



Maryland 4-H State Horse Bowl Contest Procedures & Regulations

Objectives

The primary objective of the Horse Bowl Contest is to provide an opportunity for youth involved in the 4-H Horse project to demonstrate their knowledge of equine-related subject matter in a competitive setting where attitudes of friendliness and fairness prevail. This contest provides an educational experience for participants and spectators.

General

- 1) **The contest will be held on Saturday, March 14, 2026. The 2026 contest will be held at the Plant Sciences Building, Room 1140, Regents Drive, University of Maryland, College Park, MD.** Contest check-in begins at 9:00 am. Contest matches for all age divisions will begin at 10:00 am and run concurrently. A map of the UMD campus can be found at <https://transportation.umd.edu/parking/visitors>.

- 2) **Schedule:**

NOTE: Schedule is subject to change and times listed may be adjusted.

Saturday, March 14, 2026: All Age Divisions	
9:00 am	Contest Check-in
9:30 am	Welcome and Contest Overview
10:00 am	Contest Matches for all age divisions begin
5:00 pm (estimated)	Contest Awards and Closing Remarks

- 3) More detailed information about this contest can be found on the Maryland 4-H website at: <https://extension.umd.edu/programs/4-h-youth-development/program-areas/animal-sciences/4-h-horse-program>.
- 4) **Contestants and Eligibility:**
 - a) 4-H members wishing to participate should contact their county/city 4-H office.
 - b) Youth contestants and teen/adult coaches must have an approved enrollment in 4-H Online for the 2026 4-H program year.
 - c) Registration for this event is through 4-H Online. To register, you must first be enrolled in Maryland 4-H for 2026. To access the registration once you are enrolled, log in to your 4-H Online family profile and click on the Events tab. You can find an Event Registration "how to" guide on the Maryland 4-H website.
 - d) **All event registrations must be submitted by 11:59 pm on February 18, 2026.** Registrations will be verified and approved by local 4-H Educators and the State 4-H Event Manager. 4-H members not registered by the deadline will not be allowed to participate in the contest.
 - e) Maryland 4-H members must be between the ages of 8-18 as of January 1 of the current year. Juniors are between 8-10; Intermediates are between 11-13; and Seniors are between 14-18.
 - f) Contestants must not have previously competed in the Horse Bowl at Eastern National 4-H Horse Roundup (Louisville, KY) or Western National 4-H Horse Roundup.
 - g) Contact your local 4-H office or visit the Maryland 4-H website for more information.



- 5) This is a contest in which teams compete. Points are earned or lost by quickness and accuracy of response to specific questions drawn from 4-H project materials and other references identified in the *References* section of this document.
- 6) Counties may enter up to a maximum of eight members (comprised of a team of four members and four additional individuals or a team of four members/one alternate and three additional individuals) in each of the Junior, Intermediate, and Senior divisions. Counties may enter only individuals if they do not have enough members for a team. Individual contestants in each age division will be assigned to composite teams by the contest organizers. If a county has more than four members, they must identify the members on the team, its alternate, and those entering as individuals. Composite teams will be eligible for team awards. Individuals on composite teams are eligible for individual awards. **Composite teams and coaches will be determined prior to the day of the contest. Youth participating in this statewide competition must be enrolled in the Maryland 4-H program and pre-registered for the state contest by February 18, 2026. There will be a \$7.00 entry fee for each contestant.** Counties will be invoiced for entry fees based on the total number of registered participants from their programs.
- 7) Contestants requesting a reasonable accommodation to participate in this event must indicate the need on the contest registration form in 4-H Online by the registration deadline. A reasonable accommodation is a modification or adjustment to a program that will enable a person who has a disability to participate in and/or benefit from the program. A parent/guardian of the contestant requesting an accommodation will be contacted by a contest coordinator to discuss reasonable accommodation requests. Accommodation requests cannot be accepted or modified on the day of the contest.
- 8) Participation in this event requires the 4-H member and his/her parent/guardian to agree to the terms and conditions of the Maryland 4-H Event Liability Release and Informed Consent Agreement. The agreement will be signed electronically during the contestant's event registration in 4-H Online.
- 9) The State Horse Bowl Contest will be governed by the prescribed procedures and regulations found in this document. Additional rules may be promulgated for specific purposes.
- 10) **Each team participating in the state contest must submit 40 questions by February 11, 2026. Teams MUST use the following format for questions, or they will not be used. To correctly submit questions, please follow the following guidelines:**
 - a) Each team must submit an electronic version (preferably in MS Word) of 40 horse bowl questions with the County and Age Division in the file name.
 - b) Five questions should be written from each of the following eight categories for a total of 40 questions: 1) History, Evolution, and Behavior, 2) Anatomy, Conformation, Way of Going, and Lameness 3) Breeds, Color, and Color Genetics, 4) Riding, Training, Tack, and Equipment, 5) Health, Disease, and Parasites, 6) Reproduction and Genetics, 7) Nutrition, 8) Trivia.
 - c) Question Format: Questions must come from the approved references (see the *References* section of this document) and contain a question (Q), answer (A), and source (S) with page number.
 - d) Sample Question Format:

