

NRHA JUDGES' GUIDE

GENERAL JUDGING AND SCORING GUIDELINES

Section 1. As stated in the National Reining Horse Association Bylaws, one of the objectives of the Association is "The development of suitable and proper standards of performance and judging." The *NRHA Handbook* specifies the rules under which all NRHA Reinings will be conducted and the rules by which reining horses will be judged. The following is intended as a guideline for the application of the rules for the judging as specified in the *NRHA Handbook*:

Section 2. The *NRHA Handbook* includes specific patterns which the reining horse must execute exactly, and it also contains certain specific rules involving the penalties which are applied if a horse fails to perform these specific patterns as required. The *NRHA Handbook* also, under Rules for Judging, Section A, describes in detail the standard by which a reining should be judged. This description remains unchanged throughout the evolution of the NRHA, and because of its importance in evaluating a reining horse, is reprinted in full herein. This paragraph clearly defines the quality required of a reining horse and is our strongest tool in providing clear and consistent evaluations of quality.

Section 3. "To rein a horse is not only to guide him, but also to control his every movement. The best reined horse should be willingly guided or controlled with little or no apparent resistance and dictated to completely. Any movement on his own must be considered a lack of control. All deviations from the exact written pattern must be considered a lack of or temporary loss of control; and therefore, a fault that must be marked down according to severity of deviation. After deducting all faults set here within, against execution of the pattern and the horse's overall performance, credit should be given for smoothness, finesse, attitude, quickness and authority of performing various maneuvers, while using controlled speed which raises the difficulty level and makes him more exciting and pleasing to watch to an audience."

Section 4. The scoring of reining horses is on a positive numeric scale with 70 denoting an average performance. NRHA patterns are comprised of several distinct maneuver groups which judges are asked to evaluate on an individual basis dependent on execution as dictated by the pattern description and the rules for judging, and against the quality standard described in Section A. The individual maneuvers are scored in $\frac{1}{2}$ point increments from a low of $-1\frac{1}{2}$ (extremely poor quality) to a high of $+1\frac{1}{2}$ (excellent quality) with a score of 0 denoting a maneuver that is correct with no degree of difficulty. The total of the scores applied to the maneuver groups is combined with the starting score of 70 and from this gross maneuver score, any penalties are deducted to calculate the horse's final score, which is announced after each horse works.

Section 5. An important non penalty consideration for judges is a horse stumbling. If the stumble is severe enough to significantly detract from the quality of the maneuver, NRHA requires a judge to reduce the score $\frac{1}{2}$ point for that maneuver (i.e., very good circles with a plus one evaluation would then become plus $\frac{1}{2}$).

Section 6. Failure to display the correct exhibitor number will result in a \$25 fine. When the judge determines that either the incorrect number is displayed or that no number is displayed, the scribe should note this fact on the score sheet and report the infraction to the Show Representative or Show Steward. The Show Representative/Steward should then note the incident on their Show Report.

Section 7. NRHA believes in the importance of providing challenged riders with the opportunity to compete on a fair basis. The NRHA Judges Committee will evaluate individual requests from challenged riders regarding the use of aids while they exhibit. If an individual is granted special privileges, then he/she will be presented said privileges in writing and must provide a copy of the letter to the show management each time he/she exhibits. The show management is required to present this copy to the judge(s) as well as the individual's draw number and exhibitor number prior to each class in which he/she will be competing. While allowing for the use of the approved aid(s), judge(s) are required to apply penalties and evaluate maneuvers in accordance to NRHA guidelines. If there is any failure in communicating the approval of a rider's aid(s), then the judge should contact the NRHA office immediately.

PENALTY APPLICATION

Section 1. The above describes the manner in which a judge evaluates and scores a horse's execution of the NRHA maneuvers. In addition to this evaluation process, the *NRHA Handbook* specifies certain penalties which are applied should a horse fail to execute a precise maneuver or deviate from performing the exact, written pattern. These penalties, as mentioned above, are subtracted from the score which the judge has awarded the horse, and thus have a negative impact on the final score the horse receives. No NRHA judge is empowered to change or alter the specific penalties listed in the *NRHA Handbook*. The judge's function is to determine whether a penalty has occurred and to apply the appropriate penalty in each instance. The NRHA has specified that in every instance, the horse should receive the benefit of any doubt when these penalties are applied. Therefore, if a judge is uncertain as to whether a horse has incurred a specific penalty, the penalty should not be applied. The application of all penalties is not a qualitative determination (i.e., there is no good or bad way to incur an over spin). Maneuver evaluations and penalty applications are always to be determined independently.

Section 2. The penalties specified in the *NRHA Handbook* are

reviewed annually by the NRHA Board of Directors and Judges Committee. It is the intention of the NRHA that these penalties be applied evenly and without amendment by every judge. It is equally imperative that every judge gives benefit of any doubt he/she may have to the exhibitor when assessing whether in fact a penalty has occurred.

PRE/POST CHECK

Section 1. NRHA requires riders to dismount and drop their bridles for inspection before or after showing, either in the arena for a judge or in close proximity to the arena for the designated judge in multiple judge situations. Failure to comply with this rule shall result in a no score. Judges are required to call all occurrences of illegal equipment, unsportsmanlike conduct, and evidences of abuse, without fail. As with any penalty application within NRHA, judges are advised that should there be any doubt as to whether or not there has been a violation, benefit of this doubt shall always go to the contestant. Also, judges are advised not to drop or assist in dropping bridles for contestants, this is to be done by the contestant or his/her designated assistant.

