

Introduction to the Danish Ribbon System

The Danish System of judging is designed to give the 4-Her a feel for their level of execution in a specific class. The Danish system judges the participants against a set standard for the specific competition and not against the other participants. Judging against a standard is designed as an educational tool. The purpose is to allow the participant to know what needs to be worked on and what they have done well, regardless of who they are competing against. This also allows every 4-H member the recognition for hard work, as well as helps young people recognize the need to improve their skills.

This system allows a judge to communicate to the participants if more work needs to be done to get their performance to a level that meets standard, and also allows a judge to reward a well-executed performance even if other competitors had higher scores. The Kentucky 4-H Horse Program chooses to use this system to qualify 4-Hers at the district level for the state competition. This ensures that the state show maintains a high level of competition but does not restrict it to participants that were placed based on peer competition. For example, in a class of 20 competitors there can be more than 10 people that gave a quality performance. On the other hand, sometimes participants in the top 10 failed to meet a certain level of performance desired. The Kentucky 4-H Horse Program believes the Danish Ribbon system is an educational and fair assessment of the individuals' performance as long as it is enforced uniformly. The KY 4-H Horse Program asks that all judges read the Danish Ribbon system guidelines thoroughly, and direct any questions to show management.

District Qualifying for State 4-H Show

“Horse Show Rulebook: General Show and Class Rules”

#13) The number of youth competing in a county or district 4-H horse show is determined by the respective county or district 4-H horse management teams. However, each district 4-H horse show must use the following qualification system to qualify a 4-H member for the State 4-H Horse Show:

- All qualifications will be based on the Danish Ribbon System.
- All youth must show in showmanship at the District 4-H Horse Show.
- To qualify for the State Show in all classes entered in at the District show (max = 4 classes, 1 showmanship and 3 performance), the youth must receive $\geq 50\%$ blue or red Danish Ribbons in all classes.
- If the youth receives $< 50\%$ blue or red Danish Ribbons in all classes, then the youth can only qualify for the State show in the classes they did receive a blue or red Danish Ribbon.
- If any youth qualified to attend the State 4-H Horse Show, they cannot be replaced by an alternate.

Explanation and Examples by Division

Halter

Horses must first and foremost be suitable to purpose. For example, a yearling that naturally racks should be frowned upon in the conformation class designated for hunters. Hunters are required to trot and if a horse is incapable of trotting or prefers to “gait”, then it is naturally unsuitable for its intended purpose.

Judges must base the majority of their decision on the quality of the horse. While a 4-H member may strive to present his or her horse to the best of his or her ability, young horses may become nervous and unpredictable in unfamiliar surroundings and be unwilling to stand quietly to be judged.

♣ Blue- A horse of high quality that approaches the ideal of the breed or type exhibited deserves a blue ribbon. The horse is in excellent condition and possesses natural bloom to its coat and is in proper weight. The horse should be obviously well cared for, properly turned out and shows conformational correctness.

♣ Red- A red ribbon is awarded to a lower quality horse that is turned out well and presented nicely. The horse should not possess any conformation defects that would prevent it from being a reasonable performance horse. A red ribbon may also be given to a higher quality animal presented in poor condition.

♣ White- An extremely low-quality horse or one that is obviously not ready to be shown from a grooming or conditioning perspective is awarded a white ribbon. Extreme discretion should be used when awarding a white ribbon in a conformation class as 4-H members are frequently showing the highest quality animal financially possible for the family and this holds doubly true if the animal is immaculate in its presentation (and possibly indicative of a youngster’s dedication).

Showmanship

Showmanship is judged strictly on the ability of a 4-H member to properly condition and show a horse, pony or mule. At no time should the conformation of the horse or pony affect the determination of an award. However, the condition of the horse, including its weight, grooming, bloom and condition of coat, and quality of hoof care, should be evaluated and taken into consideration when awarding a Danish ribbon.

Showmanship is a class in which any exhibitor, regardless of the quality of the horse, can excel. Only through daily grooming and proper management can horses be in top condition. Old-fashioned elbow grease is free and a determined 4-H exhibitor will spend hours preparing for this class and should be rewarded appropriately. In addition, practicing showmanship maneuvers and teaching one’s horse to stand correctly will show through and should also receive recognition.

♣ Blue-A blue-ribbon-winning performance includes a well-groomed horse and exhibitor. The halter or bridle is clean, well-oiled and properly adjusted. The required pattern is properly and promptly executed and the exhibitor displays precision and efficiency when moving around the horse.

♣ **Red**- The degree of condition is inferior to that of a blue ribbon winner. The coat may not exhibit the slickness of top competitors and other deficiencies of presentation may be seen, including, but not limited to, a careless clipping job, a long, uneven mane, or hooves in need of attention. The exhibitor's pattern is of average quality. The promptness and accuracy of a superior run is absent, but the showman manages to perform every maneuver of the pattern in an average manner. An exhibitor may earn a red ribbon if the horse is presented in immaculate condition however commits a major error in the pattern or while showing the horse.

