

2026 Rulebook



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COMPLETE OFFICIAL RULES Published June 30, 2026 - Any revisions will be in RED.

Wild Mustang & Burro Finals

presented by Mustang Heritage Foundation

October 21-24, 2026

www.MustangHeritageFoundation.org/Finals

Event location: Hoosier Horse Park

7105 S Kern St, Edinburgh, Indiana 46124

Competitor support

Shows@mustangheritagefoundation.org

Event Manager

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General Rules

Rules that apply to ALL disciplines & divisions



Mustang Heritage Foundation

This event is produced by the Mustang Heritage Foundation “MHF” which is a 501(c)3 nonprofit dedicated to promoting and supporting successful placements of America’s wild mustangs and burros through innovative programs, events, and education. Learn more at www.MustangHeritageFoundation.org.

1. Event Overview

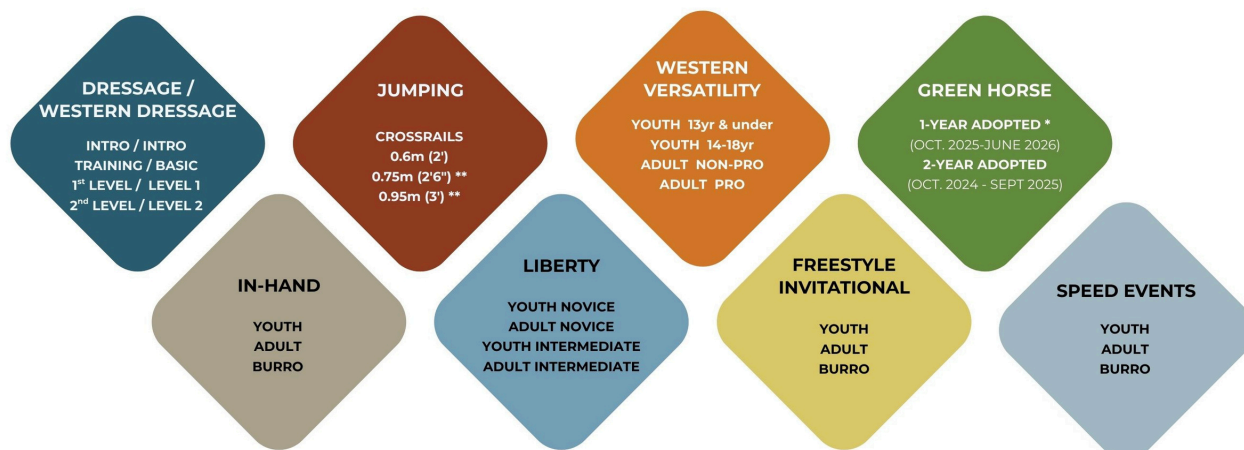
1.1 Purpose & Guiding Principles

The Wild Mustang & Burro Finals exists to celebrate ethical horsemanship, responsible training, and the unique abilities of wild-bred mustangs and burros.

These rules are built on four non-negotiable principles:

- **Animal welfare comes first**
The physical and mental well-being of the animal always takes precedence over placings, titles, or prizes.
- **Safety is a shared responsibility**
Competitors, officials, and event staff share responsibility for maintaining a safe environment for people and animals.
- **Fairness reflects ethical horsemanship and sportsmanship**
Fair competition is measured by humane handling, honest presentation, and respectful conduct toward others both in and outside of the competition. Attempts to gain advantage via manipulation or loopholes will not be rewarded.
- **Education first, but firm action when needed**
When appropriate, enforcement emphasizes correction and learning. Immediate or escalated action will be taken when welfare, safety, or integrity is compromised.

1.2 Disciplines, Divisions, & Classes offered



Each division entry includes three (3) classes, except the Freestyle divisions, which consist of one (1) competition class.

DISCIPLINE	CLASS 1	CLASS 2	CLASS 3
Green Horse	Horsemanship	Ridden Pattern	Trail
Jumping	Course 1	Course 2	Course 3
Speed Events	Poles	Barrels	Flags
Liberty	Training & shoulder	Training @ liberty	Obstacles @ liberty
Western Versatility	Reining	Ranch Riding	Trail
Freestyle Invitational	Performance		
In-Hand	Horsemanship	Showmanship	In-hand Trail
Dressage / Western Dressage	First Test (score 1)	Second Test (score 2a)	Second Test (score 2b)

2. Animal Eligibility

2.1 Eligible Animals

Only **wild-bred mustang horses and burros** are eligible to compete, including animals:

- **Originally from federal public lands** (managed by the Bureau of Land Management “BLM”, US Forest Service “USFS”, National Parks, or other federal agency)
- Originally from **Reservations** with verifiable documentation or branding
- Born in off-range holding facilities, provided the dam was confirmed pregnant prior to adoption or sale

Crossbred or domestic-bred animals are not eligible. With 65,000+ mustangs & burros in off-range holding, MHF focuses on the mission of promoting and supporting their successful placements.

