

# BEGINNING HORSEMAN .....LEVEL I..... SKILLS TEST

4-H Member's Name:1 \_\_\_\_\_ Horse's name \_\_\_\_\_

The 4-H'er must show proficiency at all skills listed below to pass the Beginning Horseman level.

**Note:** The entire riding portion of Level I must be done with a single horse and can be ridden with one or two hands on the reins. (Per Kathy...one hand with a curb, two hands with a snaffle)

**Note:** Individuals who administer the Skills Test of Level I should realize some youths may have special needs and should use their judgement on the method of testing segments of the Level I Skills Test.

**Note:** The test itself is highlighted in the boxed areas. The text that follows each skill is from 4-H curriculum. Methods described can be used by the riders and leaders to help teach what is expected of the rider in order to pass the test. Although other methods are recognized as correct and safe, while testing, please use the 4-H curriculum.

Before the test starts, ask the adult with the child if there are any safety concerns with the horse or idiosyncracies that you should know about. (Head shy, can't tie up, cinchy, etc) Make adjustments if necessary. After this, the adult should move out of the immediate testing space. Throughout the testing **Talk** to the kids about the safety concepts...what is the rule and why. In some areas, the emphasis is more on **teaching**...making sure they know what is safe.... they may be too small to do the actual haltering, etc.

## I. Basic Horse Handling.....pass/P.....no pass/NP

### A. Demonstrate and/or explain the correct procedures to approach and catch a horse.

1. Use of body position. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Use of voice. \_\_\_\_\_

Tester...**Show me how** to approach a horse safely.

#### 1. Use of body position:

**Always approach the horse from the left side.** Why... Remember, the horse can't see an object closer than 4 feet in front of its face or an object directly behind its hindquarters

- a. Walk up to the horses left shoulder, making sure that the horse sees you.
- b. Firmly place your right hand with the lead rope on the horses shoulder

**Do not approach** the horse:

- a. At its **head**.... Why...This is a sensitive area to the touch and the horse can't see you clearly.
- b. **Directly behind**.... Why...The horse can't see you and may kick

...If it is necessary to approach a horse from the rear, speak to it to warn of your presence.

As soon as the animal is aware of you, stroke it gently on the croup, then move calmly to the head, keeping always close into the horses body

- c. **At the hip**.... Why...This will make the horse move forward and also it can't see you clearly.

## 2. Use of voice:

**Always speak** to a horse **Why...** to **make sure it sees you** and to reassure it.

Catching a horse involves three stages:

### 1. Organizing stage: **getting the halter ready**

- a. Putting the unbuckled halter in the left hand with the crown piece of the halter sticking up;

### 2. Approach stage: getting next to the horse to catch it

- a. **Walk up to the horses left shoulder**, making sure that the horse sees you. (*Following is suggested*)
- b. Firmly place your right hand with the lead rope on the horses shoulder.
- c. Slide the lead rope over the neck until one or two feet of rope are hanging on the horse's grasp both parts of the rope together with your right hand.
- e. Reposition the rope that's around the horses neck so that your right hand and the end of the lead rope are at the top of the poll.

### 3. Haltering stage: putting the halter on the horse

*Testers...if 4-Her is too small to put on the halter you do it for them.... Ask them...if they want to do it let them (: They may bring their own mounting block which is ok. A bucket really isn't safe.*

## B. Demonstrate the Correct and Safe Procedure to Halter any Horse \_\_\_\_\_

Verbally go through the steps with them if you are doing it..such as “where does this part of the halter go”.

**Subjective: If the child is afraid, if it appears that mom and dad have always done it all for them....they really have no clue...it's a no pass.** The following haltering steps are suggested. If they can't put the halter on themselves make sure they know where the nose band should rest and whether the halter is too tight or too loose. (We see way too many horses in the in-hand classes with the noseband way too low)

### 1. Haltering

(The halter will still be in the left hand. The right hand is at the poll holding the lead rope to keep control of the horse.)

- a. Move the halter under the horse's neck so the right hand can grab the crown piece and place it over the poll.
- b. Then slide the noseband up and over the horse's nose.
- c. Finish by fastening the crown piece to the buckle on the halter. **Be sure the noseband of the halter is about 1&1/2 inches (2 finger widths) from the cheekbone.**
- d. **Keep your head in the clear** when haltering the horse. **Why...**It may throw its head or strike to avoid the halter.
- e. **Check the halter...not too tight, not too loose.**

C. Demonstrate the proper and safe way to lead a horse with a halter.

1. Hand position on the lead shank or lead rope\_\_\_\_\_.....
2. Body position\_\_\_\_\_.....

Testers...body position while leading varies somewhat from discipline to discipline. For the purposes of this test, **this position/method must be followed**. Talk through what should be done if the horse rears. Ask why you never wrap the lead around any part of your body..

