



# SHOW READY: LIVESTOCK STARTER GUIDE

## Horse & Pony



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How do I identify and enter my animal in the fair?

A

All livestock species, except Poultry, must be identified in the 4-H Online system (<https://v2.4honline.com>) by May 15. Ensure that you are meeting the animal ID requirements listed in the 4-H handbook when entering your animal. Identify any animals you may want to show.

By July 1, go to <http://vanderburghcountyin.fairentry.com> to enter what classes your animal(s) will be participating in. This is where you'll select which animals you will be bringing to the fair, what classes they will be in, and you can enter showmanship.

To exhibit beef cattle, dairy cattle, dairy goats, meat goats, poultry, pygmy goats, rabbits, sheep and swine, 4-H members must be certified through the Indiana 4-H Quality Livestock Care program by July 1.

If you plan to exhibit at the Indiana State Fair, be sure to check out state guidelines and registration details at <https://indianastatefair.com>.

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How do I prepare for fair?

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Attend Horse & Pony meetings regularly, and focus on conditioning your horse—riding lessons are strongly encouraged. If you have any questions or need assistance, please reach out to a Horse & Pony leader. We're here to support your learning and help ensure you have the best experience possible. Learn the rules and specs for your class found in the IN Horse and Pony rulebook (this may be found on our facebook page under the files tab or you may download a copy, or purchase a copy from the Extension Office).

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Where do I find set-up, check-in, check out, and clean up times for my species?

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You will find this in the handbook, in the summer LINK newsletters, and in a mailing that goes out before fair.

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How does check-in work? What do I need to have with me?

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To check in your horse, you must complete the check-in process. You will need to come to the unloading area and provide your Certificate of Completion of Indiana 4-H Requirements for 4-H-1031-W Exhibition of 4-H Horse and Pony (vaccination form). Once that is confirmed, you can unload your horse for a health check by Leaders and be released to your stalls. You will then turn in your emergency stall calls and will receive your show number for the show. You will need to keep this safe till you show as you will only receive one. You can also scratch classes at this time. If your horse is not on the grounds by the end of check in, you will not be allowed to show at the fair.

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What supplies/equipment do I need to have at fair?

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Feed, bedding, water buckets, fan (metal fan preferred) for your horse, yellow outdoor extension cord, all necessary grooming supplies, all necessary tack, and show clothes. A more detailed suggested supply list will be provided closer to the fair.

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How do I care for my animal during fair?

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It is expected that the 4-H member provides regular care for their animal during the fair. This includes making sure your animal has access to clean water at all times and is fed regularly. The fair is often very hot so make sure you have a plan to keep your animal cool and to prevent overheating.

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How does check out work? What do I need to do to clean up?

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Your stall will need to be checked that it is stripped before you leave the fairgrounds by the Superintendent or a designated leader. This process will be announced at the meeting before the fair. Your horse must stay at the fair until check out time. Failure to strip your stall before leaving will make you ineligible for the High Point Award. If you leave early, your project will not be complete on your achievement record unless previously approved by the Superintendent and/or the Extension Educator.

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What do I wear on show day?

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The ASTM and/or SEI standard F1163 (with original tags intact) or above approved protective helmet is required any time you are riding.

**Hunter Attire:** The exhibitor must wear knee-high hunt boots or Jodhpur boots, and solid color (not white, white is for dressage) hunt breeches or jodhpurs. A long-sleeved shirt or blouse is required when a coat is not worn, but a short-sleeved shirt may be worn under a hunt coat. A hunt coat is recommended but not required. Hunt coats should be of a conservative color, never red. Tie, stock, or choker is required. Hair must be neat and contained, as in a braid or hairnet and must not obscure exhibitor number. Traditional attire is preferred. The ASTM and/or SEI standard F1163 (with original tags intact) or above approved protective helmet is required in all hunter type classes, while mounted or driving. Hunt caps are allowed in in-hand classes. Judges must not discriminate against the use of protective vests by 4-H members in any class.

**English Saddle Attire:** 1. Minimum requirements are tailored long pants, a long-sleeved shirt or blouse with a tie, and Jodhpur boots. If a coat is worn, a short-sleeved shirt or blouse is permitted. A suitable coat is recommended. A traditional saddle suit with matching jacket and pants is preferred, especially in equitation and showmanship. Hair must be restrained. Refer to page 4 for the description of the required protective headgear. Judges must not discriminate against the use of protective vests by 4-H members in any class. 2. Optional: Gloves, approved protective vest; un-roweled spurs in performance classes, derby hat in halter classes. 3.

Prohibited: Spurs in halter and showmanship classes; roweled spurs at any time.

**Western Attire:** 1. Minimum requirements are western style long pants, long-sleeved shirt with collar (band, standup, tuxedo, etc.), and western boots with a heel. ASTM and/or SEI standard F1163 or above approved protective headgear is required in all Western Classes when the exhibitor is mounted. See page 4 for complete description of approved headgear. Judges must not discriminate against the use of protective vests by 4-H members in any class, or wearing helmets in halter and showmanship. 2. Optional: Coats, vest, jackets, gloves, and protective vests in all classes; chaps and spurs in performance classes. 3. Prohibited: Ball caps, riding sneakers, or hats other than protective headgear. Chaps or spurs in halter and showmanship classes. 4. Special Note: Additional optional and prohibited attire pertaining to specific classes is noted in the rules for that class. 5. Western hat or helmet is required in halter/showmanship.

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What supplies do I need to show?

A Show halter and lead, Saddle and Bridle, Saddle pad, and show attire. A more detailed suggested supply list will be provided closer to the fair.

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How should my animal be prepped for the show?

A Preparing a horse for a 4-H show is a mix of training, grooming, and organization. The goal isn't just a clean horse—it's a calm, responsive partner that presents well in the ring. Start with conditioning and handling, have a daily grooming routine, make sure your horse is trimmed, and make sure your tack is clean.

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How do I make my animal look its best in the show ring?

A Groom thoroughly (brush, wipe eyes/nose, pick hooves), make sure tail and mane are clean, apply hoof polish if appropriate, use light coat polish or fly spray (not too much—slick horses can be unsafe), braid or band the mane if your discipline requires it.

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What does the judge expect of me?

A At a 4-H horse show, judges aren't just looking at the horse—they're evaluating you as a horseman. That means how well you present, communicate, and care for your animal matters just as much as how the horse performs. Safety and control come first, strong basics and correctness, presentation and appearance: a clean, well-groomed horse (no stains, tidy mane/tail), properly fitted, clean tack, and an exhibitor dressed according to the class, neat and professional - it shows respect for the event and attention to detail! Confidence and ring presence, knowledge and sportsmanship (sometimes judges may ask questions and expect basic horse knowledge). Partnership with your horse. Attention to detail (small things can separate exhibitors such as squirting the horse properly in halter, keeping consistent rein length, hitting every marker in a pattern exactly).

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Who can I contact if I have questions?

A Your horse and pony superintendent or assistant superintendents can answer your questions. Their contact information can be found in the 4-H handbook in the livestock section. You can also reach out to the Purdue Extension Office at (812) 867-4935 with questions.

We hope you have a  
great year in 4-H!

