

American Indian Horse Show Rules

As AIHR is dedicated to the preservation and use of the American Indian Horse, the events in an AIHR approved show are designed to favor the versatile, handy, calm and capable event mount rather than the short sprinter-type animal which has been trained to run a specific pattern as fast as possible.

Judged classes (both halter and performance) favor the horse of superior ground-covering type necessary for distance riding. Excessive fat, hoof size too small for body weight and heavy muscle valued by certain modern breeds are penalized in Indian Horse competition. Extreme collection is also not to be desired since Indian Horses are expected to be able to carry their riders in a smooth and comfortable manner while still covering ground as efficiently as possible. Grooming of the Indian Horse should be kept to that necessary for cleanliness only. Clipping of hair or pulling of mane and tail is undesirable in the American Indian Horse, a breed which is shown in its natural state. However, it is not to be penalized in horses which are clipped for other open or all-breed competitions.

Painting of horses with Indian symbols using washable paints or natural pigments and making show halters or decorating nylon halters with Indian style ornamentation such as feathers, bells, beadwork, etc. is part of the fun of Indian Horse showmanship. Paint charts are available from the AIHR showing appropriate symbols and their meanings.

Suggestions for possible judges: All judges used in AIHR approved shows must be familiar with good Indian Horse conformation. Experience judging modern breeds is not in itself sufficient to qualify a judge to place AIHR classes. For example, judges should not place straight legs over serviceably sound legs which do not cause interference and often the Originals and their hybrids will show lateral action or “winging” in the front. Suggestions for judges for AIHR approved shows include: AIHR officials, experts from other Mustang registries with similar standards to AIHR, competitive trail judges (veterinarian or horsemanship) or BLM experts who appreciate the American Indian Horse. It is suggested that AIHR judges be able to explain their placings before dismissing a class.

Halter Classes:

General Judging Criteria: Emphasis shall not be on modern conformation type (of any breed), but rather on soundness and stamina. Judge should not place the horses as he or she believes that they would perform on a full day's ride over challenging terrain—and then consider the animals potential readiness to do the same day after day. Straight legs are not to be considered over serviceably sound legs, but defects causing soundness difficulties such as interference should be heavily penalized. Modern breed conformation criteria which may potentially cause soundness problems in long distance riding such as feet too small for body weight; heavy bunchy muscling; excessively wide (as opposed to deep) barrel is not desirable in the Indian Horse.

No particular head shape is best as the dished face of the Arabian, the ram nose of the Barb, as well as a modern, straight profile may be found in the Indian Horse, but large, wide-set eyes, full nostrils and alert ears are preferred. Parrot mouth may cause grazing problems and inefficient chewing, and is highly inheritable, so such animals are penalized by AIHR judges.

Hooves may be striped, solid, or white or any combination, but should be strong with well-arched soles, good heels, and medium to thick walls. Hoof black, varnish or other coloring or shining of the hooves is highly discourages, but hooves should be clean and in a healthy condition.

Color Classes are to be placed as the judge feels that an Indian warrior might choose his most honored mount: his war horse or buffalo horse. This class should be placed 50% color, 30% soundness, 20% conformation and attitude.

Halter Classes:

- (1) **Current Year and Yearling Foals:** May separate colts and fillies or show both sexes together. Separate classes should be offered for (A) and (AA), (M), then (O). If enough entries justify the classes, (A) and (AA) should also be split.
- (2) **Fillies, Colts, and Geldings:** Two year olds, three year olds, and four year olds. May separate colts and fillies or show both sexes together. Classes should be offered for (A) and (AA), (M), then (O). If enough entries justify the classes, (A) and (AA) should also be split.
- (3) **Aged Mares:** Classes should be offered for (A) and (AA), (M), then (O). If enough entries justify the classes (A) and (AA) should also be split.
- (4) **Aged Stallions & Geldings:** May separate stallions and geldings or show both together. Classes should be offered for (A) and (AA), (M), then (O). If enough entries justify the classes, (A) and (AA) should also be split.
- (5) **Champion and Reserve Champion Indian Pony Class:** All Indian ponies are shown together until their numbers justify classes by age and sex. First and second place ponies are Grand and Reserve Champion Indian Ponies.
- (6) **Junior Color Class:** For colorful Indian Horses four years old or younger. All sexes. Color classes may be split into solid and "broken" color classes or shown together.
- (7) **Senior Color Class:** For colorful Indian Horses over four years of age. All sexes. Color classes may be split into solid and "broken" color classes or show together.
- (8) **Color Champion Class:** First and second place horses from junior and senior color classes return to the ring. Judge shall place his or her choice of the two most colorful horses Grand and Reserve Color Champions.
- (9) **Champion and Reserve Champion (A) Class:** All (A) horses placing first or second in their classes return to the ring. If (A) shows with (AA), top two (A) horses from each class return to the ring regardless of their actual placing in the class. In this case, it is suggested that show management notify top two (A) and (AA) in each class to return for champion classes. Judge shall place top two horses Grand and Reserve.
- (10) **Champion and Reserve Champion (AA) Class:** All (AA) horses placing first or second in their classes return to the ring. If (AA) shows with (A), top two (AA) horses from each class return to the ring regardless of their actual placing in the class. In this case, it is suggested that show management notify top two (A) and (AA) in each class to return for champion classes. Judge shall place top two horses Grand and Reserve.
- (11) **Champion and Reserve Champion (M) Class:** All (M) horses placing first or second in their classes return to ring. Judge shall place top two horses Grand and Reserve.
- (12) **Champion and Reserve Champion (O) Class:** All (O) horses placing first or second in their classes return to the ring. Judge shall place top two horses Grand and Reserve.

Performance Classes: Classes should be picked from those listed below. AIHR approved show performance classes should be roughly half judged and half timed classes, but show management should pick desired classes to fill time requirements and prop availability for each show.

Judged Performance Classes:

- (1) **Frontier Period Costume Class:** Costumes shall be those appropriate to the Indian Horse from the Spanish exploration and Spanish colonial periods to the end of the frontier period. Judge shall place the class with most points given for authenticity and then for crowd appeal.
- (2) **American Indian Costume Class:** Costumes shall be from any tribe of North American Indians, which used the Indian Horse. Judge shall place the class with most points given for authenticity and then for crowd appeal.
- (3) **Tejas Pleasure Class:** Horses to be shown at a walk, trot (or easy gait), extended trot (or road gait), lope (or canter) and (if judge chooses) hand gallop both ways of the ring. Horses should be

well in hand and working calmly, but extremely low head carriage and extreme collection will be penalized.

All gaits should be judged for suitability to distance work such as modern competitive trail riding or endurance riding or frontier work such as riding fence in the big ranch country or “riding down” a herd of wild Mustangs. A slow gaited docile horse should not be preferred over an alert, active animal. Controlled spirit to be preferred over “zombie-like” robotic response so long as the horse responds to rider’s guidance smoothly and quickly. Ground-covering ability is desired, especially in the faster gaits, but the superior horse will have the smoothness of gait as well as the ability to cover ground.

Horses may be asked to slow, stop or reverse. Horses may be required to back if the judge chooses. Mounts should stop and back smoothly, but a sliding stop is not preferred to a smooth, controlled slowing. If the judge chooses to facilitate placing the class, individual entries may be worked off, separated from the rest of the class.

Faults include breaking gait, head-tossing, chomping bit, wringing tail, wrong lead, interference in any gait, poor wind, poor physical conditioning, kicking, biting, bucking, or threatening other entries, failure to follow judge’s instructions, or other faults at the judge’s discretion. Riders whom the judge feels are not in good control of their mounts may be asked to leave the ring. Any conformation defect leading to interference should be penalized by subtracting points from gait (or gaits) in which interference occurs. Horses should be shown in any humane western-style bridle and saddle, but tie-downs or running martingales or other head-setting devices are prohibited. Riders should be attired in suitable western or Indian dress.

Gait Descriptions:

- (A.) Walk should be fast, swinging, adapted to covering ground comfortably. Reverse may be required.
- (B.) Slow trot (jog) or easy gait should be smooth, controlled, affording both endurance and a pleasant ride.
- (C.) Extended (working) trot or fast gait should be much faster, showing speed, extension, flexibility, good wind and willingness to continue for as long as desired. Covering ground shall be more desirable than smoothness in this gait, but the superior horse will have both. No reverse may be required at speed, but may be stopped or slowed and reversed to work both ways of the ring.
- (D.) Canter or lope should be controlled, but not overly collected with emphasis on smoothness of ride and endurance. The horse should be willing to extend to hand gallop if the judge requires. Reverse may be required if judge feels arena and number of class participants allows the maneuver with safety. Horse may be slowed to perform simple lead change rather than flying lead change if rider desires. No reverse at the hand gallop. Horse should work on both leads.