♣ **White**- An exhibitor receiving a white ribbon lacks control of his or her horse, fails to reasonably follow the prescribed pattern, commits several errors, or has little knowledge regarding class procedure. Poor presentation of the horse and exhibitor coupled with an inferior pattern could also be classified as a white-ribbon performance.

Saddleseat Division *Performance Classes*

Show Pleasure Horse and Pony – Though alert and obedient, the show pleasure horse is not expected to have the animation (knee and hock action) observed in a park or fine harness horse. In accordance with the class name, horses must move freely and appear to be a pleasure to ride. Therefore, impeccable manners are paramount. In evaluating manners, the horse must show crisp transitions and three true gaits (walk, trot, and canter). Entries must back readily and preferably straightly. Special emphasis should be placed on a recognizable, four-beat walk. Deficiencies in manners such as excessive champing of the bit, head-tossing, jiggling, pulling, and tail-switching should be penalized.

Country Pleasure, Non-ASB English Pleasure, and Natural Pleasure – Entries in country pleasure classes must be typical of the breed represented, but may be less “showy” than a show pleasure horse (i.e., have less animation). As with entries in show pleasure, the ability of the horse to give a relaxed ride is a leading consideration. Horses must move freely and appear to be pleasurable under saddle. Therefore, impeccable manners are paramount. In evaluating manners, the horse must show crisp transitions. Horses should possess true gaits (walk, trot, extended trot, and canter). Entries must back readily. Special emphasis should be placed on a recognizable, four-beat walk. Deficiencies in manners such as excessive champing of the bit, head-tossing, jiggling, pulling, and tail-switching should be penalized.

***OI-Western Pleasure Horse and Pony** – Western pleasure horses and ponies are judged predominantly on manners and performance. Western pleasure is a three-gait class (walk, jog-trot, and lope), and all gaits are to be performed on a reasonably loose rein without undue restraint. Horses should also back willingly. Shortcomings in manners, such as those described in the show pleasure and country pleasure sections above, will result in penalties.

♣ **Blue**- Obedient horses that show properly at all three gaits are awarded blue ribbons. Slight bobbles (such as slow transitions, slight, almost imperceptible, break in gait, etc.) can be excused if the performance is generally excellent and the horse is mannerly.

♣ **Red**- A red ribbon is awarded if there is a significant deficiency in performance or manners. If a horse jigs incessantly or pulls unmercifully, a red ribbon is appropriate. A quickly corrected wrong lead or multiple instances of breaking gait, for instance, may also qualify a horse for a red ribbon.

♣ **White**- A horse that fails to perform the required gaits, including a true flat walk, earns a white ribbon. An egregious lack of manners (balking, bolting, spinning, etc.) would also characterize a white-ribbon performance. Inappropriate tack is also grounds for a white ribbon, or failure of helmet to stay on top of head during a class.

Versatility Pattern Horse and Pony – This performance class is judged solely on the execution of a prescribed pattern. The pattern includes several elements such as diagonal changes, simple lead change, and serpentine. Accuracy of the pattern is paramount. Slight errors in execution, particularly those related to timing such as late transitions, are not cause for serious discrimination. More serious errors in execution (omission of elements, string of small mistakes, wandering indiscriminately through pattern), however, relegate exhibitors to the bottom of the class and likely a white ribbon.

Equitation Classes

Saddleseat Equitation – All Saddleseat equitation classes are judged on the ability of the rider to control his or her mount while maintaining effective, efficient use of seat, legs, and hands. The winning Saddleseat equitation rider looks comfortable and in control. Application of aids is invisible and mounts are responsive. The rider maintains a workmanlike and calm demeanor throughout the rail work and pattern. A pleasing expression is more desirable than a forced smile.

All horses are worked both directions of the ring at the walk, trot, and canter, and each competitor is then asked to perform an individual pattern. The pattern should be difficult enough to ask general questions of ability, but should not be so complex as to intimidate riders or effectively make the class a “fault-and-out” competition. Assigning certain worth to the individual workout is at the discretion of the judge; some judges may consider the workout an important element of the class, and others may not.

♣ **Blue**- Riders that show their horses well while maintaining proper position are awarded blue ribbons. Ideal position includes sympathetic, steady hands; strong leg that is bent slightly at the knee; vertical upper body, and forward-looking eyes. All blue-ribbon winners are mindful of diagonals, leads, and class procedures. The horse and rider combinations perform well throughout the class, both on the rail and in individual work.

♣ **Red**- A red ribbon is awarded to riders that have slight problems in position (for example, slouchy shoulders, swinging leg, unsteady hands) or control, but manage to get his or her mount shown acceptably. These competitors may have slight mistakes on the rail and in individual work and may lack the confidence of more seasoned riders. Horse, tack, and attire may show slight signs of disrepair or uncleanliness.

♣ **White**- A white ribbon is awarded to a rider that fails to meet the minimum standards for the class. Such a rider may have considerable flaws in position or may not be aware of normal class procedure (missed diagonals or leads, for example). The rail work and pattern may be riddled with a series of mistakes or one or two serious errors. Misbehavior or disobedience of the horse may also warrant a white ribbon. Complete disregard for cleanliness and appropriate fit of tack is also justification for a white ribbon, or failure of helmet to stay on top of head during a class.

