwise endangering another driver, header, or spectator will result in elimination from the class.
8. Protective headgear approved for driving is required at all times during harnessing or competing. The headgear must be properly fitted and in good condition. Headgear must be fitted with a chin harness, which must be properly fastened. Failure to comply results in elimination from the class.
9. Headers and drivers should be appropriately attired during competition. Dress in the arena should complement the appearance of the turnout. Horses are being shown, not the driver.
 - A. No strapless dresses; no sandals or open shoes; no tee shirts or shorts.
 - B. Formal wear should not be worn.
 - C. Jackets and Western show wear is permitted, dresses are NOT required.
 - D. Gloves, helmets, and boots are obligatory.

HORSE

1. The horse must be serviceably sound and must not show signs of lameness, impairment of visions, etc.
2. Braiding of the mane is optional. Tails are not braided.
3. Application of artificial hair to horse is prohibited. Foreign substances of any kind, including a tail set, to enhance a high tail carriage is prohibited.
4. Bandages, wraps, and brushing boots are prohibited.

5. Snaffle bits and other types of traditional driving bits are allowed. They may be covered with rubber or leather. Burr, gag and twisted wire bits of any kind are not allowed.

6. Blinders (blinkers) are recommended. Side or over-checks are required.

VEHICLES

Vehicles must be of the two-wheel type and have a foot basket. Undue noise created by the vehicle will be a reason to be excused from the class.

DRIVING COMPETITIONS

GENERAL RULES

1. Judge's decisions represent their personal preferences according to the rules and are not protestable. Exhibitor's questions regarding the Judge's technical reasoning may be addressed after the competition and at the judge's invitation. Objections must be made according to HAC regulations.

2. Each entry must have an entry number before entering any class.

3. Management or the Judge may separate or combine classes if conditions warrant.

4. No change of driver is permitted during any class.

DRIVER'S RESPONSIBILITY

1. Excessive use of the voice; shouting or whistling to the horse may be penalized.

2. The driver must be prepared to enter the ring when their class is called. Entries failing to enter the ring before the gate is closed will be excluded from the class.

3. Entries requiring equipment change may request permission for additional time before closing the gate. This request should be made to the ring steward to be relayed to the judge. Determination is at the judge's discretion.

4. The judge must excuse any unsafe entry from the class.

5. If asked to leave the arena the turnout must do so as soon as possible.

6. In the event a driver is eliminated from a class they are not permitted to place in that class.

DIVISIONS OF CLASSES

1. Classes will be divided by levels when indicated.

2. Classes will be judged on performance, quality of turnout, gaits, ability, and skill of the driver in execution, regularity of pace, and suitability of the horse.

3. Shows may require a walk, slow trot, working trot, a strong trot and/or a reinback.
4. Gaits may be worked both ways and drivers may be required to execute a figure eight, serpentine, and/or other appropriate tasks.

CLASS SPECIFICATIONS

OBSTACLE DRIVING

1. A horse may not be entered more than once in the same obstacle class or in classes which use the same course.
2. Drivers will be allowed time to walk the course prior to the start of the class.
3. While walking the course drivers shall not alter, adjust, or in any way move an obstacle or part of any obstacle.
4. Drivers, or any other handler or header, are prohibited from driving or leading the horse through the course at any time prior to the competition. Failure to comply results in elimination.
5. If any part of an obstacle is disturbed or dislodged out of its sequence or if an obstacle, the start line, or the finish line is driven backwards or driven twice, it is considered driven incorrectly and will be scored accordingly.
6. The entire turnout must pass through the markers. If the vehicle straddles a marker it is scored for a disobedience even if disturbance does not occur. If the entire vehicle passes outside the markers, it is judged off course. Both wheels must pass through the start and finish markers to be considered driven correctly.
7. If a disturbance occurs, the task must be completed as close to the intended task as possible or the task will be considered incomplete and penalized accordingly.
8. Time restraints may be applied on tasks throughout the course or the entire course as a whole.
9. Widths of obstacle markers will be set to accommodate the widest track width of the widest vehicle in the event.
10. The following disobediences shall be penalized: run-outs, refusals, circles, delays, break to canter.
 - A. Stopping in front of an obstacle without dislodging it AND without backing up, but followed immediately by driving cleanly through is NOT penalized;
 - B. If the halt is prolonged or if the horse backs even a single step, voluntarily or not, a refusal has occurred;
 - C. If, during the refusal, any part of the obstacle is disturbed, that disturbance is an additional fault and will be scored accordingly.

