

NEBRASKA

## EQUINE news

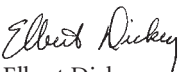
The purpose of *Nebraska Equine News* is to educate readers on equine issues and programs available through UNL Extension 4-H and the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, all in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at UNL. *Nebraska Equine News* provides current educational information important to the equine audience in Nebraska. It also includes updated information concerning the opportunities available through the Equine Science Option in the UNL Department of Animal Science and extracurricular programs.

### Connection Between 4-H and UNL

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln is a land-grant university, the mission of which is to share knowledge with all of the people of the state. UNL Extension’s mission is to help Nebraskans enhance their lives through research-based education. As a cooperative effort among the United States Department of Agriculture, UNL and local counties, extension reaches statewide, delivering research-based knowledge to people through direct teaching and publications. As the youth development arm of extension, 4-H reaches one in three of Nebraska’s eligible young people in efforts to prepare them for the 21st century. Nebraska 4-H often is considered young people’s first class at the university.



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## Remember The Big Picture

by Kathy Anderson, UNL Extension Horse Specialist, Associate Professor

In today’s highly competitive world, exhibitors tend to get caught up in tiny details and forget about the “big picture” of simply showing their horse to the best of the ability of both the horse and exhibitor. Patterns for showmanship and horsemanship are meant to test the ability of the showmen to guide horse performance for the pattern. Too often an exhibitor forgets about overall pattern smoothness and correctness, and focuses in on one or two minute details.

A smooth, confident exhibitor with a smile and charisma will cover up a less than perfect pattern. Top showmanship exhibitors focus primarily on the horse and pay less attention to the judge. It is difficult to know if the horse is standing squarely on all four feet if the exhibitor is trying to stare the judge down. Exhibitors need to be aware of where the judge is; however they also need to be certain their horses are performing correctly. An exhibitor should focus the attention on what the horse is doing and keep a confident, pleasant expression. A quick, periodic glance at the judge is all that is necessary.

Pattern classes are not a game of inches and there is usually more that separates two exhibitors than the exact location or a half-step either side of a cone. Remember showmanship and horsemanship provide opportunities to “show” your horse and your communication with that horse. Exhibitors often can tell how “picky” a judge is by the detail that is written in the posted pattern. However, do not try to second-guess what the judge wants. If you have questions – ask!

When preparing for pattern classes, exhibitors should develop a “plan” to

execute the pattern in a manner that best shows them and their horse’s abilities. Know the horse’s limitations or where it excels, and capitalize on that. For example, if the pattern calls for a 360-degree pivot and the horse can do them very correctly at a moderate speed, but gets mad and rough when asked to do it with speed, go for the smoothest presentation. Later work on increasing the speed, but show him to his best ability today.

Precision is very important in these pattern classes; however, a smooth, broke, quiet pattern often will beat an overdone, rough run. Many exhibitors get very concerned about stopping at an exact location with a cone or being in perfect step with their horse. Notice where the judge is standing or sitting and realize the judge can see only one view. The judge may or may not be able to see exactly where you stop in relation to every marker. Precision and detail will most certainly need to increase as the level of competition increases. At a small weekend show, a step or two may make no difference. However at a large show, it may make the difference between ribbon groups.

Finally, for those giving instruction, appreciate the level of experience of the exhibitors. Novice and new showmen often are glad to just get through a pattern correctly and cannot handle “over instruction.” For the newcomers – keep it simple and build confidence. Save the highly critical, detailed specifications for the highly seasoned folks who need the challenge of striving for perfection. Remember for most of these individuals, competition is supposed to be an enjoyable experience so try and keep it upbeat and positive.