Some disciplines have minimum age requirements for horses. Refer to the discipline rules for details.

2.2 Documentation

Competitors must be able to provide documentation upon entry verifying:

- Animal origin
- Adoption or sale date
- Identification matching entry information

Failure to produce required documentation may result in refusal of entry.

2.3 Age Verification & Estimated Ages

For most animals, age information can be verified through government agency documentation or online search via the Bureau of Land Management or the applicable federal or tribal agency of origin. This is the preferred method and should be the first step if age is in question.

If government records are unavailable or do not confirm an adequate age estimate, competitors have two options:

- *(Recommended)* Submit a written letter from a licensed Veterinarian or qualified equine dentist providing an estimated age, signed and dated prior to the event.
- Request an estimated age assessment from the Event Veterinarian on-site at the time of the event.

Age documentation is only required when a horse's eligibility to be ridden is uncertain — specifically, when it is unclear whether the horse has reached the minimum age of four (4) years.

Event Management and the Event Veterinarian reserve the right to request age verification for any animal and to make final determinations regarding age-based eligibility. These determinations are final.

3. Adoption Date Requirements

3.1 Standard Divisions

For ALL divisions **except Green Horse divisions**, there is **no restriction on adoption or sale date**.

3.2 Green Horse Divisions

Green divisions exist to support and encourage appropriate training timelines.

- **1-Year Adopted Division**
Original adoption or sale date must fall between **October 1, 2025 – July 15, 2026 (extended)**
- **2-Year Adopted Division**
Original adoption or sale date must fall between **October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2025**

Animals outside these windows are not eligible for Green divisions but may compete in other appropriate divisions.

4. Qualification Requirements

4.1 General Requirement

Qualifications are required **per competitor/animal combination**.

The qualification period runs from **October 1, 2025 through October 1, 2026**.

Unless otherwise noted, competitors must:

- Complete **two (2) qualifying classes**
- At **two separate horse shows**
- In **comparable classes**

The term *comparable* is intentionally flexible to allow access across a wide range of show structures. The Event management will evaluate reasonableness and intent of submitted qualifiers rather than technical exactness.

4.2 Exceptions

- Green Horse 1-Year Adopted Division
One (1) qualifying class is required.
- Jumping Divisions at 2'6" and 3'
To count as a qualifier, the competitor must place in the **top 50%** of the class.
*If the number of competitors is odd, rounding should go **down**. (i.e. in a class with 7 competitors, top 50% = 3.5, so results must be in top 3 to qualify)*
- Freestyle Division entries are by **invitation only** based on a virtual freestyle challenge.
See Freestyle Division rules for requirements.

5. What Counts as a Qualifier

For the inaugural Finals, qualification standards are intentionally simple.

Qualifications should be submitted at:

www.mustangheritagefoundation.org/qualifiers

A qualifier is defined as:

Completion of a similar class at a horse show during the qualification period.

There are two (2) options for acquiring qualifiers:

5.1 Automatic Qualifier Events

Certain events are designated as automatic qualifiers.

- Event managers can apply for designation at www.mustangheritagefoundation.org/qualifiers
- Results are submitted directly by event management
- Competitors do not submit these results themselves

A current list of automatic qualifiers is maintained on the official Finals qualifier hub at www.mustangheritagefoundation.org/qualifiers

5.2 Competitor-Submitted Results

Competitors may qualify through:

- Local shows
- Open or rated competitions

With this option:

- Competitors are responsible for accurate submission
- Insufficient documentation, falsified or misleading submissions may result in qualifier rejection or disqualification

6. Entries & Fees

6.1 Entry Eligibility & Approval Process

Only competitors who have completed and received approval of required qualification submissions through the official qualifier hub at

www.mustangheritagefoundation.org/qualifiers are eligible to enter the Wild Mustang & Burro Finals.

Once qualifiers are reviewed and approved, **competitors will receive an official approval email with the link to the online entry system.**

Questions about entries can be directed to Shows@MustangHeritageFoundation.org

Entry access is not granted prior to qualification approval.