Q: What is another name for acute laminitis?
A: Founder
S: ES, 226
 - e) Points to consider when submitting questions:
 - Be sure to submit questions that are appropriate for the age group. Junior teams should submit one third each of easy, moderate and difficult questions.
 - Be sure that you have the correct edition of the reference, double check to be sure



that the page number is correct and use the correct abbreviation for the source (see the *References* section of this document).

- f) Questions on obscure subjects or those that are exceptionally difficult will not be used.
- g) Questions with code words will either not be used or will be rewritten.
- h) Questions that are not submitted in electronic copy, have incorrect reference information, or are late will not be accepted and entry into contest will be denied for that team.
- i) **Questions must be sent electronically via e-mail to Chris Anderson at canders2@umd.edu by February 11, 2026.**

Equipment

- 1) **Game Panels:** An appropriate device will be used which will provide a clear indication of the first contestant to respond to a question.
- 2) **Time Recorder:** A stopwatch or other appropriate time device will be required.
- 3) **Signal Device:** This signal shall be used by the timekeepers and shall have a very distinctly different sound from that associated with the game panel.
- 4) **Score Keeping Devices:** Two devices will be needed. One, such as a blackboard, flip chart or electronic light display, will be used to maintain team scores visible to the contestants and, if possible, to the spectators. A second device will be required with which to maintain a record of individual contest scores.

Officials

- 1) **Moderator:** The Moderator shall assume the direction of the matches within each room, ask all questions, and designate contestants to answer questions and accept or reject all answers unless the question and/or answers are challenged. The Moderator may indicate when a contestant has exceeded the allotted time for a question. The Moderator will declare the match winner and shall always be in control of the matches.
- 2) **Judges:** At least two (2) referee judges are recommended. The judges must be knowledgeable horse persons. One referee judge (or the Moderator) should, if possible, be a veterinarian. The referee judges rule jointly on the acceptability of any question or answer. In cases of challenge to questions or answers in matches having two referee judges either, a) both referee judges, or b) one referee judge and the Moderator, must agree on the acceptance or rejection of any question and/or answer. With only one referee judge, both the judge and the Moderator must agree on actions to be taken.
- 3) **Buzzer Operator/Timekeeper:** Unless this duty is assumed by the Moderator or by a referee judge, the timekeeper will monitor all time intervals and designate when time of response has been exceeded and will handle all controls of the game equipment. It is recommended that neither the Moderator nor a referee judge be used as a timekeeper.
- 4) **Scorekeepers:** At least two (2) individuals shall be used to keep score for each contest. The individual maintaining team scores should do so in such a manner that all points awarded or taken from each team may be checked and that the scores are clearly visible to the Moderator and to the contestants. A second score keeper shall be used to maintain a record of the individual scores of each contestant. An assistant to the scorekeeper maintaining individual records is suggested.

Teams

- 1) Only four (4) contestants shall be seated on the panel at any one time.
- 2) Alternate Substitutions:
 - a) During the match, one (1) team member only may be replaced at the panel when:
 - i) The Moderator deems it impossible for one of the seated members of the team to continue in the contest; or
 - ii) the team coach and/or captain requests the substitution of a team member, and
 - iii) it does not interrupt the flow of the game.
 - b) The team member removed from a match becomes ineligible to return to that specific match. The team member removed, and the substitute member are both eligible to participate in further matches. The use of a five-member team is recommended.