Suggested Scoring Method:

<i>Gait:</i>	<i>Possible Points:</i>
Walk	15
Slow Trot (Jog) or Slow Gait	10
Extended (Working) Trot or Road Gait	15
Canter or Lope	15
Hand Gallop	5
Attitude	10
Stops, Reverses, Gait & Lead Changes	20
Horsemanship (of rider)	10
<i>Highest possible score :</i>	<i>100</i>

- (4) **Bareback Pleasure:** Same as (3), but ridden bareback. Because of the difficulty factor in this class, inexperienced riders are discouraged unless they feel confident of their ability to ride bareback at any speed up to a hand gallop.

- (5) **Youth Pleasure:** Same as (3) except no hand gallop. Attitude points (up to 10) should be subtracted if judge questions mount's suitability for a young rider. Riders not in control in judge's opinion *will be* dismissed from the class and not placed regardless of number of entries in class. Also ground-covering ability should receive less emphasis than willing obedience in this class. Youth pleasure horses should be judged with consideration to rider's comfort and safety first and ground-covering ability second.
- (6) **Youth Walk-Trot (10 & under):** Same as (3), but only walk and slow trot or jog to be used. Adult may accompany child into the ring, but if the adult has to help control the horse, points should be deducted.
- (7) **Indian Horse Under English Saddle:** Same as (3) but with emphasis on English-style riding rather than western. No flying lead changes required. Horses should be shown in any humane English-style bridle and saddle. Martingales or other head-setting devices prohibited. Riders should be suitably attired.
- (8) **Green Pleasure:** Same as (3) except that Indian horse may only have been ridden for one year of less, and no hand-gallop required. Any humane tack may be used, but saddle is required. Rider's attire must be suitable to tack.
- (9) **Indian Horse Trail Class:** This class should be designed to show the Indian Horse's good sense, sure-footedness and willingness on the trail. Horse will be judged on its ability to negotiate a course which may include any natural or artificial obstacles which the judge may approve. These may include, but are not limited to: gate or gap, bridge, low jump (not over one 1 and ½ feet), backing and/or side passing obstacle. Judge should look for alertness, calmness and willingness to proceed after the horse has looked carefully at each obstacle. Riders should be aware that each horse will be asked to cross obstacles in designated order. No live animals may be used in connection with any obstacle. The superior horse will work calmly, but may look at each obstacle before continuing. However, balking or refusing will be severely penalized. Each horse may attempt to cross an obstacle no more than 3 times. Horses may be shown in any humane tack including English, western, endurance or Australian stock saddle. Rider's attire should be suitable to tack used.
- (10) **Indian Horse Over Fences:** No jumps shall be over 2 ½ feet or constructed so that they will not fall if hit or bumped. Jumps should be as safe as possible. Entries will be penalized for hits, knock-downs, balks and refusals. After 3 refusals of the same jump, a horse will be excused from the ring and disqualified. Excessive time at any jump will be penalized. Any humane tack and any attire suitable to tack may be used, but saddle must be used and hard hat must be worn.
- (11) **Indian Horse Reining:** Judge will use a pattern of his or her choice. The pattern should include walk, trot, canter and hand-gallop (with both simple and flying lead changes in canter and/or hand gallop), stop and back. Use of leg aids is allowed. Two hands on reins or changing hands on the reins is allowed. Tie downs and running martingales are prohibited. Sliding stop not required, but horse should not bounce on the stop. Faults to be marked down include opening mouth, chomping bit, bouncing, wringing tail, wrong lead, interference in any gait, poor wind, poor physical condition, stopping crooked, backing crooked, breaking gait, bucking, breaking pattern, tossing or slinging head. Figure "8" patterns should be two circles which meet, not oval or tear drop shaped. Judge may excuse any horse which he or she considers unruly or dangerous to it's rider or other competitors. Judge may ask for additional work after pattern from any exhibitor.