1. Hand position on the lead shank or lead rope.

- a. **Use both hands** when leading.
- b. **If the horse rears up, release the hand nearest the halter** so you can stay on the ground.
- c. **Never wrap the lead around your hand, wrist or body.**

2. Body position.

- a. **Walk beside the horse** when leading, **not ahead or behind**. *Suggested: A good position is between the nose and the middle of the horse's neck. Why do you walk beside and not directly in front of the horse*
- b. **Look straight ahead** while leading. *Ask why you always look straight ahead*
- c. **Always turn the horse to the right and walk around it.** *Ask why you turn to the right*

D. Demonstrate safety precautions when working around a tied horse.

1. Approaching your horse from the rear\_\_\_\_\_.....
2. Moving from side to side.\_\_\_\_\_.....

Testers...go through the safety rules...discuss/question the 4-Hers on the "hows and whys"

1. Approaching from the rear

- a. If it is necessary to approach a horse from the rear, **speak to it too warn of your presence.** **Why**
- b. **As soon as the horse is aware of you, stroke it gently on the croup.**
- c. Then **move calmly to the head, keeping your body close into the horse's body.** **Why**

2. Moving from side to side:

- a. **Always walk around the horse.** **Why**
- b. **Never walk under the tie rope or step over it.** **Why**
- c. **Never walk under the horse's body.** **Why**
- d. **When walking around your horse, always keep a hand on the horse.** **Why**

E. Demonstrate and discuss a typical "daily" grooming routine to prepare a horse to be ridden.

1. Correct use of the equipment\_\_\_\_\_.....
2. Safety practiced while grooming\_\_\_\_\_.....
3. Proper, complete procedures\_\_\_\_\_.....
4. Name two benefits achieved from grooming your horse\_\_\_\_\_.....

**The basic grooming tools are:**

metal curry comb  
rubber curry comb  
dandy brush (course bristles)  
body brush (soft-fine bristle)  
grooming cloth...pieces of old towels or blankets will do  
mane and tail comb  
scissors and/or clippers  
hoof pick

3

**1. Correct use of Equipment and 3. Proper, complete procedures**

A metal curry comb... can be used first to get off caked on mud and dirt. **A metal currycomb is used to remove thick dry mud or heavy loose hair. Do not use the metal curry around the head or below the knee and hock Testers, please ask why: because there is not fat or muscle in these areas to cushion the comb's hard edges and it can be painful to the horse.**

A rubber currycomb... is preferred to the metal type. For ordinary cleaning, a rubber currycomb is used since a metal currycomb is too severe for the thin skin of a horse. Curry in a circular motion.

A dandy brush...a course bristled cleaning brush will work on the "big stuff" as long as it isn't dried on mud. **Brush with short brisk stokes. Flick the bristles up at the end of each stroke so they will throw the dirt from the hair. Testers please ask why....Brush with the lay of the hair. Testers please ask why.... Be especially careful to clean the saddle and cinch area really well.**

A body brush...use after the course brush to get off the remaining fine dust and dirt particles. Brush with the lay of the hair. Flick the bristles up at the end of each stroke so they will throw the dirt from the hair.

**Grooming Cloth**....pieces of old towels or blanket.....**for around the eyes, ears, nostrils and lips. Testers please ask why you wouldn't want to use a metal curry on the face of the horse.**

Mane and Tail Comb...to keep the mane and tail free of snarls

Clippers and Scissors...to clip the unwanted hair of the bridle path and on the legs.

Hoof pick.....**always clean all four feet. Clean the hoof from heel to toe**, paying attention to the area around the frog. **The cleft should be cleaned thoroughly. Testers please ask why... to prevent thrush** and other infections. Watch for rocks, nails, injuries and loose shoes! Work in order...near forefoot, near hind, off fore, off hind.