6.2 Entry Platform

All entries must be submitted through the HorseSpot platform.

The Wild Mustang & Burro Finals entries, schedules, draw orders, and results will be managed and published on HorseSpot's website.

To enter, competitors will:

- Create a HorseSpot account
- Complete their competitor profile
- Enter accurate horse information
- Upload required documentation

Required horse documentation includes:

- Proof of horse eligibility (as outlined in Section 2)
- Current horse health documentation:
 - Negative EIA test (Coggins)
 - Core vaccines required within 1 year of the event dates: **Tetanus, EEE/WEE, WNV, Rabies**
 - Additional vaccines required within 1 year of the event dates: **Equine influenza (Flu) & Equine Herpesvirus (EHV-1/EHV-4)**

Competitors are responsible for consulting their Veterinarian regarding compliance.

Entries are not considered complete until all required documentation and payment are received.

Event Management reserves the right to reject incomplete entries.

6.3 Division Entry Structure

With the exception of the Freestyle Division, **each division entry includes three (3) classes.** (Refer to discipline rules for details)

Freestyle Division consists of one (1) competition class.

A division placing requires completion of all required classes.

Competitors entering a division are expected to compete in all classes within that division unless:

- The competitor voluntarily withdraws from a class
- The competitor is eliminated from competition

If a competitor does not complete all required classes within a division, the final division results will reflect the entry as:

- Withdrawal, Retired, or
- Elimination (if applicable)

Failure to complete all division classes does NOT entitle the competitor to any refund.

(See Section 7 for awards and prize eligibility.)

6.4 Entry Fees

Division Entry Fees:

- **\$150 per division (3 classes)**
- **Freestyle Division: \$100**

Late Entry Fee *after October 1, 2026*:

- \$50 per division, in addition to standard entry fees

Additional **\$25 admin fee** applies per horse on HorseSpot.

All entry fees must be paid in full at the time of submission unless otherwise specified.

Entries submitted without payment will not be accepted.

6.5 Refund Policy

Refunds, when permitted, should be requested through a competitor's HorseSpot account.

Refund schedule:

- Full refunds available until: October 1, 2026
- Partial refunds available until: October 19, 2026
- No refunds available after: October 20, 2026

No refunds will be issued if a competitor fails to complete a full division, including if competitors withdraw, retire, or are eliminated or disqualified for any reason.

Administrative or processing fees may be non-refundable.

Event Management reserves discretion on this policy in extraordinary circumstances.

6.6 Stall & Other Fees

Stall fees: \$150 each

Tack stalls may be available in limited quantity. Reservation policies and availability will be published prior to the event. Stall reservations are not confirmed until payment is received.

Trainers who bring four (4) additional entries will earn one (1) stall free-of-charge.

Bedding fees: \$10

One bag of bedding will be provided per stall by Event management.

Competitors are responsible for maintaining stalls in accordance with facility rules.

6.7 RV Reservations

RV hook-up reservations are managed through the Mustang Heritage Foundation website:

<https://www.mustangheritagefoundation.org/event-details/rv-spot>

Limited hook-up spots are available on the Horse Park grounds.

Additional RV accommodations are available through Johnson County Park grounds nearby.

RV reservations are subject to availability and are not guaranteed without confirmed payment.

6.8 Entry Limits & Acceptance

Event Management reserves the right to:

- Limit entries per division
- Split or combine divisions or classes
- Establish waitlists
- Close entries prior to the published deadline
- Refuse or cancel any entry in the interest of safety, welfare, or event integrity

Submission of an entry constitutes agreement to abide by all published rules and policies.

7. Awards & Prizes

7.1 Class Placings & Ribbons

Each individual class will award ribbons 1st through 6th.

Class placings are determined by the official results of that individual class and stand independently from division championship results.

Class placings do not determine prize money eligibility unless specifically stated.

7.2 Division Championship Awards

Division Championships will be determined by the cumulative scores of all required classes within that division, except Dressage/Western Dressage which will be determined by two scores (refer to Dressage/Western Dressage rules).

With the exception of the Freestyle Division, each division consists of three (3) classes.

The Freestyle Division consists of one (1) class and will be scored accordingly.

To be eligible for Division Championship awards, competitors must complete all required classes within the division. Final division standings will be based on official cumulative results.

The following Division Championship awards will be presented:

- Champion
- Reserve Champion
- Third Overall

If a competitor withdraws or fails to complete all required classes within a division, that entry will **not** be eligible for Division Championship awards or placings.