Match Overview

- 1) The first half of the match is called the “one-on-one competition”. During the one-on-one competition, only one member of each team will be eligible to respond to a question. This eligibility to respond will rotate among the team members with each question. Each team member will be given an opportunity to respond to the same number of questions. That is, the number of questions asked during the first half of the game will be evenly divisible by 4.
 - a) The Moderator shall indicate the start on one-on-one play clearly to the players.
 - b) Each question shall be addressed to only one member of each team, beginning with the number 1 contestant of each team and progressing with subsequent questions to the number 2, 3, and 4 contestants, respectively.
 - c) The Moderator shall indicate which two contestants are eligible to respond prior to the reading of each question.
- 2) The second half of the match is called “open competition” whereby all players from each team are eligible to respond to the questions asked. The Moderator shall indicate the start of the open competition play clearly to the players.
- 3) Toss-Up/Bonus - During the open competition, there will be one or more “Toss-Up” questions. If a player answers the Toss-Up question correctly, the Moderator reads the “Bonus” question to that player’s team. If the Toss-Up question is answered incorrectly, the next question in the round will become the Toss-Up question until a Toss-Up question is answered correctly. After the Bonus question is read, a 10 second discussion period is permitted for team consultation to determine the answer. At the signal from the timer, a 5-second period is then permitted for the team captain or a designee to begin the answer. Other team members may still feed the designee information.
 - a) All parts of the Bonus question must be answered correctly with no partial points permitted, regardless of the number of parts of the question answered correctly.
 - b) No part of the Bonus question will be repeated nor will any additional information or prompting from the Moderator or Judge(s) be given to the contestants.
 - c) There will be no Bonus questions asked during the one-on-one period.
 - d) Successful completion of the answer will result in that team being awarded 3 points.
 - e) Failure to answer a Bonus question will result in no penalty (loss of points) to the team.
 - f) No part of the Bonus question will be repeated nor will any additional information or prompting from the Moderator or Judge(s) be given to the contestants.
 - g) There will be no Bonus questions asked during the one-on-one period.
 - h) Successful completion of the answer will result in that team being awarded 3 points.
 - i) Failure to answer a Bonus question will result in no penalty (loss of points) to the team.

Playing the Match

- 1) Teams are assembled and seated at the respective panels and each contestant is given the opportunity to check the equipment.
- 2) A team captain is designated; normally to be seated nearest the Moderator.
- 3) The question packet is opened by the Moderator.
- 4) The Moderator reads the first question (as with all succeeding questions) until the completion of the reading of the questions or until such time as a contestant activates a buzzer.
- 5) If a buzzer is activated during the reading of any question, the Moderator will immediately cease reading the question and the contestant activating the buzzer will be acknowledged prior to giving their answer. The contestant will then have five seconds after being recognized by the Moderator to begin the answer to the question. The repeating of the question by the contestant shall not be considered the initiation of the answer. It shall be the responsibility of the Moderator and the referee judges to determine if any answer is started with the 5-second period.
- 6) If any contestant other than the contestant acknowledged by the Moderator responds to a question, that individual will lose two points, and the team of that individual contestant will lose two points as a penalty.



