MONTGOMERY COUNTY 4-H

HORSE JUDGING CRITERIA
2026 - 2027

Horse Judging provides an opportunity for youth to learn to make decisions and organize their thoughts. The presentation of oral reasons helps judgers improve their memory skills and speak effectively. These benefits are available whether they own a horse or not. If they do ride it can help them become a better exhibitor as they learn the current show standards and criteria used by actual judges to evaluate each class.

The ability to select the best quality horses comes through many hours of study, training, and practice. A 4-H judging team is an effective means to teach such skills related to horses.

A team consists of 3-4 members (usually with only the top 3 scores counted). Members may be trained by an activity leader in their local club, as well as by county horse judging leaders. Members learn the principles of horse judging and selection and how to evaluate differences in various breeds and groups of animals. They also learn to make quick and accurate decisions as the contests are timed - usually 12 - 15 minutes per class. Judging team members also learn to justify their decisions through presenting oral and/or written reasons. Horse judging members test their skills in evaluating horses in halter and performance divisions relating to Western and English disciplines.

Montgomery County may send multiple Junior (3rd - 5th Grade); Intermediate (6th - 8th Grade); and Senior (9th - 12th Grade) age teams to the District Judging Contest. These teams will be **prioritized** from those 4-H'ers who participate in at least two of the qualifying contests.

NOTE: 4-H competitive age for the 2026-2027 year will be determined by the grade of the member on September 1, 2026. They will compete at that grade level the entire year unless contest rules say different.
Major Show Contests have different age divisions and determine the divisions differently. Read each show's rules carefully to determine age division.

Michelle Mihalek is the County Extension Agent for assisting. (936) 539 - 7823
Hank Thomas (713) 443 - 1001 will serve as countywide Horse Judging Coordinator.
County Agent responsibilities will include:
- Calculate score averages
- Work with coach to assign teams based on previous contest scores.

Leader responsibilities will include:
- Collect and prepare county entries
- Enter all contests in coordination with County Agent
- Work with contest officials to enter teams at contests (or designate a leader if they are unable to attend a contest.)
- Coordinate meetings with other coaches
- Secure and submit scores to County Extension Office
- Notify all leaders of contest specifics

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*** Members, leaders, and managers are expected to give them their full support.

PRACTICES

IF there is a case of multiple horse judging groups in the county, all clubs could schedule practices for their own members. It is recommended, that when possible, the club holding the practice should notify all groups of the practice (especially if they will be judging live animals). Online practice information: www.horsejudging.com free classes as well as additional classes for a fee, www.campus.extension.org has contest archives available for a fee.

COUNTY MEETINGS

These meetings will include educational topics, announcements of upcoming contests, registrations, current scores, etc. It is recommended that all members attend these meetings to receive information. If you are unable to attend a county meeting, it is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to check with coaches or county coordinators to receive information you may have missed.

TRAVEL

Members must pay their own entry fees, meals, transportation costs and any other expenses that may arise in conjunction with attending contest.

Members are responsible for securing transportation to and from contests with parents or enrolled volunteer leaders. Coaches are not responsible for transporting their members to and from contests.

QUALIFYING CONTESTS AND SETTING TEAMS

All contests that the County Extension Office is notified of will be considered as qualifying contests.

Reasons and Questions scores will be included in the calculation of member's scores.

COUNTY TEAM SELECTION FOR CONTESTS

PREVIOUS MEMBERS

1st and 2nd contest - Use last years ending average (not counting district contest)
3rd contest - Highest score of this year's first two contests
4th contest on - Average of two highest scores from this year. (One can be a zero if member has only attended one contest this year)

FIRST YEAR MEMBERS

Members will judge on novice teams within their age division at first contest. These teams will be set at county coordinators discretion. First contest scores will be used to place these members on teams after the first contest.

PARTICIPATION CRITERIA

Horse judging is open to all 4-H members in Montgomery County. All members will judge as a county group within their age division. FFA students who are 4-H members in good standing can judge in our District Contest. 4-H judging project members have priority, regardless of their score, over FFA students in completing a team.

Parent participation is strongly encouraged at all horse judging activities including practices and contests.

In accordance with Texas Education Code, school grades must be checked to determine if members are eligible to participate in a contest. Members must submit an official, completed, Declaration of Eligibility Form for participation in extra-curricular activities to the 4-H office at least one week prior to the event. THIS MUST BE DONE WHETHER THE CONTEST IS ON A SCHOOL DAY, SPRING BREAK OR ON A WEEKEND. Members are strongly encouraged to submit requests for all contests within a grading period at one time to make it easier on the 4-H office as well as the school you attend. Declaration of Eligibility Forms must be presented to the County Extension Office at least one week prior to the event.