D. Disobediences happening during the correction of a deviation from course must be scored accordingly.

E. Requiring control assistance from a header results in penalties.

F. Unnecessary delay or excess time at an object may be penalized. The Judge may advance the exhibitor to the next obstacle. Advancement under this condition is penalized.

11. The following disobediences are cause for elimination:

A. If a header or any other person besides the driver handles the reins, whip, bridle, harness, or cart, for purposes other than immediate safety control, the driver will be eliminated;

B. Failure to cross the starting line within reasonable time of being signaled to start (judge's discretion) or starting prior to being signaled to start will result in elimination.

C. Off-course is cause for elimination.

D. Breakage of either harness or vehicle, necessitating a halt for repair, will result in elimination.

E. Vehicles which overturn or the horse falling will result in elimination.

F. Multiple breaks to canter or prolonged canter will result in elimination.

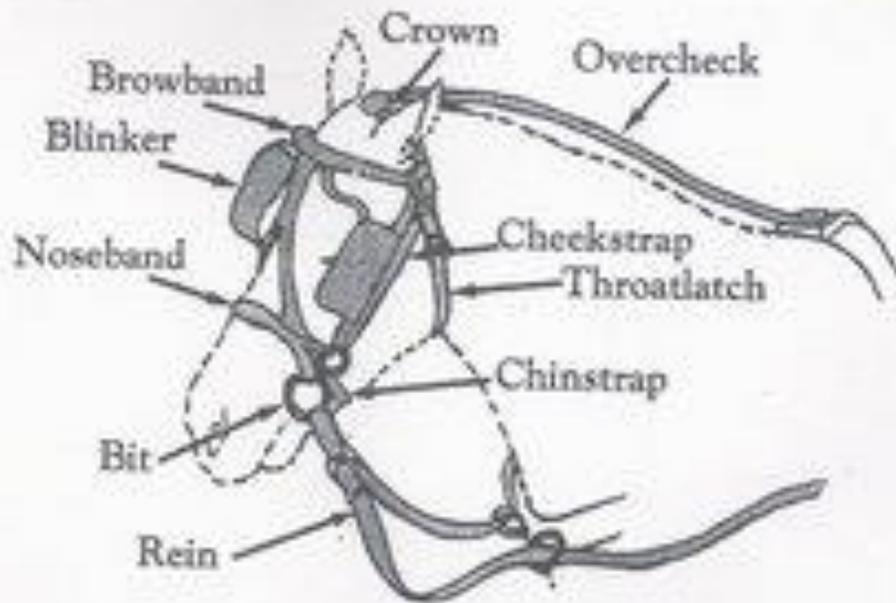
G. Failure to complete the course will result in elimination.

12. Entries who are eliminated from a class are not eligible to place in that class.

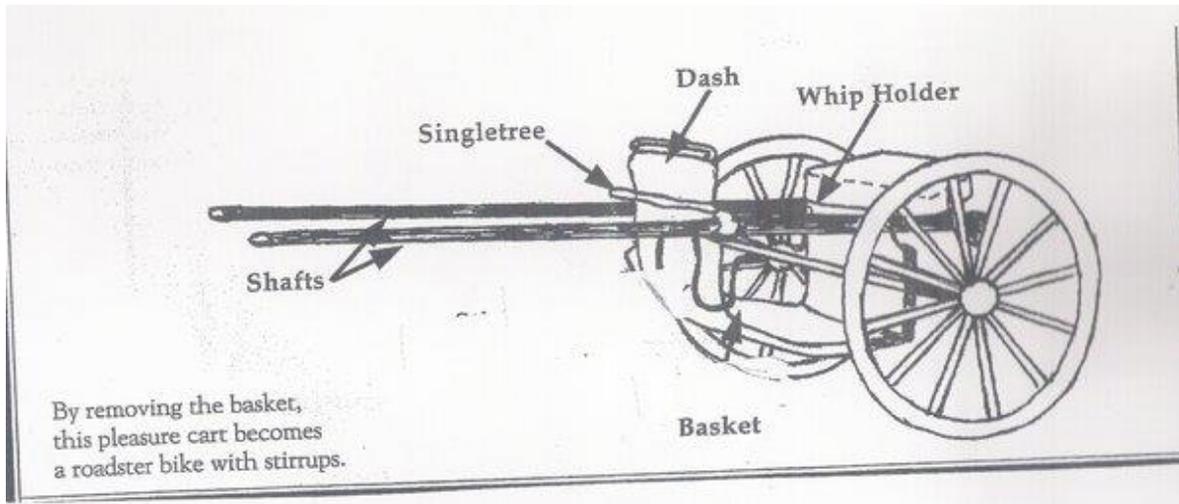
13. Ties for first place will be determined by a drive-off. If a driver refuses a drive-off that driver will be awarded second place.

