



In-Hand

Discipline Rules



1. Overview

1.1 Purpose

The In-Hand Division evaluates the quality of the ground-based partnership between competitor and horse or burro across three classes: Horsemanship, Showmanship, and In-Hand Trail. Competitors are judged on the horse's responsiveness, the handler's skill and communication, and the overall partnership demonstrated throughout each class.

1.2 Divisions Offered

- Youth (Ages 8 - 17 years)
- Adult
- Burro



2. Classes & Division Championship

2.1 Required Classes

Each division consists of three scored classes:

- Horsemanship
- Showmanship
- Trail

A competitor must enter all three classes to be eligible for Division Championship standing. Division Championship is determined by cumulative score across all three classes.

3. Eligibility

3.1 Animal Eligibility

All horses must meet the general eligibility requirements outlined in the General Rules. Burros will all compete in the Burro division regardless of handler's age.

The minimum age for any equine is one year or more. There is no maximum age.

3.2 Competitor Eligibility

Competitors must meet the age requirements for their division as of the date of competition. All competitors must meet the general eligibility requirements outlined in the General Rules.

4. Equipment & Attire

4.1 Halter & Lead Rope

A well-fitted halter is required for all In-Hand classes. Leather, nylon, or rope halters are permitted. Nose chains, lip chains, and stud chains used over the nose or under the chin are not permitted.

A standard lead rope is required. Lunge lines are not permitted in the competition arena.

4.2 Handler's Whip or Stick

A handler's whip, stick, or carrot stick with no lash attachment may be carried for communication and direction. Maximum length: 48 inches. Lunge whips and any implement with a lash more than 6 inches are not permitted in the competition arena.

4.3 Attire

Competitors should present a neat, workmanlike appearance appropriate to horse handling. Appropriate closed-toed shoes are also required.

4.4 Prohibited Equipment

The following are prohibited in all In-Hand classes: nose chains, lip chains, stud chains used over the nose or under the chin, lunge lines, lunge whips, any whip or implement with a lash more than 6 inches long, and any device designed to cause pain or coerce compliance. Use of prohibited equipment will result in elimination from the class.

5. Class Procedures

5.1 Horsemanship

The Horsemanship class evaluates the horse's quality of movement, turnout, and overall conditioning. The judge will also consider the horse's compliance and relaxation in a group setting.

The judge will evaluate:

- How the animal leads at walk and trot
- Picking up and holding feet for inspection
- Conditioning of the animal's body condition, coat, and appearance
- Collective rail work and individual short pattern

The specific pattern and tasks will be called or posted at the competition.

5.2 Showmanship

The Showmanship class evaluates the handler's skill and technique in presenting the horse and the horse's responsiveness to handler cues.

The judge will evaluate:

- Handler position and handling technique
- Accuracy and smoothness of transitions and maneuvers
- Horse's attentiveness and responsiveness
- Overall presentation and turnout of animal and handler

Pattern elements may include: square set-ups, pivots (90°, 180°, 270°, 360°), walk, trot, backing, and side pass. The specific pattern will be posted at the competition.

5.3 In-Hand Trail

The In-Hand Trail class evaluates the horse's willingness and the handler's ability to guide the horse through a series of ground obstacles. The judge will evaluate the horse's confidence, quality of handler's communication, and accuracy through the obstacles.

Obstacles may include, but are not limited to:

- Walk-over poles, logs, or ground rails
- Backing through or around markers
- Side-passing along a pole or rail
- Tarps, unusual surfaces, or novel objects
- Gate navigation
- Ground-level bridge or platform

The course will be tailored to the appropriate level and posted at the competition.

6. Scoring

6.1 General Scoring Format

Each class is scored on a maneuver-by-maneuver basis using the following scale:

Score	Description
10	Excellent
9	Very Good
8	Good
7	Above Average
6	Satisfactory
5	Average
4	Below Average
3	Poor
2	Very Poor
1	Extremely Poor
0	Not Performed or Demonstrated

Half-point increments (0.5) are permitted at the judge's discretion. The final score for each class is the sum of all maneuver scores, plus the Connection mark as described in Section 6.2.

6.2 Connection — Collective Mark

At the conclusion of each class, the judge will award a single collective mark for Connection. Connection evaluates the overall relaxation, confidence, and partnership between horse and handler as demonstrated throughout the class. The Connection mark is scored on the same 0-10 scale, half-point increments permitted, and is added to the maneuver total to determine the competitor's final class score.

7. Penalty Infractions

Infraction	Point Deduction from Class Score
Use of prohibited equipment	Elimination from the class
Equipment failure - if permitted to continue	-2
Excessive use of aid - if permitted to continue	-5
Off pattern - Judge may stop & allow to correct	0 for affected maneuver

Excusal from a class by the judge is final. Elimination from a class results in no score and no placing for that class. All are subject to further review under the General Rules enforcement system.