ENTRY PROCEDURE

Entry fees for Spring Major Livestock shows must be paid to the Horse Judging Coordinator prior to Major Show Entry night the first weekend in November. Cash or check made out to "4-H General Account".

Entries for the District 4-H Horse Judging Contest will be completed individually through 4-H Online.

Once fees have been paid, there will be no refunds.

When registering for contests, the Montgomery County 4-H Office address should be put on the registration packets, rather than the team coach's address. This address is : 9020 Airport Rd., Conroe, Texas 77303.

DISTRICT TEAM SELECTION:

Scores to select district teams will be an average of the top two contest scores.
Highest two scores divided by two.

FIGURING SCORES

Average = number of judged and reasons/questions classes at contest divided into the total possible score for contest. Average will be carried to four decimal points then rounded to three. **Individual** scores will be available at the Extension Office when received from contest and will be available to individuals.

CONTEST AND PRACTICE CONDUCT

A designated time will be announced for contest arrival at the monthly countywide meeting. Those arriving after the designated time will fill spaces on lower teams. Members are expected to be courteous and notify their coach or the county coordinators if they are not going to attend a contest they are registered for.

DRESS CODE: For contests with reasons classes: Strongly encouraged to dress professionally with a button up collared shirt, blazer/jacket, khaki pants. Must wear boots/closed toed shoes. Girls' hair should be pulled back, contained in a braid or pony tail. All other contests: Attire to be determined, but must have closed toed shoes. Those with questions about appropriate dress should contact the county coordinator or 4-H office. No hats may be worn during any contest. Ties are optional.

There will be no use of tobacco products at any practice or contest.

There will be no talking during contests. This can lead to disqualification of a team. (It is recommended that members avoid sitting by friends or other members of your team while judging performance classes. This removes the temptation to talk during the contest.)

There will be no public displays of affection while attending contests.

Members are expected to respect the coaches/county coordinators.

NO cell phones/smart watch etc. are allowed in any contest - if a contestant is found with an electronic device even if it is turned off the individual and possibly the team could be disqualified. Turning electronic devices over to the coach or parent will protect against this risk. For those concerned about contact after the contest, a designated meeting place for members, parents, coaches and leaders is set prior to the contest.

END OF YEAR AWARDS

Awards will be given to high point judgers in each age division. Depending on the number of participants, Junior and Intermediate may be combined into a single age division following most contest divisions. High Point will be based on the average of the top two scores for contests during the year and participation in 50% or more of the practices. The item awarded will be determined by the overall participation.

October 3, 2026

Montgomery County 4-H
Horse Judging Practice
Schedule 2026 - 2027

All Meetings Start at 6:00 p.m. at the Montgomery County Extension Office

DATE	AGE DIVISION	LOCATION
September 1, 2026	All	Auditorium
October 6, 2026	All	Tom LeRoy Building
November, 3, 2026	All	Auditorium
December 1, 2026	All	Auditorium
January 5, 2027	All	Auditorium
February 2, 2026	All	Auditorium
March 2, 2027	All	Auditorium
April 6, 2027	All	Auditorium
May 4, 2027	All Auditorium	

Additional practices will be scheduled as needed and communicated through GroupMe and 4-H Weekly Updates. They will also be listed in the 4-H Focus Newsletter if time allows.
Subject to change

Individual Practice On-line: http://animalscience.tamu.eduwww.horsejudging.com free classes as well as additional classes for a fee. The website explains the criteria for judging conformation and links to the practice videos are found at the bottom of the page.

Horse Judging Contests – Entries for Major Shows are due November 1-2, 2026

LOCATION	DATE	CONFIRMATION
Fort Worth Fair Grounds	January 19, 2027 (Tues)	YES (Sr. Only)
San Antonio Fairgrounds	February 10, 2027 (Wed)	YES
Houston Livestock Show	March 8, 2027 (Mon)	YES
District 9 Contest College Station	April 17, 2027	YES

Any questions please contact : County Extension Office
County Extension Agent - Michelle Mihalek (936) 539 - 7823
Coordinator - Hank Thomas (713) 443 - 1001

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Please complete one per family and return this page to club horse judging leader immediately.

We have read the Montgomery County 4-H Horse Judging Criteria for 2025 - 2026, understand these criteria, and agree to abide by them. Our failure to do so could result in being removed from a team, or placed on a lower team.

Member _____ Date _____

Member _____ Date

Member _____ Date

Member _____ Date

Parent _____ Date

Parent _____ Date