Section 2. Should the judge responsible for examining horses and equipment determine that a rule violation has occurred, that results in a no score the exhibitor or his/her representative, trainer or guardian may at that time accept the no score and allow the equipment judge to cause the appropriate changes to all score cards or request the other judges confer on the appropriate call. If contested, the equipment judge should so indicate to the other judges immediately, and detain the horse and equipment until it is possible for the other judges to complete an inspection of said violation. In a multiple judge situation where the equipment judge is located outside the arena, any infraction detected by the equipment judge should be examined by all other judges as soon as is practical if contested by the exhibitor.

Section 3.

(a) Show committees have the option of using a pre-check or a post-check. When a pre-check is used, there shall be no routine post-check. A pre-check system should not be used in a single judged event. When a pre-check is used, it is strongly recommended that there be a designated area in close proximity to the pre-check judge for the checked horses to remain until they enter the arena.

(b) When a pre-check is used, the presence of fresh blood or any other evidence that any act of abuse has occurred prior to the check will result in a no score (see Rules for Judging, B. Scoring [4]). If illegal equipment is presented at the pre-check, the exhibitor will not receive a no-score, if he/she is able to correct the problem without delaying the class. If a checked horse leaves the field of vision of the pre-check

judge prior to showing, the pre-check judge is to recheck the horse before allowing it to enter the arena.

(c) In this system the first two horses should be pre-checked 8-10 minutes before the class begins, with all remaining horses checked when they are in-the-hole. It is suggested that the pre-check judge, as soon as the first three horses have been checked, develop the routine of checking each horse as it becomes the in-the-hole horse. This requires the judge to keep track of only two horses at any one time, the already examined on-deck and in-the-hole horses. In addition, this allows each exhibitor time to regain composure and focus following the check, and it gives an exhibitor time to correct an equipment problem should one occur. Before entering the arena each horse will have a final walk around inspection.

(d) When a pre-check system is used, all officiating judges, including the pre-check judge, are compelled to call any acts of abuse to a horse while in the arena. If the situation arises where a chair judge calls a no score, the judge making the call should request that the exhibitor present his/her horse to the pre-check judge for inspection. If a no score is called, the exhibitor can accept or contest the call. If contested, the other judge(s) shall be called as soon as is practical to examine the horse and confer.

NO SCORES

Section 1. The *NRHA Handbook* specifies that horses are to be disqualified and receive a no score if the infractions of “abuse of a horse or misconduct by the rider” are incurred. Misconduct may include failure to present the horse and equipment for inspection before or after completing the pattern and/or any disrespectful or unprofessional conduct by the exhibitor. This includes not dismounting prior to dropping the bridle.

Section 2. While the application of a penalty for abuse requires the discretion of the judge, this judge must make his/her determination based on NRHA guidelines. The NRHA has determined that the exhibition of a horse that is obviously lame or is otherwise in an unhealthy condition must be considered abuse. The exhibition of a horse that has a cut or abrasion showing clear evidence of fresh blood in the mouth, nose, chin, shoulder, barrel, flank or hip area (those areas reasonable to believe the injury may have been caused by the rider or equipment) must be considered abuse regardless of how the injury was caused.

Section 3. Included in the infraction of abuse is the use of illegal equipment. The *NRHA Handbook* specifies the following as illegal equipment:

- (a) bits and snaffle bits with mechanical devices;
- (b) leveraged bits and snaffle bits having mouthpieces constructed from anything other than smooth rounded material, (Note: Twisted wire mouthpieces are illegal);

- (c) Leveraged bits with mouthpiece bar spaces less than $\frac{5}{16}$ " or greater than $\frac{3}{4}$ " diameter;
- (d) nothing may protrude more than $\frac{1}{8}$ " below the mouthpiece (bar);
- (e) *bits with ports exceeding $3\frac{1}{2}$ " in height;
- (f) *snaffle bits with rings smaller than 2" or larger than 4" in diameter;
- (g) *snaffle bits with mouthpieces smaller than $\frac{5}{16}$ ", measured 1" from the cheek. (Note: It should be noted that a conventional snaffle can only be broken in one place. A conventional snaffle may have loose rings. An optional curb strap is acceptable provided it is loose, however curb chains are not acceptable. No minimum or maximum width is required, decorative knots and round material are acceptable.)
- (h) rope or leather bosals with wire, iron or mechanical devices;
- (i) *bosal larger than $\frac{3}{4}$ " diameter on the cheek;
- (j) twisted curb chains or curb chains with barbs and/or wire;
- (k) *wire on bits (Note: Spade bits may have wire wrap on spacer bar only);
- (l) use of tack collars, tie downs, nose bands, electric shocks, whips or bats;
- (m) use of any attachment which alters the movement of or circulation of the tail.

(*See Figures #1 & #2.)

Section 4. Abuse as defined in the *NRHA Handbook* is "That which a reasonable person informed and experienced in generally accepted equine training and exhibition procedures, would determine to be cruel, abusive and inhumane. " A judge is thus compelled to disqualify any horse that he/she feels is being exhibited in a manner which is cruel, abusive and inhumane. This may include the exhibition of an animal which is clearly not in a fit or sound condition, the use of abusive equipment, and/or the use of abusive showing techniques by the rider. A judge(s) may excuse a horse at anytime while in the arena for unsafe conditions or improper exhibition caused by the horse and/or the rider. While each judge is required to disqualify any horse exhibited in the manners described above, it should be noted that in every case the exhibitor should be given the benefit of any doubt, should any doubt exist.