**2. Safety practiced while grooming**

1. **Approach a horse from its left** and from the side... Walk up to the horse's left shoulder, making sure that the horse sees you. **Always speak** to the horse to **make sure it sees you** and to reassure it. If you don't approach the horse safely, you could get hurt. Remember, the horse can't see an object closer than 4 feet in front of its face or an object directly behind its hindquarters. Always let the horse know what you intend to do; **no fast movements as this may startle the horse.**

2. **Stay close to the horse's body.** Testers please ask why...The closer you stand to a horse, the less likely you will be kicked; you may be shoved away, but not hurt.

3. **You should stand or stoop with your head facing the head of the horse.** (Especially while grooming the belly) In that way, should the horse strike, it won't be as likely to kick your head and will get your backside instead!

4. The horse is sensitive to touch around the ears, eyes, and nose. Go slowly as you work around these areas. **If using a clippers, start up the clipper and let the horse get used to the sound before starting to clip. Keep your head in the clear. Testers please ask why...in case the horse should throw its head.**

5. **Always walk around your horse. Never walk under the tie rope nor step over it. Why**

4. Name two benefits achieved from grooming your horse.

1. A clean healthy, shiny coat and skin
2. Most horses enjoy it
3. It helps gentle most horses
4. It stimulates muscle tone
5. While grooming you can watch for cuts, bruises and hoof or foot problems that you might otherwise miss

F. Demonstrate the proper and safe methods and adjustment for saddling and bridling a horse. \_\_\_\_\_

(Note: smaller members should learn the correct methods even if they may not be able to follow them entirely. They should be able to discuss the procedures and assist in the saddling and bridling of their horse.)

F has been combined into G and H

G. Saddling:

1. Correct placement and adjustment of the pad and saddle \_\_\_\_\_
2. Proper fastening and tightness of the cinch/girth \_\_\_\_\_
3. Adjustment of stirrups/irons \_\_\_\_\_

Testers...ask if they can saddle the horse themselves....if they can great.....if not do it for them. Ask about each step. Have the 4-Her point to where the pad goes, etc.

1. Correct placement and adjustment of the pad and saddle.

**Western**

- a. Always brush, make sure back/cinch areas are clean **Why**
- b. Check pad/saddle lining for burrs, etc **Why**
- c. Lay saddle blanket evenly across back of horse
- d. Lay blanket several inches forward, then slide to rear
- e. Hook up stirrups/cinch so won't hit horse when putting saddle on

- f. Lift saddle up, place gently on horse's back
- g. Ease stirrups/cinch down so they don't slap the horse
- h. Return to near side, check position of saddle
- j. Raise pad edge where it lays over withers
- k. Tighten the cinch, front first
- l. Lead horse a few steps, check cinch for tightness

**English**

- a. Always brush, make sure back/cinch areas are clean
- b. Check pad/saddle lining for burrs, etc
- c. Place pad forward, then slide back into withers area (3-4" of pad in front of saddle)
- d. Cinch positioned so as not to flop against horse
- e. Irons should be run up the stirrup and under the skirt flap
- f. Gently place saddle on back with front of saddle close to upper rear edges of shoulder blades
- g. Move to off side, bring girth down, check for twisting,
- h. Push pad up/off withers
- i. Buckle girth, one finger between girth and horse's barrel
- j. Lead horse forward...check tightness of girth

**2. Proper fastening and tightness of the cinch/girth.**

- a. Always fasten front cinch first.
- b. If double cinched, check to make sure front and back are connected
- c. Tighten cinch, enough to allow hand with fingers flat, between horse's body and cinch
- d. Rear cinch should be loose but not dangling
- e. Lead horse a few steps, check cinch for tightness

**3. Adjustment of stirrups/irons.** Testers, I wouldn't make adjustments to stirrup length before they ride...but make suggestions

- a. **Not too long, not too short**...you want a little bend in the knee and to be able to keep your heels down. You don't want to be reaching for the stirrup. Western rule of thumb..stirrup tread at the ankle bone when leg is straight.

**H. Bridling**

- 1. Correct method of bridling\_\_\_\_\_.....
- 2. Adjustment of the horse's bit and bridle\_\_\_\_\_.....