7.3 Division Tie-Breaking Procedure

In the event of a tie in cumulative scores for Division Championship placings, the following tie-breaking procedure will be applied, except in the Freestyle Division (refer to Freestyle discipline rules for tie-breaking procedures specific to that division):

1. The competitor with the higher placing in the final class of the division will receive the higher overall division placing.
2. If a tie remains, the competitor with the higher placing in the second class of the division will receive the higher overall division placing.
3. If a tie remains, the competitor with the higher placing in the first class of the division will receive the higher overall division placing.
4. If competitors remain tied after application of the above measures, the tie will be resolved by the judge(s) who scored the division.

Division tie-breaking determinations on placings are final.

7.4 Division Prize Money

Division prize money will be calculated as fifty percent (50%) of the total entry fees collected for that division.

Prize money will be awarded to the top three (3) overall division placings:

- Champion
- Reserve Champion
- Third Overall

The exact distribution percentages among the top three placings will be published prior to the event.

Prize money is awarded only at the division level and is not awarded for individual class placings.

7.5 Eligibility for Awards & Prize Money

To receive Division Championship awards or prize money, a competitor:

- Must have completed all required division classes
- Must remain in good standing
- Must not be disqualified from the event
- Must comply with all welfare, medication, and enforcement policies
- Must resolve any pending disciplinary or review matters

Competitors who are excused, eliminated, or disqualified for rule violations, or who fail to complete a division will forfeit eligibility for Division Championship awards and prize money.

If a placing is voided due to a rule violation, awards and prize money will be redistributed according to adjusted official results.

Prize money payments will be issued after final verification of results and resolution of any pending reviews.

7.6 Additional Awards & Sponsored Prizes

Additional awards, prizes, or sponsored recognitions may be offered.

Details of sponsored awards, non-cash prizes, or specialty recognitions will be published prior to or during the event.

Event Management will determine eligibility criteria for any sponsored awards.

Event Management reserves the right to modify or substitute awards if necessary.

8. Welfare Standards (All Disciplines)

All welfare and safety determinations are final.

Protection of animals, clarity of enforcement, and integrity of the event take precedence over competitive outcome.

8.1 Humane Handling and Training

All animals must be handled and trained humanely at all times.

Prohibited practices include, but are not limited to:

- Excessive force that results in panic or defensive behavior
- Pain-based or fear-based training methods
- Retaliatory or punitive handling
- Repeated aggressive cues after compliance
- Jerking or spurring after response
- Striking with unnecessary force

- Pushing a horse in visible distress
- Forcing through repeated resistance without adjustment

Humane, thoughtful horsemanship is expected in competition and on the grounds. Many methods can be accepted, as long as they result in a willing, calmly responsive, and mentally present horse.

8.2 Soundness and Fitness

Animals must be:

- Physically sound
- Mentally fit
- Appropriately conditioned for the class entered
- Body condition scoring of 4 or better by the Veterinarian on site

Officials and event management may excuse any animal deemed unfit, with or without prior warning. Presentation of an animal that appears injured, distressed, or improperly conditioned may result in disqualification regardless of competitive standing.

8.3 Health Concern Issues

No harmful or sensitizing substance(s) may be applied to an animal's mouth, teeth, gums, legs, or body prior to or during competition. Violation is grounds for elimination.

Evidence of blood on the animal's mouth or sides in the competition arena is grounds for elimination. Evidence of blood observed anywhere on the animal outside the competition arena is possible grounds for elimination from the next scheduled class, at event management's discretion. These cases will be referred to the on-site Veterinarian.

9. Equipment & Training Practices

Be sure to also refer to each discipline's equipment rules, as they may differ.

9.1 General Standards

- Equipment must fit properly and be used as intended
- Equipment must not cause pain, injury, or distress

9.2 Authority to Require Changes

Judges, Stewards, or Event Management may:

- Require equipment adjustments
- Prohibit specific equipment
- Disqualify an entry if humane standards are not met

9.3 Permission for Bridleless Competition

Competitors wishing to compete without a bridle must submit a request to event management or the presiding judge prior to their scheduled class. Bridleless competition

is not permitted by default and requires explicit written or verbal approval before the competitor enters the arena.

If approved, the competitor must use a neck rope for the duration of their performance. The neck rope is required as a minimum safety measure and does not substitute for demonstrated control of the horse. The presiding judge, arena steward, or event management retains authority to withdraw approval at any time if animal welfare or arena safety concerns arise. Withdrawal of approval does not entitle the competitor to a scratch, refund, or re-ride.