Section 5. Judges are required to report no score situations to the NRHA Representative or Steward with instructions to include the details of said no score in the official show representative's report. Further, a judge (or judges) must present in writing any grievance that he/she may have against contestants or shows to an official officer, director, or duly elected or appointed contestant's representative of the NRHA at the time of the grievance. It should be noted that a judge is not required to post a \$100.00 grievance fee.

PENALTY SCORE ZERO

Section 1. The *NRHA Handbook* specifies certain situations in which a horse will receive a score of 0 regardless of its execution of the pattern. These situations shall be reported by a judge to a scribe as “penalty score zero.” This is extremely important to avoid confusion in the scribe’s recording. The *NRHA Handbook* prohibits the use of more than the index finger between the reins, the changing of hands on the reins, or use of two hands on the reins; however, it specifically outlines situations in which the rider’s free hand may be used to untangle excess rein (any place the horse is allowed to be completely stopped during the pattern). The *NRHA Handbook* also permits the rider to use his/her free hand to hold a romal in the normal fashion; the definition of which is contained hereunder: Exceptions occur in the Snaffle Bit & Hackamore, Freestyle, Youth 10 & Under, NRHA Green and Ride classes. See rules for each class.

Section 2. When using a romal, the rider’s hand shall be around the reins with the wrist kept straight and relaxed, the thumb on top and the hand closed around the reins; no fingers between the reins are allowed. The free hand may be used to hold the romal provided it is held in a relaxed position and there are at least 16 inches of romal from the free hand to the reining hand. Use of the free hand while holding the romal to alter the tension or length of the reins from the bridle to the reining hand is considered to be the use of two hands and a score of 0 will be applied. Consistent with NRHA rules regarding split reins, a rider using a romal may untangle excess rein (romal) any place a horse is allowed to be completely stopped during the pattern.

Section 3. A penalty score 0 shall also be incurred if a horse fails to complete the pattern as written, performs the maneuvers in other than the specified order, and/or includes maneuvers not specified. Included as maneuvers in other than the specified order, is the situation wherein a horse runs circles out of order (i.e., when a small slow and large fast circles are required, and the horse runs a large fast and small slow and large fast set of circles) and on run in patterns, once beginning a canter a complete stop prior to reaching the first marker. In the instance where a horse backs up where a backup is not specified, the penalty score of 0 will be incurred should the horse back more than 2 full strides. It is important to note one stride is defined as the complete movement or steps of all four legs, one time. In this particular situation it is very helpful for a judge to watch and count the steps of the front feet. Up to and including four steps of the front feet in the non required backup receives no penalty. The horse must complete 5 or more consecutive steps backward without stepping forward to be considered an inclusion of a maneuver. Whenever a horse deviates from the exact written pattern by turning more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the geographical circumference of the arena (i.e., an over spin, a turn during a backup,

etc.), the penalty score of 0 will be applied. When a horse stops (completely losing forward motion) where a stop is not required, an inclusion of maneuver has occurred and a penalty score of 0 will be applied. NRHA rules provide for an exception to this rule; a complete stop in the first $\frac{1}{4}$ circumference of a circle after a canter departure is not to be considered an inclusion of maneuver. This allows for a rider to correct a missed lead. It is important to be sure that all other penalties incurred during this situation are applied, including jogging, missed leads, and always a break of gait in lieu of the inclusion of maneuver. (See Figure #3B.)

Section 4. The *NRHA Handbook* further specifies that the refusal of a command (balk) will incur a penalty score of 0. In this instance the judge must determine that the horse blatantly and continuously refused a rider's command. In the case of a spin or a rollback, the judge must differentiate between freeze up (as discussed below) and refusal of command. The *NRHA Handbook* further states that a penalty score of 0 will be applied if a horse jogs in excess of $\frac{1}{2}$ of the circumference of a circle, or $\frac{1}{2}$ the length of the arena. (See Figure #5.) The *NRHA Handbook* also requires judges to apply a penalty score of 0 in the event that a horse or rider falls to the ground or the rider is dislodged. A horse is deemed to have fallen when its shoulder and/or hip and/or underline touches the ground. The *NRHA Handbook* also specifies that each entry must run in order drawn. Note: In multi-go events, finals qualifying horses that get a 0 or scratch will still be eligible for payouts, with a 0 placing higher than a scratch. In the event not enough horses qualify for total purse distribution, the undistributed portion of the purse will be retained by show management.

5 POINT PENALTIES

Section 1. There are four situations that require a judge to apply a five (5) point penalty. These situations are: spurring in front of the cinch, use of either hand to instill fear or praise, holding the saddle with either hand (except in the Youth 10 & Under Short Stirrup class) or blatant disobedience. The application of the spurring rule requires the judge to ensure that contact with the horse was made. The holding the saddle rule does not include incidental, brief contact (i.e., brushing the saddle with the free hand). A rider must be allowed to straighten the latigo any place a horse may be completely stopped during the pattern. The same is true of untangling the horse's mane from the reins. Judges must allow riders to straighten reins at an appropriate place without incurring a holding the saddle or instilling praise penalty. Blatant disobedience includes kicking, biting, bucking, rearing and striking. It should be noted that judge(s) may confer and/or review the video on five (5) point penalties in accordance with NRHA rules. Therefore, it is helpful for judges in multiple judged events to require scribes to

acknowledge the existence of a five (5) point penalty when reporting the score. If a lack of concurrence exists, then show management would be alerted and scores would be held pending video review or conference.