**1. Correct method of bridling.**

- a. Untie horse's lead rope, drape over your shoulder
- b. Loop bridle reins over the neck
- c. Follow picture steps 1-2-3
- d. Handle ears gently. Right ear, then left ear

2. Adjustment of the horse's bit and bridle.
  - a. Bit should rest in corner of mouth
  - b. 1 to 3 wrinkles in the skin above corner of lips
  - c. Curb strap loose enough to allow two fingers between jaw and strap
  - d. Throat latch with enough slack to prevent choking

## II Riding **(Note: the rider's confidence and ability are more important than the response of the horse at this level.)**

### A. Demonstrate correct and safe methods to mount and dismount.

*(Note: smaller members should learn the correct methods even if they may not be able to follow them entirely. They should be able to discuss the procedures.)*

*These techniques are basic. The best techniques may vary depending on riders size and height.*

1. Mounting-Position, method used, correct use of reins \_\_\_\_\_
2. Dismounting-Position, method used, correct use of reins \_\_\_\_\_

Testers...If rider is small...walk/talk them through it

#### 1. Mounting-Position, method used, correct use of reins.

**Western...**There are two positions considered proper for mounting.

- a. **Check to see that girth is tight**
- b. Hold reins in left hand with just enough tension to steady horse.
- c. **Excess rein (called "tail") should start out on the side you are mounting from.**
- d. Place left hand on the horse's neck just in front of the withers.
- e. Stand by horse's left shoulder with your body facing a quarter turn to the rear.
- f. Turn left stirrup clockwise with right hand. Steady stirrup with right hand until left foot is in stirrup.
- g. Place right hand on saddle horn
- h. Place knee against the horse..Brace your knee against the horse for support to keep your foot out from the side
- i. Don't let the toe of your boot rake the horse along its side as you swing up.
- j. Make sure your toes do not jab horse in ribs (PIC 1)
- k. Hop on right foot to a position facing the side of the horse (PIC 2)
- l. In one motion....Push off right foot, grasp the cantle with right hand, hold mane in left hand and swing up, right leg over
- m. **Sink slowly and softly in the saddle** Do not swing too high and plop into the saddle.
- n. Place right foot into stirrup
- o. Adjust both reins and assume riding position

*In Western, once you mount, if you are left handed you leave the tail where it is, if right handed, you switch the reins to that hand and the tail to that side also*

The second position is used when you are tall enough to stand and place your left foot in the stirrup without moving back to the rear of the horse. You should face squarely across the seat of the saddle. Turn your left foot so the toe of your boot is pointed forward or into the cinch. Swing up and into the saddle with a spring, pushing with your right leg.

**English...**

- a. **Check to see that girth is tight**
- b. Shorten reins so you can feel horse's mouth...(short enough so horse won't move forwards or back)
- c. (Reins should be even)
- d. **The bight (excess loop) should hang toward you.**
- e. Stand with left shoulder next to horse's shoulder
- f. Place left hand in front of withers and grasp the mane
- g. Turn left stirrup clockwise with right hand
- h. Put left foot in

- i. Make sure your toes do not jab horse in ribs (PIC 1)
- j. Hop on right foot to a position facing the side of the horse (pic 2)
- k. Push off right foot, grasp the cantle with right hand, hold mane in left hand and swing up, right leg over
- l. **Sink slowly and softly in the saddle**
- m. Place right foot into stirrup
- n. **Adjust both reins and assume riding position**  
**With English reins, the bight should hang toward the right when mounted.**

2. Dismounting-Position, method used, correct use of reins.

**Western...**

Use the same hand positions when dismounting.

- a. Take the slack out of the reins to steady the horse
- b. Place your left hand (holding the reins) on the horse's neck,
- c. Grasp the saddle horn with your right hand
- d. Loosen your left foot in the stirrup (push down on your left heel to allow your foot to slip out of the stirrup. Do not roll your left foot on its side to slip it out) and shift your body weight slightly to your left leg keeping your left knee in close to the horse.
- e. Your right foot should be free of the stirrup.
- f. Swing out of the saddle, keeping your right leg close to the horse without hitting the cantle of the saddle or the horse's rump. Do not swing your right leg in a wide arc. Keep it in close to the near side of the horse so you will be facing slightly forward when your foot touches the ground.
- g. Bring reins over the head of horse.

**English...** there are two methods, stepping or sliding down

- a. Put both reins in the left hand ( bight goes back to the side you are dismounting on)
- b. Place left hand on horse's neck
- c. Place right hand on pommel
- d. Slide left foot slightly out of stirrup
- e. Remove right foot from stirrup
- f. Swing right leg over without touching horse's back

**To slide:**

- a. Shift right hand to cantle
- b. Keep weight of body on your hands
- c. Remove left foot from stirrup and drop lightly to ground

**To Step down:**

- 1. Swing leg over rump of horse and just step down
- g. **After dismounting, run the stirrups up the leathers.**
- h. **Bring reins over the head of horse.**