Timed Performance Events:

- (1) **Water Race:** Rider is given 3/4ths cup of water in 1-cup container. Rider must trot around barrel at end of arena and attempt to canter back while balancing container. Rider's failing to canter back will be penalized ½ cup of water. Horse and rider which brings the most water back across the finish line wins. In case of tie, fastest time wins.
- (2) **Forest Escape:** Horse and rider must weave "trees" (metal or PVC uprights with limb-holders containing real tree branches on at least 2 sides) set in random positions on alternating sides of an imaginary center line down the arena. As trees are not in a straight line (as in pole bending), control and strategy are needed as well as speed. Each knocked-down tree will add 10 seconds to rider's total time, as this represents rider being unhorsed by collision if he or she had struck a real

tree while alluding pursuit in a forest. Rider must turn around (or roll back) and return the same way he or she came. All trees should be at least 15 feet from nearest fence (for safety purposes).

A second version of this event is called Oklahoma Forest Escape. In this event each turn is marked by two trees which the rider must guide his or her mount between like a gate in skiing. The rider negotiates the course from trees nearest the entrance to the trees at the far end and then runs straight out.

- (3) **Trail Obstacle Race:** A “circuit” around the arena is laid out with a variety of obstacles for the riders to negotiate. Obstacles which may be presented include, but are not limited to: a close knit group of “trees” made from the “Forest Escape” props; a stack of logs or crossties; a free-standing gate which must be opened and closed from horseback; a low jump; a boxed-in area for demonstrating the horse’s ability and willingness to back and cavaletti. Any obstacle may be complicated by the addition of tanned animal skins draped over it. All obstacles should be presented in a natural form, such as might be encountered on wilderness trails. In the speed version of this event, the rider must simply negotiate the course successfully (as determined by an arena or foul judge), fastest time wins. In the other version (under “Judged Performance classes”), this is strictly a judged event.
- (4) **Scent Drag Race:** Each rider enters the arena dragging behind them a tanned, dried, or rawhide animal skin on a long rope. (The rope length should be about 21 feet, long enough to drag the hide well behind the horse’s hind legs, yet not so long that the rider must contend with excessive rope coils.) The rider must keep the drag on the ground, pulling it around a barrel at the end of the arena and then exiting the arena while still pulling the drag until across the finish line. Entry is disqualified if drag rope is dropped. Fastest time wins.
- (5) **Torching the Prairie:** A small brush pile (limbs from Forest Escape Race) is stacked at the end of the arena. A lime circle is drawn around the pile 10 feet in diameter. Another lime circle 30 feet in diameter circles the brush pile with an open alley 4 feet wide and 10 feet long to allow entrance to the big circle. Rider carries a “torch” with simulated “fire” made of red, orange, yellow and pink surveyor’s tape streamers. Rider races into large circle rounds brush pile and throws torch onto brush pile, then races out. Torch must be thrown onto the brush pile (within small lime circle) to qualify. If the torch lands outside the small circle, rider may dismount, pick it up and throw it in correctly. Rider is disqualified if he or she or the mount touches any lime line. Fastest time wins.

Note: As with a real torch, it is not considered appropriate for the rider to carry the torch in any manner other than in one hand, well away from themselves or their mount. Ribbons must be allowed to stream, rider may not hold down surveyor’s tape as it represents real fire.

- (6) **Backfiring the Prairie:** A variation of Torching the Prairie. Instead of using any lime-drawn circles, all the brush is piled in a long stack approximately two-thirds of the way down the arena. Rider enters carrying his or her torch and crosses over the brush, dropping the torch in or behind the brush pile and then exiting the arena. The horse and rider must jump over or cross over the brush pile at least once to qualify, either before dropping the torch in or behind the brush pile coming and going. Torches dropped in front of the brush pile must be picked up and placed correctly, or entry is disqualified.
- (7) **Buffalo Horse Race:** Each rider attempts to spear rings accurately at varying heights from ground to ring. Rings should be hung no lower or higher than the body of a buffalo (2-6 feet approximately), but should definitely vary from ring to ring. Number of rings and target boards will be designated by show management before the class. Horse and rider combination with most rings wins; ties for number of rings will be placed according to time with fastest time winning. Ties for time and number of rings will be run off. Rider may return for missed ring no more than three times. Canning rings attached to board targets by horizontally-glued clothes pins are usually used. Alternative targets are balloons attached by clothes pins to boards. Boards may be painted with figures of buffalo, deer, etc. Spears can be made with broom handles, but each must be tipped with a small finishing nail if balloons are used. **BE CAREFUL WITH SPEARS AROUND STOCK AND CHILDREN! SAFETY FIRST!**
- (8) **Counting Coup:** Each rider has a spear tipped with a finishing nail. There is a pile of several equal sized potatoes in a wide box filled with at least 4 inches of sand or dirt which sits either on