2 POINT PENALTIES

Section 1. A judge is required to apply a two (2) point penalty should a horse break gait during the execution of a pattern. The requirement here is to determine gait has been broken, not what gait or if actually a gait was reached by transition. An important consideration is a horse which, while executing a required downward speed transition, has its rear feet briefly slip on the ground without loss of the overall cadence and stride of the lope should not receive a 2 point break of gait penalty. If gait is clearly broken, it should receive the appropriate 2 point penalty. Further, should the horse stop during the downward speed transition (completely lose forward motion) an inclusion of maneuver will have occurred resulting in a penalty score of 0.

Section 2. If a horse freezes up in a spin or rollback, a 2 point penalty will be applied. The NRHA defines a freeze up as a brief but obvious refusal to start a spin or rollback or any complete stoppage of a horse's lateral shoulder movement which delays the execution of a spin or rollback. (See Figure #3A.) A judge thus must determine whether there was a momentary complete stoppage of lateral shoulder movement in a spin or rollback. It is not necessary to determine if the freeze up was caused by the horse or rider (i.e. a rider who spins 3 times, stops his/her horse and realizes the error and immediately completes the 4th spin, shall receive a freeze up penalty).

Section 3. It is required in patterns that begin in the center of the arena with a canter departure, the departure be executed from a walk or stopped position; failure to do so shall result in a judge applying a 2 point penalty. It should be noted that patterns beginning with spins at the center of the arena, failure to complete spins in the prescribed area would result in a reduction of the maneuver evaluation. On all run-in patterns, a judge is required to apply a 2 point penalty for failing to be in a canter prior to reaching the first marker or for a break of gait prior to the first marker. (See Figure #5.)

Section 4. NRHA patterns require a horse to run past a marker placed in the arena prior to stopping. If the horse does not completely pass the specified marker before assuming a stop position, a penalty of 2 points is to be applied. It is important to note that this penalty is to be applied if the horse assumes a stop position (rear legs up underneath, setting up) whether or not this stop is completed. Further, the judge, by applying this penalty, is only reflecting the fact it happened, and should not be concerned with whether it was caused by the horse or by the rider. Judges should note that it is their responsibility to insure that these markers are placed correctly, and in such

a fashion that a horse could reasonably be expected to go past them before executing a stop or rollback maneuver. The NRHA has specified that the end markers be no less than 50' from the end wall or fence of the arena.

LEAD PENALTIES

Section 1. Each time a horse is out of lead, a judge is required to penalize it by 1 point. The penalty for being out of a lead is cumulative, and the judge will add 1 penalty point for each 1/4 of the circumference of a circle or any part thereof that a horse is out of lead. (See Figure #4.) A judge is further required to penalize a horse ½ of a point for a change of lead delayed by one stride where a change of lead is required by the pattern. It should be noted that a gait is specified, but no lead is specified in the instance of run downs either on the side of the arena or through the middle of the arena, and no penalty is incurred for a horse changing leads in these areas. (See Figures #6 & #7.)

Section 2. In patterns where a horse is required to make a run around the end of the arena, the horse must be on a specific lead while rounding the end of the arena. The horse is required to be on the specified lead as soon as it completes the 1st straight portion of the run-around and begins to turn the corner of the arena. Failure to be in the correct lead beyond this point will result in the following penalties being assigned:

- a) From the turn to the halfway position at the end wall –1 point.
- b) Beyond the halfway point up to the beginning of the run down –2 points.
- c) It should be noted NRHA has determined there to be no correct lead on a straight line. Therefore, changing leads in a straight line is not to be penalized, though it may or may not demonstrate resistance to being dictated to completely which must be dealt with in maneuver evaluation. (See Figures #6 & #7.)

Section 3. In the instance where a pattern requires a ½ circle prior to beginning a run down to the other end of the arena (i.e., patterns #2 & 4), failure to be on a specified lead should be penalized as follows:

- a) 1 point - beyond one stride up to ¼ circumference of circle
- b) 2 points - beyond ¼ circumference of circle up to the entire half circle. (See Figure #6.)

Section 4. In classes which allow simple lead changes, the ideal change is to jog for one stride to change leads. Any deviation from the ideal change that takes place in the lead change area as described by the *Handbook* would not incur a penalty but deserves less credit. In order of decreasing difficulty would be jogging more than one stride, walking rather than jogging, stopping during the change and finally more than one attempt to execute the change. Penalties would apply if the lead change was early or late just as they would for a flying lead change.

JOG PENALTIES

Section 1. Inasmuch as a horse is required to be in a lope or a canter throughout the reining pattern, a penalty must be applied for starting a circle or exiting a rollback at a jog. Jogging up to two strides incurs a $\frac{1}{2}$ point penalty. Jogging beyond two strides will incur a 2 point penalty. (See Figure #5.) In determining whether a $\frac{1}{2}$ or 2 point penalty has been incurred it is useful for a judge to consider the distance traveled and to count the steps of the rear legs. Four steps and under would represent two or less strides and require a $\frac{1}{2}$ point penalty; five steps and more, therefore, require a 2 point penalty.