Example Class: Country Pleasure Horse and Pony

294 - A chestnut American Saddlebred gelding with very little knee or hock action. Though the gelding goes consistently slightly above the bit, he knows his job and performs admirably with light contact. He resists backing slightly by raising his head and opening his mouth. After a couple of tugs, however, he eventually yields and backs squarely.

379 - A bold bay Morgan mare that is consistently over flexed. She is forward at all of her gaits and her rider has a difficult time with downward transitions (the mare tucks her head against her chest and opens her mouth to avoid the bit). It is obvious the mare is not enjoying the ride. She requires considerable checking to keep her from jiggling at the walk, and she whinnies throughout the class. The mare backs obligingly but prances when asked to stand.

781 - Another chestnut American Saddlebred gelding. This one is much more "showy," with knees and hocks snapping tidily. He wears his ears well throughout the class and looks through the bridle while performing gaits with relative ease. He jigs slightly to the right but eventually settles down to the walk. He stands quietly, though alertly, and backs immediately when asked.

311 - A gray Arabian mare that has a long, springy stride, though little animation. A calm, matronly sort, the mare is allowed to do whatever she likes, including looking around at the surroundings and ignoring a variety of aids from her rider. She canters only on the right lead and in an inconsistent fashion, often breaking gait. The young rider kicks her relentlessly in an effort to keep her going. She doesn't back when asked.

Danish ribbon distribution: A blue ribbon should be awarded to **781** and **294**, and white ribbons to **379** and **311**.

Example Class: Versatility Pattern

781 - The same chestnut American Saddlebred gelding that was in the Country Pleasure Horse and Pony class earlier in the day. He is timely and responsive to the cues offered up by his rider throughout the pattern. The rider executes each maneuver to the highest degree, takes the correct diagonals at the trot, and shows the most degree of correctness in the class.

210 - This is a bay Arabian gelding. This gelding is lazy and requires constant, though light, urging with the whip. He pokes his head through the bridle, and shows a series of uninspired, uncollected gaits. However, the rider keeps him honest at all gaits and performs her diagonals at the proper locations. On the positive side, the gelding seems perfectly safe and content.

439 - A gray American Saddlebred mare that fails to walk consistently at any time during the class. Though she's "on the muscle" at the walk, she doesn't seem unsafe, and she's mannerly and workmanlike throughout the pattern. She does back readily, but crookedly. However, the rider seems under control and confident in her pattern, despite one or two minor mistakes.

87 - This is an aging chestnut Morgan gelding that looks a bit arthritic and rickety. He marches into the ring at a square, rhythmic trot and performs flawlessly through the class. He requires little insistence from the rider during transitions and wears his ears constantly. He is slow to back and opens his mouth wide during the maneuver. The pattern is slow overall, but is very correct.

802 - This grade gelding looks unhappy from the get-go: he's pinning his ears and wringing his tail. He raises his head constantly. He refuses to turn 180 degrees, does not counter canter, and is overall disobedient to the rider's commands.

Danish ribbon distribution: A blue ribbon should be awarded to **781, 87, and 210**, a red ribbon to **439**, and a white ribbon to **802**.

Example Class: Saddleseat Equitation I

217 – A nicely attired boy on a school-type American Saddlebred gelding. The boy has a solid foundation, though he misses his diagonal one direction of the ring but changes it immediately. He is balanced in the saddle during all gaits. His pattern is a bit rough, but he manages to do all that is asked of him.

374 – A well-dressed girl with a phony smile is riding a small Morgan mare. The mare is obedient and the child maintains an adequate position. She tends to lean forward at times, which causes her eyes to drop and her hands to collapse. She misses a lead in the pattern.

19 – This young girl on a squirrely chestnut Arabian is wearing a coat that is a few sizes too large. Her basic position is weak, and her downward-pointing toes indicate an obvious lack of strength. Control is an issue at the canter; the rider is unable to make effective contact with her horse's mouth because her reins are too long. The pattern is dismal.

124 – A well-dressed girl is riding a flashy bay American Saddlebred. The duo performs flawlessly on the rail but forgets an element of an otherwise well-executed pattern.

Danish ribbon distribution: A blue ribbon is awarded to **217**, red ribbons to **124** and **374**, and a white ribbon to **19**.

Hunter Division

Performance Classes

Hunter Under Saddle – Horses are shown at three gaits in hunter under saddle classes. In large or extremely competitive classes, the judge may require the entries to hand gallop collectively one way of the ring (no more than eight will gallop at a time). Light contact with the horse's mouth is required at all three gaits. Way of going and manners are prime considerations. Horses and ponies should move efficiently across the ground with long, flat strides and a balanced, cadenced carriage. Judges should give foremost consideration to horses that work on the bit in a collected frame. Serious consideration should not be placed on "headset."