Discipline sections govern all other equipment requirements. Bridleless approval does not waive or modify any other rule.

10. Drugs, Medications & Substances

10.1 General Rule

No substance may be used to:

- Mask or conceal pain
- Artificially enhance performance
- Alter normal sensory, neuromuscular, or pain responses in the animal
- Conceal unsoundness

This applies to substances administered internally or externally to gain competitive advantage.

10.2 Testing and Cooperation

- Competitors agree to comply with drug testing if welfare or fairness concerns arise
- Competitors must cooperate fully
- Refusal to cooperate may result in immediate elimination

Nutritional supplements are not prohibited unless they contain substances that affect pain, normal responsiveness, or performance.

10.3 Permitted Therapeutic and Supportive Care

Medications, treatments, or supplements administered for the legitimate support of a horse's health or management of a documented medical condition are permitted **provided they do not:**

- Artificially enhance performance
- Mask pain or unsoundness
- Suppress normal sensory, neuromuscular, or pain responses
- Compromise the safety or welfare of the horse

Examples of permitted therapeutic care may include, but are not limited to:

- Allergy management
- Gastrointestinal support
- Dermatologic treatment

- Maintenance care for chronic, non-performance-limiting conditions

If you have questions, it is recommended to consult with your Veterinarian regarding these rules. You may also contact the event Veterinarian on site at the event with specific questions.

Questions prior to the event can be submitted to: Shows@mustangheritagefoundation.org

11. Sportsmanship, Safety & Conduct

11.1 Sportsmanship Expectations

All participants are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful, responsible, and sportsmanlike manner.

This expectation applies:

- In competition arenas
- In warm-up areas
- Throughout the show grounds
- During interactions with officials, staff, volunteers, competitors, and spectators

Unsportsmanlike conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Disrespect toward officials, event staff, or volunteers
- Harassment, intimidation, or aggressive behavior
- Disruptive conduct that interferes with safe or fair competition
- Conduct that reflects disregard for animal welfare

11.2 Safety and Compliance

Competitors must ride and handle their animals in a controlled and responsible manner at all times. Any conduct that creates unnecessary, unreasonable, or avoidable risk to any person or animal is prohibited and may result in warning or immediate disqualification.

- Unsafe riding or handling is prohibited; this includes, but is not limited to:
 - Loss of control that endangers others
 - Excessive speed or riding beyond the horse's level of preparation
 - Aggressive or retaliatory handling
 - Failure to maintain appropriate spacing in warm-up areas
 - Disregard for posted rules or official instructions
- Facility rules and posted instructions must be followed
- Officials' directions must be obeyed promptly

11.3 Impairment

Handling or riding while impaired by alcohol or drugs is prohibited and will result in immediate removal from the event.

11.4 Dog Policy

Dogs are permitted on the grounds under the following conditions:

- All dogs must be on a physical leash and under control at all times.
- Dogs must remain attended at all times, unless securely contained.
- Loose dogs or dogs dragging a leash are strictly prohibited.
- Retractable leashes must be managed safely as to not impact others.

Any dog that:

- Makes excessive noise
- Chases, startles, or disrupts horses or burros
- Interferes with competition operations
- Creates a safety concern

will be required to be immediately removed from the area or contained appropriately.

Enforcement:

- First offense (loose dog or leash violation): \$25 fine
- Second offense: \$50 fine
- Subsequent violations may result in the dog being required to leave the grounds

Event Management reserves the right to require removal of any dog at any time in the interest of safety, animal welfare, or event integrity.

Dog owners are fully responsible for the behavior of their animals and any damage or injury caused.

12. Authority Structure

Clear authority ensures consistent and fair enforcement.

Event Management

- Authority anywhere on the grounds
- Defers to Judges for competitors in active competition
- Ultimate authority over necessary excusal from the grounds

Oversees documentation and enforcement consistency

Judges

- Full authority within competition arenas
- Full authority on scoring decisions and interpreting discipline rules as written
- May stop a competitor mid-class
- May issue warnings or eliminate competitors from any arena at any time

Arena Stewards

- Authority in warm-up areas, arena entrances/exits, and on the grounds
- Address safety, conduct, and welfare concerns in and outside competition
- Defers to Judges for competitors in active competition

Event Veterinarian

- Authority anywhere on the grounds

- May assess welfare or fitness at any time
- May recommend action to Judges, Stewards, or Management

13. Enforcement System

13.1 Purpose of Enforcement

Enforcement is designed to:

- Protect animal welfare
- Maintain safety for all
- Preserve fair competition
- Allow for education and correction when appropriate

When possible, issues will be addressed through instruction and correction before penalties escalate. However, welfare, safety, and integrity always take priority.