14. Patterns shall be displayed publicly prior to the competition.

Parts of the Driving Bridle

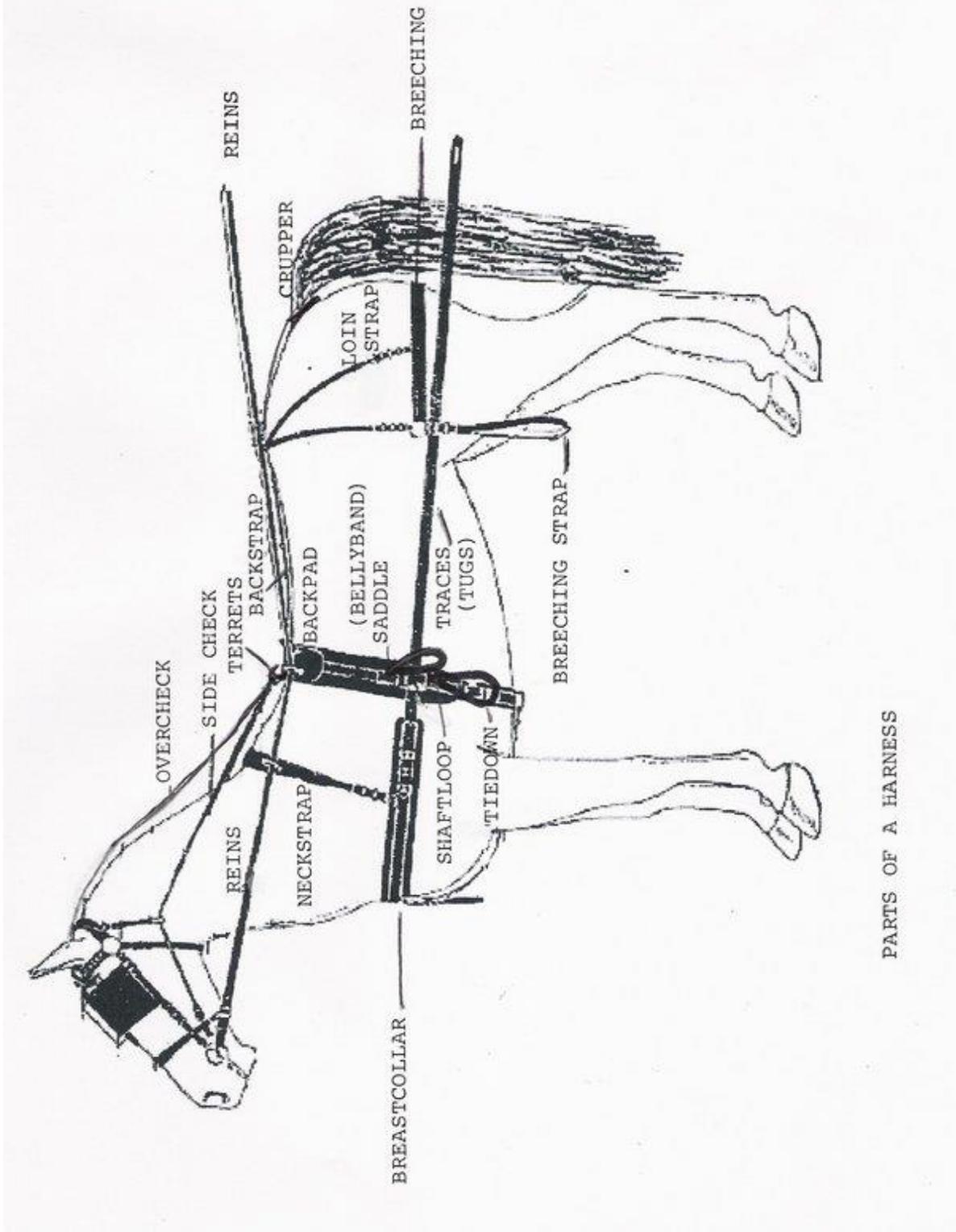


Note: Some parts of the bridle may be called by other names: the browband, cheekstrap, and noseband are collectively called a "headstall" or "cavesson," blinkers can be called "blinders," and the cheekstrap may be called a "cheekpiece."



PARTS OF A CART

These rules and guidelines are a compilation of information gained from a variety of sources including: ADS, AMHA, AMHR, Carriage Driving Webzine, NARHA, HSCart Co, ASPC, and PennState University.



PARTS OF A HARNESS