- 7) If any contestant responds more than twice to questions directed to another contestant, the individual and the team will be assigned penalty points, and the contestant will be replaced at the panel by the alternate if available. Or if no alternate is available, the remainder of the match will be played with less than the full team, and all questions normally addressed to the eliminated contestant will be addressed only to the opposing contestant.
- 8) If the answer to any question, whether read to completion or not, is incorrect, neither team will be given the opportunity to correctly answer the question, and the Moderator moves on to the next question in the round.
- 9) If the time in which to answer a question elapse without a contestant activating a buzzer, there shall be neither a loss of points nor an awarding of points to either team.
- 10) If the answer to a question is begun during the 5-second allowable time and answer is incorrect, that team or individual will lose the point associated with that question. If a member of a team activates a buzzer and an answer has not been started within the 5-second allowable time, there will be an appropriate 2-point penalty imposed against the team and the contestant activating the buzzer.
- 11) If the question is correctly answered within the 5-second time limit, that team and individual score 1 or 2 points.
- 12) If a question is thrown out either due to poor reading by the Moderator or a decision of the referee judges, it will be replaced by another question so that the total number of questions to be asked remains constant.
- 13) Team Bonus - To encourage full team participation, bonus points will be awarded throughout the match to the teams when at such time, each of their players has answered a question correctly (excluding Bonus questions). The team bonus shall be worth 2 points. After having earned the team bonus once within a match, both teams are eligible to earn additional team bonuses by repeating the process specified for team bonus awards.
 - a) After each contestant answers a question correctly, they should flip up a "smiley face" located at their seat. If a team member, who has already answered a question correctly, is replaced by an alternate and the alternate has not yet answered a question correctly, it will be necessary for the alternate to also answer a question correctly before a team bonus point may be awarded.
 - b) When a team bonus is earned, each player will flip down the smiley face card at their seat indicating that all members must answer a question correctly to earn additional team bonuses.
- 14) Time Out - Either team captain or the Moderator may call for a "time out" for clarification of a rule, to permit replacement of a team member, or to allow for unexpected problems. These "time out" periods may be called only after a question has been answered and before the start of the next question.
- 15) Following the final question, the recording scorekeeper and the board scorekeeper will consult and announce the final score to the Moderator. The team with the highest number of points shall be declared the winner of that match by the Moderator.
- 16) Tiebreaker - In the event of a tie, 5 additional questions will be asked. The team with the highest score at the conclusion of the tie-breaking round wins the match. If a tie remains after the first tiebreaker, the Moderator will ask additional questions until one of the teams earns a minimum of a one-point advantage over the other team, either by being awarded a point or because of a loss of a point by the other team. At such time, the team with the one-point advantage will be declared the winner. **Team Bonus does not continue into the tiebreaker round.**

Scorekeeping

The point value of correct/incorrect responses, bonuses, penalties are as follows:

- a) Correct answer – One-On-One questions 2 pts.
- b) Correct answer - Open questions 1 pt.



- c) Toss-up question - All answers required 1 pt.
- d) Bonus question - All required answers correct..... 3 pts.
- c) Bonus question - All incomplete answers or no answers. 0 pts.
- d) Team Bonus - four correct answers. 2 pts.
- e) All incorrect answers -1 pt.
- h) Acknowledgment penalty - contestant not acknowledged -1 pt.
- i) Response penalty - no answer started in 5 sec. /or out of turn..... -2 pts.
- j) Response penalty - out of turn 2 times - Eliminated from match -2 pts.
- k) Response penalty - out of turn 3 times - Eliminated from contest..... -2 pts.
- l) Protest penalty - if official protest not up-held..... -1 pt.

Equipment Failure During a Match

- 1) It shall be the responsibility of each contestant to be assured that all equipment is operating correctly at the start of the match.
- 2) If the device being used ceases to function during a match or is believed to be malfunctioning, a "time out" may be called by a contestant, the Moderator, or by either coach.
- 3) If it is determined, after checking the equipment, that there is an equipment malfunction, the faulty part(s) will be replaced and play resumed.
- 4) Scores accumulated up to the point of the "time out" shall stand and all further points awarded during the remainder of the match will be added to or subtracted for this total.
- 5) If both referee judges or one referee judge and the Moderator deem it advisable, points awarded for the two (2) questions asked immediately before the equipment was deemed to fail may be recalled and two (2) additional questions used.
- 6) Under no conditions shall there be a replay of a match in which there was equipment failure.

Protests of Questions and/or Answers

- 1) A protest of a question or answer to a question may be made only by one of the team captains or the coach of either team and then only at the time the question is read or the answer is given. It must be done prior to the reading of the next question. There will be only one coach recognized for each team. The decision of the Moderator and the referee judges will be final.
- 2) When a protest is made, play will be stopped until the protest is resolved. A one (1) point penalty will be assessed if the protest is not upheld.
- 3) If a protest is upheld, the Moderator will take one of the following actions as is deemed appropriate:
 - a) A question is protested before an answer is given and the protest upheld -- discard the question. No loss or gain of points will result for either team.
 - b) An answer is protested (either correct or incorrect) -- at least one of the referee judges and the Moderator or both referee judges determine the validity of the protest. Points will be added or subtracted as appropriate.
 - c) A question is protested after an answer is given (correct or incorrect) -- at least one referee judge and the Moderator or both referee judges determine the validity of the protest of the question. The question may then be discarded at no loss of points as in (b) above.
- 4) Abuse of the protest provisions may result in one or more of the following:
 - a) Dismissal of team coach from the contest area.
 - b) Dismissal (replacement) of team captain.
 - c) Dismissal of entire team with forfeiture of any points or standing.
- 5) Spectators, parents, and visitors may not protest any question, answer, or procedure during play. They may, however, submit in writing to the contest organizers any suggestions, complaints or protests at the conclusion of the contest. Unsportsmanlike conduct or any actions, which are generally accepted as detrimental to the contest may subject the perpetrators of such actions as to dismissal from the immediate area of the contest.