13.2 Informal Correction

Officials may address minor issues through verbal instruction or correction.

Informal corrections:

- Are not recorded as formal warnings
- Are intended to resolve minor issues promptly
- Do not count toward the formal warning limit

Examples may include:

- Equipment adjustment requests
- Spacing reminders in warm-up areas
- Minor procedural errors

13.3 Formal Written Warnings

A Formal Written Warning may be issued when:

- A competitor fails to correct an issue after instruction
- Conduct undermines safety, welfare, or sportsmanship
- An infraction warrants documentation

Formal warnings:

- Are documented with Event Management
- Clearly describe the violation
- Specify required corrective action
- Are provided to the competitor

13.4 Accumulation of Warnings

Receipt of **three (3) Formal Written Warnings during the event** will result in **automatic disqualification from further competition at that event.**

- Warnings accumulate across all divisions and classes
- Multiple warnings may be issued in a single day
- Warnings do not reset between classes

13.5 Immediate Elimination (No Warning Required)

Officials or Event management may excuse a competitor immediately, without prior warning, if:

- Animal welfare is at immediate risk
- Human or animal safety is endangered
- A competitor refuses to comply with an official instruction
- Conduct is aggressive, abusive, or severely unsportsmanlike
- A violation materially undermines fairness or integrity

Serious violations are not subject to the three-warning progression.

13.6 Elimination or Disqualification

Elimination may include:

- Removal from the current class

Disqualification may include:

- Removal from remaining classes
- Forfeiture of placings or awards
- Removal from the event grounds if warranted

13.7 Record of Disqualification & Future Eligibility

Disqualification from the event will be formally documented by Event Management.

Documented disqualifications may be considered when reviewing future entries. Event Management reserves the right to:

- Place a competitor on probation for future events
- Require additional conditions for participation
- Refuse entry to future MHF events

Decisions regarding future eligibility are at the sole discretion of Event Management and will be based on welfare, safety, and integrity considerations.

14. Administrative & Legal Provisions

14.1 Schedule Changes & Class Adjustments

Event Management will determine the official schedule of competition.

Event Management reserves the right to:

- Adjust class order or start times
- Combine or divide classes or divisions

- Modify class formats if necessary
- Substitute judges if required
- Delay, suspend, or reschedule competition due to weather, facility conditions, animal welfare concerns, safety considerations, or other circumstances beyond reasonable control

All schedules and schedule changes will be communicated as promptly as possible through the event page on HorseSpot.

Entry fees will not be refunded due to schedule adjustments, class combinations, delays, or cancellations resulting from circumstances beyond Event Management's control.

Event Management decisions regarding scheduling and class structure are final.

14.2 Media, Photography & Promotional Release

The Wild Mustang & Burro Finals is a public event and may be photographed, recorded, live streamed, or otherwise documented.

By entering or attending the event, competitors and participants grant the Mustang Heritage Foundation permission to:

- Photograph or record them and their animals
- Use images, video, audio, names, likenesses, and competition results
- Publish and distribute such materials for educational, promotional, archival, or fundraising purposes

This use may occur in print, digital, broadcast, or social media formats without further notice or compensation.

Participants who do not wish to appear in media coverage must notify Event Management in writing prior to the event. Event Management will make reasonable efforts but cannot guarantee exclusion from incidental background capture at a public event.

14.3 Assumption of Risk & Liability

WARNING

Under Indiana law, an equine professional is not liable for an injury to, or the death of, a participant in equine activities resulting from the inherent risks of equine activities.

Participation in equine activities involves inherent risks, including but not limited to risks associated with horses and burros behaving in ways that may result in injury, harm, or property damage.

By entering or participating in the Wild Mustang & Burro Finals, competitors acknowledge and accept the inherent risks associated with equine activities, event operations, and facility conditions.

Competitors are responsible for:

- The safety and control of their animals
- Their own actions and decisions
- The actions of their guests, family members, employees, assistants, or representatives

The Mustang Heritage Foundation, event staff, officials, volunteers, sponsors, and facility partners will not be responsible for injury, loss, damage, or accident to any person, animal, or property except as required by law.

Submission of an entry constitutes acknowledgment of and agreement to these conditions.