



Wisconsin 4-H Horse Association  
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December 9, 2022

To currently enrolled 4-H Horse & Horseless Horse Project Youth and Adults:

We value youth voice as a key component in the WI 4-H Horse Association program and always look for ways to live the 4-H motto and make the best, better. It was brought to our attention that there was a situation regarding unfair and inequitable practices regarding the blue-ribbon eligibility requirement for the WI 4-H Horse Expo. We reviewed the situation and found that it was an ongoing issue throughout the state that needed to be addressed. Together, we worked with the WI 4-H Youth Development Agriculture and Animals Science Specialist to find a resolution to this situation.

With support from the Wisconsin State 4-H Office, the WI 4-H Horse Association moved forward to find a solution to the problem. One of our key steps in gathering input was hearing directly from the youth members. A survey of the youth attending the 2022 State 4-H Horse Expo was taken to gather their input about removing the policy requiring youth to receive a qualifying blue ribbon to show at State 4-H Horse Expo. There was also room to provide comments to the Wisconsin 4-H Horse Association.

Survey results showed that the majority favored dropping the blue-ribbon qualifying rule. In addition, many helpful comments were received that are being given to the appropriate committees for future discussion and consideration. To continue the dialogue and input, open discussion was held at the November 4-H Horse Association meeting where both youth members, adult volunteers, and families were able to provide further feedback and information to the association.

Issues discussed included:

- Currently, the only State 4-H event that requires prior qualification on a county level to be able to participate is 4-H Horse Expo.
- Safety issues were discussed. 4-H Expo has ring safety policies in place to remove a horse/rider that is exhibiting unsafe behavior. 4-H also has 32 years with Hunt & Dressage and 35 years with Gymkhana without a blue-ribbon qualification requirement to indicate support of a rule change.
- Current rule is not equitable to all youth. County fairs do not have the same availability to qualify. Fairs range from allowing youth to ride 2 qualifying classes to unlimited qualifying classes and everything between.

- Having the privilege to attend State 4-H Horse Expo based on one show and one judges opinion has proven to be unfair to many youth. (Family emergencies, weather concerns, ring conditions, illness for youth or horse, and judges that are inexperienced working with youth have all prevented 4-H members from showing/qualifying at their county fair.)
- Every county had a different due date (early fairs would like more time for youth/parents to decide if they are prepared to attend State 4-H Horse Expo. Labor Day fairs have little time to complete entries and plan their trip). **The new due date for all 4-H Horse Expo entries is August 1<sup>st</sup>.**
- The rule change would give youth the opportunity to substitute another project animal in the event their horse develops health/lameness issues or passes away.

With the survey results, comments received, and much discussion regarding this matter, the Board of Directors voted at their November meeting to **drop the requirement for youth to receive a blue ribbon in order to qualify to show a horse at State 4-H Horse Expo effective immediately.**

We encourage members to continue participating at your local county fair. The county fair is an excellent opportunity to receive feedback from a judge, gain experience with your horse, make friends, and grow with your horse project.

The Wisconsin 4-H Horse Association would like to thank everyone for the input they provided to help make this decision. As we move forward we hope you will continue to give your support to the 4-H Horse and Horseless Horse project activities on both a county and state level.

**To recap the rule changes:**

**Effective immediately the requirement for youth to receive a blue ribbon in order to qualify to show a horse at State 4-H Horse Expo is no longer in effect.**

**The new due date for all 4-H Horse Expo entries is August 1<sup>st</sup>.**

Sincerely,  
 Wisconsin 4-H Horse Association  
 Dale Bauer, President