Hunter Over Fences – Horses are asked to negotiate a course of eight fences and shall be judged on jumping ability, suitability, manners, and soundness. The following faults are scored subjectively by the judge, and depending on severity may be considered minor or major faults: showing an obstacle to a horse, kicking out, jumping out of form, missing a lead change, spooking, and jumping into the corners of a jump. The following are major faults: knocking down any part of an obstacle, trotting on course when not specified, circling on course, refusing a fence, bucking, or any dangerous jumping (such as leaving a leg). The following may or may not be considered faults depending on their severity and frequency: light rubs, late lead changes, adding or eliminating a stride in a line, swapping leads in a line, and excessive show of animation.

♣ **Blue** - A blue ribbon is awarded to horses that fulfill all class requirements with a degree of style. Blue-ribbon winners commit no serious errors. A high-quality horse that commits an error but is corrected immediately may also be eligible for a blue ribbon. Score of 75 or higher. Even hunting pace throughout the course with soft, well executed lead changes (if applicable to class specifications). A horse that demonstrates good form over and meets all fences well merits a blue Danish.

♣ **Red**- A red ribbon is appropriate for lower quality horses that commit one major error or a string of less significant mistakes. Horses that show signs of anxiousness (opening mouth, excessive champing of the bit, wringing tail) may also deserve a red ribbon. Score of 50-74. Pace changes throughout the course, such as too slow or too quick yet under control. A red Danish is awarded to those horses who jump safely, but not in correct form. Horses that perform simple lead changes, cross canter or trot on course (if applicable to class specifications) merit a red Danish. One pulled rail or knockdown as well as repeated rubs merit a red Danish award.

♣ **White**- A white ribbon is given to horses that have multiple major errors including behavioral problems (kicking out, bucking, etc.). Unsound horses are also given white ribbons, or failure of helmet to stay on top of head during a class. Score of 49 or lower. Refusals, extra circles, off course, multiple knockdowns, horses that jump in a dangerous manner (form or speed). Illegal equipment as based on KY 4H/USEF guidelines.

Hunt Seat Equitation - The hunter seat equitation rider should be workmanlike with a supple seat; light, forgiving hands; and a strong leg with ankles flexed and calves resting at or slightly behind the girth. The shoulders should be back and the eyes looking forward. As with other

equitation classes, riders should always give the impression of being in control. All riders will be asked to ride on the rail at the walk, trot, and canter both ways of the arena. At the discretion of the judge, riders may be asked to perform one or more of the following tests: halt (four to six seconds) and back; hand gallop; figure eight at the trot showing a change of diagonal; figure eight at the canter on the correct lead showing a simple change of lead, and work collectively at the walk, trot, or canter. Alternatively, a judge may require each contestant to perform a pattern.

Equitation Over Fences – The progression of the hunter seat rider from work on the flat to work over fences is often slow and tedious, for riders must be balanced and secure in their seats and legs (often as a result of work without stirrups). Riders will jump a somewhat more demanding course than those found in working hunter classes. Courses may include sharp turns, bending lines, striding questions, and trot fences.

♣ **Blue**- A blue ribbon is awarded to strong riders that maintain a balanced, secure seat throughout the class and any individual work asked of them. The rider is confident and in control of his or her mount throughout the entire class and shows the horse to its best advantage. Tack and attire are appropriate, well-fitting, and clean. Few, if any, faults are recognized. Score of 75 or higher. Rider makes educated decisions and executes course with precision, style and control. Turn out of horse and rider is excellent with regard to tack, appointments and grooming.

♣ **Red**- A red ribbon is given to intermediate riders that typically have faults in position or control. One or two significant errors or a succession of minor mistakes characterize a red-ribbon performance. Tack and attire may be suitable but in need of attention. Score of 50-74. Equitation faults occur such as pace and distance issues, weakness in leg and seat. A red ribbon is awarded to riders who make some good decisions on course, but lack the finish and consistency of the more advanced riders. Simple lead changes, cross cantering or trotting on course merit a red award. One pulled rail or knockdown as the result of rider error earns a red Danish.

♣ **White**- A white ribbon is given to riders that are insecure in their position or have little knowledge of class routine, or failure of helmet to stay on top of head during a class. The performance is typically marred by several major faults. Inappropriate attention to proper fit, repair, and cleanliness of tack is sometimes apparent. Score of 49 or lower. Serious equitation faults occur, refusals, off course, multiple knockdowns, riders who obviously lack the training or experience to execute the course safely. Illegal tack or attire based on KY 4H/USEF guidelines.

Jumpers – The jumper classes are another opportunity for hunter seat riders to perform over fences. Unlike hunters, jumpers are not scored on their jumping ability. Instead, jumpers compete in a two-round class to determine the winners. In the first round, riders jump a course of at least eight fences. If the first round is completed without faults (knockdowns, refusals, or elimination), the competitor advances to the second round, called the jump-off. The jump-off consists of a shortened course. The second round is timed but contestants can still garner jumping faults. The horse that completes the jump-off with the fewest jumping faults in the least amount of time is considered the winner.

♣ **Blue**- A blue ribbon is appropriate for all horses that complete two rounds of jumping.

♣ **Red**- A red ribbon is assigned to all horses that fail to advance to the jump-off because of jumping penalties in the first round, or that advance from the first round to the jump-off but then is eliminated in the jump-off.