the ground or on a barrel at the end of the arena. A tire or similar large, heavy ring lies flat on the ground near the center of the arena. Rider must spear 3 potatoes individually, ride back to the tire and scrape or knock off each potato inside the center of the tire. When 3 potatoes are within the center of the tire, rider races back to cross the finish line. Dropped potatoes may be re-speared, but no potato may be touched with rider's hands. Fastest time wins.

(9) **Rescue Race and Indian Rescue Race:** This is a race for two riders and one Indian Horse. The "Indian" version is run bareback. The race is run with partner on the ground behind two barrels at end of the arena. First rider races down and picks up his or her partner. Rescued partner must be picked up by mounted partner behind barrels at end of the arena. First rider races down and picks up his or her partner. Rescued partner must be picked-up rider's feet must not touch the ground before crossing the finish line Team with the fastest time wins.

(10) **War Horse Race:** This is a race for one rider and two Indian Horses. The "war horse" is led from the rider's regular mount. In the more difficult version, the war horse is tied at the end of the arena behind two barrels. The rider enters, circles behind the barrels, unties the war horse from the arena fence and races out the other side of the barrels, leading the war horse. The time stops when the rider's mount crosses the finish line, but the war horse's lead must be in the rider's hands. If the war horse's lead is dropped, or the war horse pulls away, it must be re-captured by the rider and then led across the finish line. Rider may dismount if necessary.

(11) **Pony Express Race:** This is a relay race for two riders and their Indian Horses. One partner races into the arena with a set of saddle bags. (Newspaper stuffing may be in them for bulk.) The other partner is dismounted behind two barrels at the end of the arena, holding his mounts reins in his hand. First rider throws saddle- bags to his partner and helps his partner to mount, if necessary. Exchange of saddle- bags and mount must be made behind the barrels, or team is disqualified. Dropped saddle bags may be picked up. Time is stopped when the nose of the horse carrying the saddle- bags crosses the finish line. Team with the fastest time wins.

An alternate (and faster) way to run this relay race is to allow a mounted hand-off between the two barrels with no mount required of team member already in the ring at the beginning of each team's run. Hand-off may not occur before first barrel or after second barrel, or team is disqualified.

(12) **Cherokee Ribbon Race:** A team of two riders and their Indian Horses enter the arena together, each rider holding one end of a "Cherokee ribbon". The Cherokee ribbon is to be 36 inches in length, possibly hand-woven from light cord, with tassels at each end, and small bells, and long feathers hanging down all along its length. The two riders must enter the arena, circle behind a barrel near the end of the arena and ride back out. If at any time either of the riders drops his or her end of the Cherokee ribbon, the team is disqualified. The team may ride at whatever pace they choose, but fastest time wins.

(13) **Torch Relay:** One member of a team goes to right rear corner of the arena and waits. (If an electric eye timer is used, this position should be well in front of the finish line, so that a hand-off may be made without breaking timer beam.) The other team member enters the arena carrying a "torch" of the type used in "Torching the Prairie" and "Backfiring the Prairie". The first team member circles the arena, rounding two barrels set near the end of the arena, returns to their partner and hands off the torch. In the most difficult version of this event, the second team member must then make a full circuit of the arena, rounding the two barrels again, and then handing the torch back to the first team member in the right rear arena corner. Then the first team member, who originally brought the torch in, runs the torch out of the arena, again rounding the two barrels and then exiting. This version requires two hand-offs.

In the faster version of this event, there is only one hand-off. The first team member enters the arena, rounds the barrels and hands off to the partner. The second team member takes the torch at the hand-off, rounds the two barrels, and then exits the arena with it. Show management decides which version to use depending on the number of entries and time available, but all contestants should be made aware of which version is being run.