SPIN PENALTIES

Section 1. When performing the spin maneuver, horses are required to stop and start in a precise direction within the arena. Failure to stop a spin with some portion of the horse's shoulder and hip aligned with the proper position will result in a penalty. A horse can only be assessed one over or under spin penalty per maneuver. The penalties assigned to over and under spinning are as follows:

- a) Over or under spinning beyond a shoulder width and up to $\frac{1}{8}$ of the circumference of the spin- $\frac{1}{2}$ point penalty.
- b) Over or under spinning up to $\frac{1}{4}$ of the circumference of the spin 1 point penalty.
- c) If a horse over spins by more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the circumference of a spin, an additional maneuver is deemed to have been included and a score of 0 will be applied. It should be noted that the shoulder width tolerance applied when determining the first $\frac{1}{8}$ over or under spin should not be applied when determining the severity of the deviation (i.e. the determination of a $\frac{1}{2}$ or a 1 point penalty or the determination of a 1 point penalty or a 0 score).
- d) In the instance where a horse under spins by more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the circumference of a spin and is properly realigned before starting the next maneuver, it shall be considered a freeze up in the spin and a 2 point penalty will be assigned. (See Figure #3A.)

WALL PENALTY

Section 1. In NRHA patterns that require a horse to run around the end of the arena, it is specified the horse must remain a minimum of 20 feet from the side of the arena when approaching a stop and/or rollback. Failure to do so will result in a $\frac{1}{2}$ point penalty.

REVIEWS

Section 1. If the judge is unsure as to whether a major penalty has occurred (i.e., no score, a 0 score, or a 5 point penalty) the judge will submit his/her score and ask that the score be held pending a conference or a review of the video at the next drag. Further, it must be remembered that the *NRHA*

Handbook does not allow judges to confer as to any penalty or maneuver score prior to submitting a score. Video reviews may only be utilized in the instance where the judge believes that all entrants have been videotaped by an official videographer. A judge shall not be required to change his/her score following a conference or video review, each judge's decision is an individual call.

Section 2. Judges must continue to score no scores and 0 scores in a multiple judged or videotaped event. This allows for video review and/or conference with the other judge(s) without the potential bias that could exist if a judge should need to reverse his/her original decision or rely on memory to score the run. Whether or not a class is videotaped or multiple judged, it is suggested that NRHA judges continue to mark all runs whenever possible, as a service to our members.

Section 3. An exhibitor or owner in the respective class may request a review of a major penalty (penalty score zero and 5 point penalty). The judge(s) has the right to deny or honor the request. If honored by the judge(s) he/she must believe the entire class was videotaped by an official videographer. The request must be made no later than 30 minutes after the last run of the day and before the judge(s) has left the grounds for the day. In cases where a class is run in sections over multiple days, each day's scores will be official thirty minutes after the last run of each section. Exhibitors or owners may not have direct contact with the judge(s) during the entire process of requesting a review. The request must be submitted to the Show Steward, Show Representative, or if need, Show Management who will take the request to the judge(s)

MANEUVERS

As mentioned earlier, judges are required to score a reining horse based on its execution of the maneuver groups required in each pattern. All NRHA patterns are divided into seven or eight maneuver groups. Descriptions of ideal maneuvers required of a reining horse are as follows:

Walk-in

The walk-in brings the horse from the gate to the center of the arena to begin its pattern. The horse should appear relaxed and confident. Any action which may create the appearance of intimidation including starting and stopping, or checking is a fault which shall be marked down according to the severity in the first maneuver score.

Trot-in

Horses must jog the majority of the way to the center. Failure to jog the majority of the way to the center will result in a 0 for failure to complete the pattern as written.

Stops

Stops are the act of slowing the horse from a lope to a stop position by bringing the hind legs under the horse in a locked position sliding on the hind feet. The horse should enter the stop position by bending the back, bringing the hind legs further under the body while maintaining forward motion and ground contact and cadence with front legs. Throughout the stop, the horse should continue in a straight line while maintaining ground contact with the hind feet.

Spins

Spins are a series of 360-degree turns, executed over a stationary (inside) hind leg. Propulsion for the spin is supplied by the outside rear leg and front legs, and contact should be made with the ground and a front leg. The location of hindquarters should be fixed at the start of the spin and maintained throughout the spins. It is helpful for a judge to watch for the horse to remain in the same location, rather than watching for a stationary inside leg. This allows for easier focus on other elements of the spin (i.e., cadence, attitude, smoothness, finesse, and speed).

Rollbacks

Rollbacks are the 180 degree reversal of forward motion completed by running to a stop, rolling (turning) the shoulders back to the opposite direction over the hocks and departing in a canter, as one continuous motion. The *NRHA Handbook* states no hesitation; however, a slight pause to regain footing or balance should not be deemed hesitation. The horse should not step ahead or backup prior to rolling back.

Circles

Circles are maneuvers at the lope, of designated size and speed, which demonstrate control, willingness to guide, and degree of difficulty in speed and speed changes. Circles must at all times be run in the geographical area of the arena specified in the pattern description and must have a common center point. There must be a clearly defined difference in the speed and size of a small, slow circle, and a large, fast circle; also, the speed and size of small, slow right circles should be similar to the small, slow left circles; and the speed and size of the large, fast right circles should be similar to the large, fast left circles.

Backups

A backup is a maneuver requiring the horse to be moved in a reverse motion in a straight line a required distance; at least 10 feet.

Hesitate

To hesitate is the act of demonstrating the horse's ability to pause in a relaxed manner, at a designated time in the pattern. All NRHA patterns require a hesitation at the end of the final maneuver to indicate to the judge(s) the completion of the pattern.