♣ **White**- A white ribbon is appropriate when a horse is eliminated in the first round or acquires an excessive number of jumping penalties in the first round (exceeding 16 faults, for example), or failure of helmet to stay on top of head during a class.

Example Class: Hunter Under Saddle II

324 - This Arabian mare has a long, ground-covering stride and lofty gaits. She carries her head in a natural position, with her poll well above her withers. She is calm and obedient throughout the entire class. She executes prompt transitions.

707 - This beautiful Thoroughbred gelding is an average mover. He tosses his head in the air when the rider makes contact with his mouth. The canter is a bit quick and the transition from walk to canter is rough to the left. He tosses his head again when asked to back.

212 - This handsome Quarter Horse gelding travels with his head level with his poll. He possesses lovely, daisy-cutting trot and is supremely mannerly. The canter is too slow, however, and at times becomes a bit muddled and four-beat. He stands quietly and backs immediately. The turnout is generally good, though aspects deviate somewhat from traditional tack and attire (square saddle pad and kimberwicke, for instance).

615 - This plain Thoroughbred gelding is a classic hunter. He carries himself in a wonderful frame and his powerful hindquarters engage beautiful movement. His canter transitions not crisp; he is allowed a few trot steps before striking off on the appropriate lead. The pair's turnout is meticulous.

65 - A draft cross gelding that moves heavily and short. The horse is resistant to aids and refuses to pick up the left lead or back. The bridle fits poorly and the bit is dirty.

Danish ribbon distribution: A blue ribbon is awarded to **324**, **212**, and **615**, a red ribbon to **707**, and a white ribbon to **65**.

Example Class: Hunter Over Fences-Limit or Low Hunter

324 – The Arabian mare is back. Her jumping style is flat but she has no trouble marching around the course. Significant problems include two deep fences with corresponding rubs and two missed lead changes.

707 – This gelding has a quick canter but appears relaxed enough on course. He does pick up his head when the rider relies on her hands too much. His jumping style is average, though the rider has a tendency to choose long distances, which causes a deterioration of form. He manages to land on all of the correct leads.

212 – This gelding is sluggish. He does not appear to be athletic enough to jump spectacularly. He lands in a heap after each jump and adds strides down the lines. He cannot heave himself adequately over one oxer and he pulls a rail. The horse does not have a lead change and canters the entire course on the left lead.

615 – Though plain-headed, this gelding is a beautiful hunter. He is a lovely jumper, snapping his knees squarely over each fence. He picks up a cadenced canter and meets each jump out of stride. The rider tends to jump the fences left of center. He performs lead changes unflinchingly.

43 – This spooky Appaloosa gelding refuses the first jump two times. He is erratic in speed and gait, often breaking to a trot. He jumps from dangerously long distances on two occasions. The gelding wears a pelham and a tight standing martingale.

Danish ribbon distribution: A blue ribbon is awarded to 615 and 707, a red ribbon to 324, and white ribbons to 212 and 43.

Example Class: Hunt Seat Equitation III

117 – This is a nicely attired girl on a Quarter Horse. She appears a little stiff at the walk and posts too upright at the trot; she should be inclined forward slightly. At the canter, she sits heavily on her horse, sometimes called “in the back pockets,” and because of this is constantly behind the motion. She has classic “puppy-dog” hands. She looks like a stock seat rider in hunter seat attire. She never allows the horse to move beyond a slow trot and an extended lope.

640 – An attractively turned out girl on a Thoroughbred gelding. She gives the overall impression of being loose. Her ankles are not flexed and she leans into her hands. She checks her diagonal constantly. There is little “finesse” about her; she’s rough and ready.

421 – This competitor gets an A+ on turnout. Her clothes are well-fitted and her tack is well-oiled. Everything glistens with good care: the bit and stirrups, the horse’s coat, the rider’s boots. Though she’s slightly stiff through her elbows and upper body, she looks competent and comfortable. Her horse is sufficiently obedient, but perhaps a little dull to her leg.

877 – This rider is the complete opposite of 421. The turnout is slovenly: sun-bleached hair coat on the horse and mane that’s nine inches long. The saddle pad is ill-fitting and dirty. As expected, the performance is lackluster, too. The horse is nervous and too strong at the canter and the rider’s fixed, unsympathetic hands do little to ease the horse’s tension. The horse picked up the wrong lead on two occasions. She rides with a roach back and weak, ineffectual legs.

Danish ribbon distribution: A blue ribbon is awarded to 421, red ribbons to 117 and 640, and a white ribbon to 877.

Dressage – Assignment of Danish ribbons is best done following all rides in a class. By compiling a list of entries and their scores (percentages), natural breaks can be found and Danish ribbons apportioned.

Example Class: Dressage, USEF Lower Training Level
Entry Number Score

481	43.25%
502	61.90%
217	29.65%
994	59.72%
820	31.65%
437	44.85%
600	46.58%

Danish ribbon distribution: A blue ribbon is awarded to **502** and **994**, a red ribbon to **600**, **437**, and **481**, and a white ribbon to **820** and **217**.

