Ranch Riding Rules for 2010

1. Ranch Riding serves to measure the ability of the horse to be functional and a pleasure to ride at a working speed while being used as a means of conveyance from one western stock horse task to another. This horse should be well-broke, relaxed, quiet, soft, and cadenced at all gaits. The horse should be responsive to the rider, yield to contact, and make all required transitions smoothly, timely and correctly. The horse should perform with reasonable speed, and be obedient, well-mannered, free, and easy moving.

2. Class consists of pattern work which is ridden individually. For each maneuver, the horse is judged on quality of gaits, response to the rider, manners, and disposition.

3. A horse will be given credit for traveling with his head held in a normal position, ears alert and moving at a natural speed for the gait requested. The horse should be ridden on a relatively loose rein with light contact and without requiring undue restraint. Excessively long floppy reins will not be given extra credit.

4. Tack and Equipment: Ranch work equipment and attire is recommended, but show equipment and attire will not be penalized. Roping reins or reins with romal are permitted.

5. There will be one pattern which will be used for all shows. The class may be conducted inside or outside of an arena. Markers shall be setup to designate gait changes.

6. To break ties or to resolve close placings, the judge, at his/her discretion, may require designated contestants to work on the rail or repeat any portion of the pattern.

7. Part of the evaluation of this class is on smoothness of transitions. All transitions should be smooth without undue exaggeration or resistance from the horse.

8. **Description of Ideal Gaits** – The ideal ranch riding horse will have a natural head carriage at each gait – neither too high nor too low.

   A. **Walk** – The walk should be straight, square, flat footed, relaxed with the horse moving out freely and looking ahead.

   B. **Trot** – This gait should be a square two-beat diagonal trot. The trot should be steady, soft and slow enough for riding long distances. Trots which are rough and hard to sit should be penalized. Excessively slow and uncadenced trots should also be penalized.

   C. **Extended Trot** – The extended trot should show an evident lengthening of stride from the regular trot with the same cadence that will cause an increase in speed. This trot should be level, flat and steady with the appearance that the horse could hold this gait for an extended distance.

   D. **Natural Gait and Extended Natural Gait** – Non-trotting horses should perform their natural gait where a trot is indicated and show a distinctive difference in speed of that gait where an extended trot is asked. The natural gait should be smooth and appear effortless for riding long distances.

   E. **Lope** – This gait should be a three beat gait that is cadenced, straight and steady and is comfortable to ride over long distances.
F. **Extended Lope** – The extended lope should be an obvious lengthening of stride from the previous lope, be at the same cadence and cause an increase in speed. The gait needs to be steady, quiet, and maintaining the increased speed while being under control.

G. **Stop** (from both lope and trot) – The horse should be in the correct stopping position – both hocks engaged and stopping on the hindquarters.

H. **Reverse** – A horse should turn briskly and flat with front feet on the ground and holding an inside rear pivot foot.

I. The extended trot may be ridden with the rider either posting or standing in the stirrups to the front of the saddle. Holding the saddle horn is permissible, at this gait, as might be done in open terrain. When transitioning from the extended trot to the lope, it is permissible to take the horse back a bit (collecting) before loping.

9. There are a series of maneuvers worth 10 points each. Point ranges are defined as follows:

A. 10 points – Excellent performance. High quality mover.

B. 8-9 points – Above average performance. High quality mover.

C. 7 points – Average performance

D. 6 points – Below average performance, minor error, i.e. not performing gaits at designated marker, lack of control, break of walk/trot for 1-2 strides.

E. 4-5 points – Major error, i.e. break of walk/trot for more than 2 strides, missed but corrected lead.

F. 1-3 points – Major disobedience, i.e. bucking, kicking out, wrong lead not corrected.

G. Disqualification:
   (1) Off pattern.
   (2) More than one finger between reins.
   (3) Touching horse with free hand.
   (4) Illegal equipment.
   (5) Equipment failure that delays completion of pattern.
   (6) Use of two hands (except for junior horses shown with hackamore or snaffle bit) or changing hands on reins.
1. Start at G. Trot to B.
2. At B, extend the trot and continue to C.
3. At C, transition to lope and lope (left lead) to D.
4. At D, extend the lope and continue to A.
5. At A, return to a regular lope and continue to B.
6. At B, stop, settle, and wait for judge’s cue to continue.
7. At judge’s cue, trot in a small clockwise circle.
8. At B again, transition to lope (right lead) and continue to A.
9. At A, stop and reverse.
10. Walk to G.
11. At G, stop and back at least 10 steps.