Lead Changes

Lead changes are the act of changing the leading legs of the front and rear pairs of legs, at a lope, when changing the direction traveled. The lead change must be executed at a lope with no change of gait or speed and be performed in the exact geographical position in the arena specified in the pattern description. The change of front and rear leads must take place within the same stride to avoid penalty.

Run Downs and Run-arounds

Run downs are runs through the middle of the arena, and runs along the side and ends of the arena. Run downs and run-arounds should demonstrate control and gradual increase in speed to the stop.

PATTERN DESCRIPTIONS

The NRHA has divided its patterns into sets of seven or eight maneuver groups, which are scored as described earlier. These patterns break down as follows:

PATTERN 1

Maneuver 1

Run down the middle, past the end marker, left rollback

Maneuver 2

Run down the middle, past the opposite end marker, right rollback

Maneuver 3

Run down the middle, past the center marker, stop, backup, hesitate

Maneuver 4

4 right spins, hesitate

Maneuver 5

4 1/4 left spins, hesitate

Maneuver 6

Left circles departure, large fast, small slow, large fast, lead change

Maneuver 7

Right circles large fast, small slow, large fast, lead change

Maneuver 8

Complete 3/4's of a large fast left circle, run down side past center marker, stop, hesitate

PATTERN 2

Maneuver 1

Right circles departure, small slow, two large fast, change leads

Maneuver 2

Left circles small slow, two large fast, change leads

Maneuver 3

Continue around previous circle to the right. At the top of the circle, run down the middle past end marker, right rollback

Maneuver 4

Run down middle past the opposite end marker, left rollback

Maneuver 5

Run down middle past the center marker, stop, backup, hesitate

Maneuver 6

4 right spins, hesitate

Maneuver 7

4 left spins, hesitate

PATTERN 3**Maneuver 1**

Run around the end of arena, run down side past center marker, left rollback

Maneuver 2

Run around end of arena, run down side past center marker, right rollback

Maneuver 3

Right circles two large fast, one small slow, change leads

Maneuver 4

Left circles two large fast, one small slow, change leads

Maneuver 5

Run $\frac{3}{4}$'s of a large fast circle, run completely around the arena, past center marker, stop, back up, hesitate

Maneuver 6

4 right spins, hesitate

Maneuver 7

4 left spins, hesitate

PATTERN 4**Maneuver 1**

Right circles departure, two large fast, small slow, stop, hesitate

Maneuver 2

4 right spins, hesitate

Maneuver 3

Left circles departure, two large fast, small slow, stop, hesitate

Maneuver 4

4 left spins, hesitate

Maneuver 5

Depart right lead, figure eight, lead change

Maneuver 6

Continue around previous circle to the right. At the top of the circle, run down the middle past end marker, right rollback

Maneuver 7

Run down middle past opposite end marker, left rollback

Maneuver 8

Run down middle past center marker, stop, backup, hesitate

PATTERN 5**Maneuver 1**

Left circles departure, two large fast, small slow, stop, hesitate

Maneuver 2

4 left spins, hesitate

Maneuver 3

Right circles departure, two large fast, small slow, stop, hesitate

Maneuver 4

4 right spins, hesitate

Maneuver 5

Depart left lead, figure eight, change leads

Maneuver 6

Run $\frac{3}{4}$'s of a large fast left circle, run down side past center marker, right rollback

Maneuver 7

Run around end of arena, run down side past center marker, left rollback

Maneuver 8

Run around end of arena, run down side past center marker, stop, backup, hesitate

PATTERN 6**Maneuver 1**

4 right spins, hesitate

Maneuver 2

4 left spins, hesitate

Maneuver 3

Left circles departure, two large fast, small slow, change leads

Maneuver 4

Right circles two large fast, small slow, change leads

Maneuver 5

Run $\frac{3}{4}$'s of a large fast left circle, run down side past center marker, right rollback

Maneuver 6

Run around end of arena, run down side past center marker, left rollback

Maneuver 7

Run around end of arena, run down side past center marker, stop, backup, hesitate

PATTERN 7**Maneuver 1**

Run down middle past end marker, left rollback

Maneuver 2

Run down middle past opposite end marker, right rollback

Maneuver 3

Run down middle past center marker, stop, backup, hesitate

Maneuver 4

4 right spins, hesitate

Maneuver 5

$4\frac{1}{4}$ left spins, hesitate

Maneuver 6

Right circles departure, two large fast, small slow, change leads

Maneuver 7

Left circles two large fast, small slow, change leads

Maneuver 8

Run $\frac{3}{4}$'s of a large fast right circle, run down side past center marker, stop, hesitate

PATTERN 8**Maneuver 1**

4 left spins, hesitate

Maneuver 2

4 right spins, hesitate

Maneuver 3

Right circles departure, large fast, small slow, large fast, change leads

Maneuver 4

Left circles large fast, small slow, large fast, change leads

Maneuver 5

Run $\frac{3}{4}$'s of a large fast right circle, run down side past center marker, left rollback

Maneuver 6

Run around end of arena, run down side past center marker, right rollback

Maneuver 7

Run around end of arena, run down side past center marker, stop, backup, hesitate

PATTERN 9**Maneuver 1**

Run down middle past center marker, stop, backup, hesitate

Maneuver 2

4 right spins, hesitate

Maneuver 3

4 $\frac{1}{4}$ left spins, hesitate

Maneuver 4

Left circles departure, small slow, two large fast, change leads

Maneuver 5

Right circles small slow, two large fast, change leads

Maneuver 6

Run $\frac{3}{4}$'s of a large fast left circle, run down side past center marker, right rollback