Western Division

Hunter Under Saddle, Western Pleasure-

♣ **Blue**-Distributed to those competitors showing horses that meet the requirements of the class and perform without major error. Manners are extremely imperative in 4-H mounts. Any display of dangerous behavior, regardless of the quality of the horse, should drop a horse to a white ribbon. Such intolerable acts include bolting, rearing, bucking, kicking out, balking, or biting.

♣ **Red**-Red ribbons are distributed to exhibitors showing horses that reasonably meet the requirements of the class, are obviously well-broke and possess appropriate control and workmanlike attitude. A higher quality horse which exhibits blatant signs of anxiousness, including jiggling, wringing of the tail or excessively mouthing of the bit may be awarded a red ribbon. Performances may have one major error or a succession of minor ones.

♣ **White**-Horses and ponies with several major deficiencies in performance such as repetitive breaks of gait, uncorrected wrong leads or consistent lack of forward motion should be assigned a white ribbon. Horses which display extreme behavioral problems such as biting, kicking,

rearing, balking, bucking or bolting should be given a white ribbon as well as failure of helmet to stay on top of the head during a class.

Western Horsemanship-The emphasis in horsemanship classes is naturally placed on the rider's ability. Again, the horse should be presented in show condition, but the quality and performance of the horse is irrelevant unless it relates directly to a riding deficiency.

♣ **Blue**-A balanced rider of high quality who is capable of directing a horse through the posted pattern with precision and without major error deserves a blue ribbon. Performance on the rail as required is also excellent.

♣ **Red**-A red-ribbon performance is obviously of lesser quality than a blue ribbon one because of deficiencies in position or control and guidance through the pattern. The red ribbon winner typically makes one or two major errors or a combination of several minor ones. Rail work may show only limited ability as well. The turnout of the red ribbon winner may be average.

♣ **White**-Failing to control the horse or follow the posted pattern and committing several major errors denotes a white ribbon performance. At times, one element of the pattern is indecipherable from another and the rider may show his or her inaptitude on the rail as well. A classic example of a white-ribbon performance is going "off pattern." Other major errors include fall by horse or rider, illegal use of hands on reins, or failure of helmet to stay on top of head during a class.

Western Versatility, Reining-

♣ **Blue**- Judges should look for a natural break to separate the blue and red ribbon winners. Naturally, blue ribbon recipients meet the requirements of the class, show control of the horse, understanding of the pattern, and commit few minor errors.

♣ **Red**- Again, judges should look for a natural break to separate blue-and red-ribbon contestants. A typical red-ribbon winner has committed one or two major errors or many minor errors, but is not disqualified or given a no score.

♣ **White**- Use of illegal equipment or bits, lack of control, committing a significant behavioral error (bucking, rearing, balking, bolting, or kicking out), any pattern resulting in a score of 0, disqualification from the class, or failure of helmet to stay on top of head during a class.

Example Class: Western Pleasure Horse II

10 – This horse and rider requires constant correction and aggressively mouths the bit during the jog. When asked to lope, the horse wrings its tail and appears to have an unpleasant attitude. All gaits are uncadenced and uncollected, but performed when asked.

144 – This horse and rider perform all gaits when asked with ease. Is responsive to the rider, shows a pleasant ride, and balanced through the jog and lope. All gaits are true, cadenced, and collected. The horse backs willingly and stands quietly.

388 – This horse proves to be a willing and athletic performer, showing a true, cadenced 2-beat jog and 3-beat lope in both directions. When tracking to the right at the lope, he breaks gait for 3 strides. His walk is slow and labored, and he drops his head slightly behind the vertical.

Danish ribbon distribution – A blue ribbon should be awarded to **144**, red to **388**, and a white ribbon to **10**.

Contest

Both time and horsemanship skills will be evaluated during all contest division classes to determine the Danish Ribbon. Blue ribbon winners possess both speed and the ability to ride in an experienced and understanding manner for the class. Red ribbon winners may lack speed, horsemanship skills, or both. White-ribbon winners are generally exhibitors that execute the pattern in an extremely slow fashion (a 35-second barrel run, with or without penalty), exhibit little or no understanding of the skills required of the class, ride in a reckless or unsafe manner, or are disqualified.

Several instances of anticipating the rider's cues in a run also can result in a white ribbon. This is defined as acting against the rider's commands in a negative way, but not in a way that is unwilling (which also may result in a white ribbon). The horse and the rider should work together in a pattern, and the horse should not take over the ride. For example, coming into the pattern, if the horse balks or rears in anticipation of the pattern multiple times, and the rider must circle or delay starting the pattern. Also, in a barrel pattern for example, if a horse throws its head and takes a hold of the bit as the rider tries to set the horse up for a turn. Multiple examples of this during the pattern would result in a white ribbon. If the rider is able to correct the horse and gain control, this would not result in a white ribbon. A horse that is unwilling to work may also receive a white ribbon. Examples of this include a horse who does not want to move forward after encouragement from the rider or a gate-sour horse.

Flag Race-

♣ **Blue**-Rider has complete control of horse's direction and speed, horse expresses a willing attitude, exhibitor uses proper aids to perform class, and pattern is completed with the added difficulty of speed.

♣ **Red**-Rider appears to understand the pattern but lacks speed, horse appears out of control but completes a clean and fast run, horse shows ability but rider lacks horsemanship skills necessary to control horse with the added difficulty of speed, or lacks the necessary precision to obtain a blue.

♣ **White**- Incompletion of pattern, disqualification, loss of forward motion, unable to maintain gait, excessive use of a bat, crop, whip, spurs or rope, failure of helmet to stay on top of head during a run, extremely slow pattern, rider shows little or no understanding of the skills required for the class, horse is unwilling to work or anticipates riders cues (defined above), and any event that happens during the run that results in a no time.

Stake Race-

♣ **Blue**-Rider has complete control of horse's direction and speed, horse expresses a willing attitude, exhibitor uses proper aids to perform class, and pattern is completed with the added difficulty of speed.

♣ **Red**-Rider appears to understand the pattern but lacks speed, horse appears out of control but completes a clean and fast run, horse shows ability but rider lacks horsemanship skills necessary to control horse with the added difficulty of speed, or lacks the necessary precision to obtain a blue.

♣ **White**- Incompletion of pattern, disqualification, loss of forward motion, unable to maintain gait, excessive use of a bat, crop, whip, spurs or rope, failure of contestant to cross the start and finish line, knockdown of marker or pole, failure of contestant to cross over the center line between the markers before turning the second pole and cross back over the center line after turning the second pole, failure of helmet to stay on top of head during a run, extremely slow pattern, rider shows little or no understanding of the skills required for the class, horse is unwilling to work or anticipates riders cues (defined above).

Barrel Race-

♣ **Blue**-Rider has complete control of horse's direction and speed, horse expresses a willing attitude, exhibitor uses proper aids to perform class, and pattern is completed with the added difficulty of speed.

♣ **Red**-Rider appears to understand the pattern but lacks speed, horse appears out of control but completes a clean and fast run, horse shows ability but rider lacks horsemanship skills necessary to control horse with the added difficulty of speed, or lacks the necessary precision to obtain a blue.

♣ **White**-Incompletion of pattern, two or more barrels knocked down, disqualification, loss of forward motion, failure to follow the course, unable to maintain gait, excessive use of a bat, crop, whip, spurs or rope, failure of helmet to stay on top of head during a run, extremely slow pattern, rider shows little or no understanding of the skills required for the class, horse is unwilling to work or anticipates riders cues (defined above).

Example Class: Barrel Race Horse III

<u>Entry Number</u>	<u>Time</u>
111	15.951
235	16.012
346	21.798
468	20.134
533	40.523 (with penalties)

Explanation of Danish Ribbons-

Blue = 111, 235: Both exhibitors completed the pattern with speed and precision. They rode with confidence and exhibited a high degree of communication with their horses.

Red = 346, 468: Completed the pattern with the same confidence and quality of ride as the exhibitors mentioned above but without the added difficulty of speed.

White = 533: Obviously, 533 received a white due to time.

Pole Bending-

♣ **Blue**-Rider has complete control of horse's direction and speed, horse expresses a willing attitude, exhibitor uses proper aids to perform class, and pattern is completed with the added difficulty of speed.

♣ **Red**-Rider appears to understand the pattern but lacks speed, horse appears out of control but completes a clean and fast run, horse shows ability but rider lacks horsemanship skills necessary to control horse with the added difficulty of speed, or lacks the necessary precision to obtain a blue.

♣ **White**-Incompletion of pattern, disqualification, two or more poles knocked down, loss of forward motion, failure to follow the course, unable to maintain gait, excessive use of a bat, crop,

whip, spurs or rope, failure of helmet to stay on top of head during a run, extremely slow pattern, rider shows little or no understanding of the skills required for the class, horse is unwilling to work or anticipates riders cues (defined above).

Walking/Racking/Mountain Horse Division

All Pleasure classes-

♣ **Blue**-Quality horses that perform with style, consistency and stride length at all gaits. These horses should represent their breed well in the 4-H ring and be easy to determine as such. Horses in this category should do their job willingly with a positive attitude, including the back (if required).

♣ **Red**-Average horses who perform safely and consistently, but lack the style, way of going and ability of the higher quality horses earn a red award. Gapping mouth, minor breaks in gait, pinning ears and resistance to back (when required) are all faults that place a nicer animal in this category. Pacing, occasional mixing of gaits and pace variances within each gait are faults in the Pleasure horse earning a red Danish.

♣ **White**-The white Danish is suited to those horses that lack control or work in an unsafe manner to endanger the rider or other entries. Trotting, failure to ever display a correct gait or a difference in gaits in reference to speed, stride length and rhythm may be considered. Refusal to back in required classes is considered a major fault and earns a white award. Showing in a Western class in a curb bit with two hands that requires the use of one justifies a white award. (i.e.: Plantation Pleasure, Western) Illegal tack/equipment as determined by KY 4H Guidelines.