Maneuver 7

Run around end of arena, run down side past center marker, left rollback

Maneuver 8

Run around end of arena, run down side past center marker, stop, hesitate

PATTERN 10**Maneuver 1**

Run down middle past center marker, stop, backup, hesitate

Maneuver 2

4 right spins, hesitate

Maneuver 3

4 $\frac{1}{4}$ left spins, hesitate

Maneuver 4

Right circles departure, two large fast, small slow, change leads

Maneuver 5

Left circles small slow, two large fast, change leads

Maneuver 6

Run $\frac{3}{4}$'s of a large fast right circle, run down side past center marker, left rollback

Maneuver 7

Run around end of arena, run down side past center marker, right rollback

Maneuver 8

Run around end of arena, run down side past center marker, stop, hesitate

PATTERN 11

Maneuver 1

4 left spins, hesitate

Maneuver 2

4 right spins, hesitate

Maneuver 3

Right circles—departure, small slow, two large fast, change leads

Maneuver 4

Left circles—small slow, two large fast, change leads

Maneuver 5

Continue around previous circle to the right. At the top of the circle, run down the middle past end marker, right rollback

Maneuver 6

Run down middle past the opposite end marker, left rollback

Maneuver 7

Run down middle past center marker, stop, backup, hesitate

PATTERN 12

(FOR USE WITH 10 & UNDER SHORT STIRRUP ONLY)

Maneuver 1

Left circles – stop, hesitate

Maneuver 2

2 left spins - hesitate

Maneuver 3

Right circles – stop, hesitate

Maneuver 4

2 right spins – hesitate

Maneuver 5

Run around end of arena, run down right side past the center marker, right rollback

Maneuver 6

Run around end of arena, run down left side past the center marker, stop, back up.

The following are allowance made for the Short Stirrup class only:

1. Riders are allowed to choose the size and speed of the circles. Excessive speed will result in a maneuver deduction.

2. Riders are allowed to hold the saddle without penalty.
3. Closed reins may be used and include but are not limited to romal, roping, crossed, knotted, or taped reins.
4. Riders are allowed to ride with one or two hands at any time during the class.

A. SCORING

(1) The NRHA requires that the score for each run be reflected on a maneuver by maneuver and penalty by penalty basis utilizing a scribe and an NRHA score sheet. This score sheet represents a judge's report to an exhibitor of how a score was derived, and it is critical that this report to the exhibitor be accurate.

(2) In the name of accuracy, it is important that the judge not average scores for maneuvers (i.e., a $+\frac{1}{2}$ spin and a $-\frac{1}{2}$ spin = two 0 spins, etc.). A judge must, at the completion of each maneuver, evaluate the maneuver on the scale listed below as an individual component of the entire run.

(3) In keeping with this practice, it is also critically important that a judge not average penalties into maneuver scores. Penalties are evaluated on a separate criteria than maneuver scores and should not at any time be combined with maneuver scores (i.e., a $+\frac{1}{2}$ spin with a $\frac{1}{2}$ point over spin penalty does not = a 0 maneuver score). It is also important for a judge not to allow a penalty to adversely affect the scoring of the maneuver, unless the quality was truly affected.

(4) One key element in accurately describing the scoring of the entire run to the exhibitor is the judge's scribe. It is management's responsibility to supply a scribe at every official NRHA event; however, it is the judge's responsibility to ensure that the scribe is properly trained prior to beginning the first run of the day. The judge must confirm that the scribe understands the fundamentals of recording both maneuver scores and penalty scores. It is recommended that judges verify that the addition of the maneuver scores and penalties is correct at the completion of the run. As part of the training process for the scribe, the judge should make certain that his/her communications are clear to the scribe. To ensure this clear communication, the judge and scribe should agree upon a method of speaking, so that maneuver scores and penalty scores are not confused (i.e., a judge will say a number for a maneuver score and will say "penalty" and a number for a penalty, thus allowing the scribe to place the appropriate score in the appropriate box on the score sheet). Scribes should be advised to record all scores and penalties in fractions as opposed to decimals to prevent errors in tabulating the final scores. If for any reason a judge does not believe that a scribe is competent, he/she should ask show management to replace the scribe immediately. An example of a correctly completed score sheet is illustrated in Figure #8 of this guide. Judges must sign every completed score sheet.

B. MANEUVER SCORES

(1) As described earlier in this guide, the NRHA has divided each pattern into sets of maneuvers. It is the judge's responsibility to evaluate these maneuver groups individually and rate each maneuver group on the following scale:

-1½	Extremely Poor
-1	Very Poor
-½	Poor
0	Correct
+½	Good
+1	Very Good
+1½	Excellent

(2) In evaluating a maneuver, a judge should consider the horse's performance based on the following hierarchy of concerns:

a) On pattern: The judge must ensure that the maneuver being performed by horse and rider is the correct maneuver as dictated by pattern.

b) Correctness: Having ascertained that the horse and rider are performing the maneuver required by the pattern, the judge must then ascertain whether the maneuver is being executed correctly. In this regard, the judge must evaluate the performance of the maneuver against the requirements of the maneuver descriptions listed in this guide. In each group of maneuvers, the judge must ascertain that the horse has been dictated to completely and the basic elements of the maneuver have been fulfilled regardless of the degree of difficulty. In the instance where horse and rider have failed to correctly perform the maneuver, the judge will deduct for a substandard performance. This deduction ranges from -½ to -1½ for the maneuver.

c) Degree of difficulty: Having ascertained that the horse and rider are on pattern and have performed the maneuver group correctly, a judge must evaluate the degree of difficulty in completing the maneuver. In the instance where the horse has correctly performed the maneuver and has exhibited some degree of difficulty, a judge will assess the degree of difficulty on a scale of +½ to +1½. Credit for degree of difficulty should be given for using smoothness, fineness, attitude, quickness, authority and controlled speed while completing a correct maneuver.