Equitation Classes-

♣ **Blue**-The blue Danish rider is one that displays poise, style and ultimate control over their horse, whether on the rail or in pattern work. The rider's position has an "educated" look that is both functional and forgiving. Pattern work is smooth, precise and polished. Attire is neat and well fitted and the horse is professionally turned out to complement it.

♣ **Red**-Riders earning a red are safe, but lack the finish of the upper riders or possess equitation faults. Swinging/loose legs, pointing toes, leg too far forward or back to function correctly, hands carried too high or too low based on the horse's head carriage. Hard or late transitions on the rail or in pattern work, loss of a stirrup, breaks of gait based on rider error are considered faults worthy of a red award. In pattern work, the rider performs the work correctly but not without several errors. Turnout is acceptable but lacks polish (i.e. saddle suit is too big, pant legs not secured with jod straps, hair up but sloppy, etc.)

♣ **White**-White Danish is suitable for riders who lack control or ride in a manner dangerous to their performance. Going off pattern, failure to ever obtain a consistent gait, trotting, use of two hands on a curb bit in Stock Seat Equitation and illegal equipment based on KY 4-H Rules all warrant a white award. Dirty or poor fitting tack/attire or unprofessional appearance such as long

hair, not properly contained, hanging over the back number may be considered in the white category in equitation.

Miniature Horse Division

Halter Obstacle-This class is judged primarily on performance and way of going with emphasis on manners throughout the course.

♣ **Blue**- Horses are responsive to their handler's commands, approaches and performs each and every obstacle in a willing manner, negotiates the obstacle with style and some degree of speed without sacrificing correctness.

♣ **Red**- Horse and handler do not complete each individual obstacle within 60 seconds, horse refuses obstacles, horse performs inconsistently, displaying occasional unwillingness and/or resistance to the handler's commands.

♣ **White**- Horse that performs in an unwilling manner, is disobedient to the handler's commands, baiting an animal, or performing the pattern in a way that results in a disqualification (taking an obstacle in the wrong direction or in the wrong sequence, negotiating an obstacle from the wrong side, skipping an obstacle, or going off pattern).

Hunter- Horses are asked to negotiate a course of 6-8 fences and shall be judged on jumping ability, suitability, manners, and soundness. Preference is given to those horses who cover the course at an even pace, with free flowing strides (brisk trot or canter), but must maintain the same gait throughout the course. The following faults are scored subjectively by the judge, and depending on severity may be considered major faults: light rubs or touches, showing an obstacle to a horse, kicking out, spooking or shying, wringing tail, knocking down any part of an obstacle, circling on course, refusing a fence, bucking, or any dangerous jumping (such as leaving a leg). The following may or may not be considered faults depending on their severity and frequency: jumping out of form and excessive show of animation.

♣ **Blue** - A blue ribbon is awarded to horses that fulfill all class requirements with a degree of style. Blue-ribbon winners commit no major errors. A high-quality horse that commits a minor error but is corrected immediately may also be eligible for a blue ribbon.

♣ **Red**- A red ribbon is appropriate for lower quality horses that commit one or two major errors or a string of less significant mistakes. Horses that show signs of anxiousness (opening mouth, tossing head, or wringing tail) may also deserve a red ribbon.

♣ **White**- A white ribbon is given to horses that go off course, or have multiple major errors including behavioral problems (kicking out, bucking, etc.). Horses that are disqualified should also receive a white ribbon.

Pleasure Driving-Class is judged on appearance of a pleasurable drive and animation, although high action in the front is unacceptable. Walk, collected trot and working trot should be performed naturally and not artificially enhanced. Importance is placed on manners, way of

going of horse, conformation, appropriateness, condition and fit of vehicle and harness and neatness of attire (in that order). Major errors that are judged subjectively by the official include excessive speed at any gait, failure to take gait or back, bucking, kicking out, spooking or shying, failure to drive on the bit, and excessive chomping of the bit or wringing tail. Minor errors include break of gait, or lack of cadence and collection.

♣ **Blue**- Obedient horses that show properly at all three gaits willingly in an even and pleasant manner are awarded blue ribbons. One or more minor errors can be excused if the performance is generally excellent and the horse is mannerly.

♣ **Red**- A red ribbon is awarded if there is a significant deficiency in performance or manners. If a horse shows a major error or a series of minor errors, a red ribbon is appropriate. A quickly corrected speed or multiple instances of breaking gait, for instance, may also qualify a horse for a red ribbon.

♣ **White**- A horse that fails to perform the required gaits, including a true flat walk, earns a white ribbon. Several major or minor errors, such as an egregious lack of manners (balking, bolting, spinning, etc.) would also characterize a white-ribbon performance. Inappropriate tack is also grounds for a white ribbon, or failure of helmet to stay on top of head during a class.

Revised on 10/31/11 by Amy Lawyer, Equine Extension Associate, and Dr. Fernanda Camargo, Extension Horse Specialist with the help of the following qualified horse judging individuals:

♣ *Bryan Cassill, Western Contest*

♣ *Jennifer Moshier, Hunter, Walking/Racking/Mountain Divisions*