(3) It is recommended that a judge use the same scale for evaluating a maneuver, regardless of the level of competition at an NRHA event and regardless of ground and other conditions. When utilizing the above scoring methodology, it is critically important that a judge evaluate the entire maneuver group. For example, in maneuver six of pattern eight, a judge is required to evaluate all of the following:

- (a) the run around the end of the arena
- (b) the approach to the stop
- (c) the stop
- (d) the rollback

(e) the exit from the rollback

(4) An over emphasis of any component of the maneuver group will cause an inaccurate maneuver score.

(5) It should be noted when applying the previously described hierarchy, that during the various components of a maneuver group, a horse and rider may exhibit varying degrees of correctness and difficulty. Incorrect form, a particular component of the maneuver group does not disqualify the horse and rider from correcting the form, therefore being eligible for credit depending on degree of difficulty. For example, a horse that begins a spin incorrectly for one revolution then corrects the form and achieves a high degree of difficulty in the last three rotations would receive a score for the maneuver combining a minus score for the first rotation and a plus score for the final three rotations. Judges are required to generate a maneuver score that accurately reflects the combined correctness and degree of difficulty of the various components of a maneuver group.

C. MISCONDUCT/RE-RIDES

(1) In order to ensure that each and every exhibitor has the unconditional attention of the judge, it is imperative that the judges be allowed to concentrate on the performance of an exhibitor. In this regard, a judge must ensure that show management has provided an environment which provides for said concentration. Should any exhibitor(s) or person(s) in proximity to the show arena conduct him/her self in a manner distracting to the judge, he/she should not continue evaluating horses until the distraction has been removed by show management.

(2) If the conduct of any exhibitor is disrespectful to a judge, the judge has the right to refuse judging the exhibitor for the remainder of the show, and may request show management remove the exhibitor from the show grounds.

(3) If an unavoidable circumstance (i.e., a fault suddenly appearing in the arena, an unpredictable major distraction to the horse, etc.) disrupts a horse and rider's pattern, the judge may allow for a re-ride. In the event a judge believes that a re-ride is warranted, he/she will ask his/her scribe to inform show management immediately upon completion of the pattern. In the case where a horse was able to complete the pattern, but a re-ride was warranted, the score should be held until the rider decides whether to exercise the re-ride option. An exhibitor who has been allowed the option of a re-ride may at his/her option:

(a) not re-ride the pattern, and be awarded the score for their original ride, **OR**

(b) re-ride the pattern in an order of go dictated by show management in consultation with judge(s), and accept the score for the second run only. A horse should never be required to rerun immediately following the original run. Rather, a sufficient amount of time should be given for the horse to

rest (approximately 5 minutes). This should prevent a horse from being exhibited while in a fatigued condition.

(4) Show management, the NRHA Representative and the exhibitor have no right to petition a judge for a re-ride. Any re-ride must be entirely at the judge's prerogative.

D. REPORTS/CONDUCT

(1) Any person assuming the responsibilities of an NRHA judge is acting at all times as an NRHA official. A judge's conduct on and off the show ground must be exemplary and a reflection of the standards required by the National Reining Horse Association. A judge's judging privileges may be removed by the NRHA at any time for conduct not considered to reflect favorably upon the National Reining Horse Association.

(2) In the capacity of an official of the NRHA, it is a judge's responsibility to ensure that all deviations from NRHA standards by exhibitors or show management be noted on the NRHA representative's report. This report should include any and all examples of unprofessional conduct by exhibitors, any insufficiencies or inequities by show management, unsportsmanlike conduct by any individual, and report inhumane treatment of a horse either during exhibition or on the show grounds. It is important that a judge be aware of whom the NRHA representative is and communicates with this individual before and after the show to ensure the NRHA representative's report includes any and all concerns of the judge.

(3) When a judge agrees to officiate at an NRHA event, he/she is responsible as an official of the NRHA for ensuring that all contractual obligations with show management are both explicit and fulfilled. Any miscommunication between show management and a judge will be deemed by NRHA to be a judge's responsibility. When a judge agrees to officiate an NRHA event, it becomes his/her responsibility to ensure the obligation is fulfilled. If a judge is unable to fulfill the obligation, it is his/her responsibility to ensure that a qualified replacement judge is available under terms suitable to the management of the event. Judges are also required to notify the NRHA office of said change.

(4) In order to fully utilize training and judging methodologies, it is imperative that all NRHA judges ensure they arrive to officiate an NRHA event in a physically well condition (i.e., well rested, prepared, on time, etc.). Judge(s) shall not appear on the show grounds more than one (1) hour prior to the scheduled start of the show unless as directed by show management.

(5) The NRHA is committed to providing its membership with the best possible judging at all levels of competition. In order to ensure this, the Association has and will continue to provide comprehensive judges applicant seminars and schools at a low cost to the individual participant in key areas throughout the reining world. The NRHA Judges Committee encourages feedback from judges, and any comments that might assist the Committee to ensure that all judging is of world class caliber.