- 6) No source of information is infallible. There may at times be answers given to questions that agree with the recommended sources, which are in fact erroneous. Every effort shall be made to eliminate such questions, but in the event of such occurrence, the referee judges and Moderator may challenge the answer and if there is unanimous agreement may elect to accept only the correct answers or to discard the questions with no loss or gain of points to either team.
- 7) **Team Captains/Coaches may protest a procedure/scoring during the round. There will be no loss of points for this type of protest.** Once the Moderator has declared a winner of the game based on the scores, there shall be no additional protest allowed.

Recorders and Communication Devices

No recording devices such as tape recorders, video, or cameras, and communication devices such as cell phones may be used during a match. Photographs will be permitted only before or after a match and then in only such a manner as not to be disruptive of the contest.

Awards

- 1) Team awards will be based on pre-determined procedure of play.
 - a) The exact procedure to be followed must be determined by the number of teams participating and the time allocated for the contest.
 - b) All divisions will follow double elimination.
- 2) The rank of teams will be determined based on their position within the double elimination brackets. To place teams eliminated in the same round, the team that has the most points within the round of elimination will be awarded the higher rank.
- 3) Individual Awards:
 - a) Scores will be kept for each individual contestant, with the high ten (10) individual contestants receiving special recognition.
 - b) Only those contestants who have participated in two or more matches will be considered for the top individual awards.
 - c) The high two match scores for everyone will be used in cases where individuals participate in more than two matches.
 - d) Ties for individual awards will be broken based on: First - high average score for the entire contest; Second - high individual round scores; and Third - total number of points earned in the contest.
- 4) Maryland 4-H State Horse Bowl Team Selection Process:

The top 10 individual seniors at the Maryland 4-H State Horse Bowl Contest will be invited to participate in the Maryland 4-H State Horse Bowl Team selection process.

 - a) The top ten individual scorers will be invited to participate in the next step of the selection process. If any of the top ten individual scorers decline this invitation, their spots will be offered to the next high scorer (11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, or 15th place in turn.)
Note: No more than ten 4-H members will be permitted to participate in the next step of the selection process.
 - b) All players who go on to the next stage of the selection process will be given the same study materials.
 - c) The next step of the selection process will be a BUZZ OFF held at a date, time and location to be announced to determine the final Horse Bowl team of four.
 - d) There are two phases to the selection process:
 - The written phase is worth 0 to 5 points. Each entrant will complete a fifty-question multiple choice test. After the tests are graded, the highest scorer and ties will receive 5 points. The next highest scorer and ties will receive 4 points. The 3rd, 4th, and 5th highest scorers and ties will receive 3, 2, and 1 point respectively.
 - During the buzzer phase, all players will play at the same time. The individual who buzzes in first will have the opportunity to answer each question. Each question will be worth 1 point if it is answered correctly and minus 1 point if it is answered incorrectly.



- There will be 100 questions during this phase.
 - The first player to reach 10 combined points (written and buzzer phases added together) will make the national team. Similarly, the second, third, and fourth players to reach 10 points will make the national team.
 - If the 100 questions are completed before 4 players have scored 10 points, the top 4 scorers will make the national team.
- e) If for some reason, one of the top four players must withdraw from the Maryland 4-H State Horse Bowl Team after being named to the team, his or her spot will be offered to the next highest scorer in turn from 5th through 10th.
- f) Maryland 4-H members may participate in only ONE state-level project team in a calendar year. If a 4-H'er qualifies for more than one project team in the same year, s/he must choose which team s/he will participate in. Once a 4-H'er commits to a state-level project team, s/he may not withdraw to accept a spot on a different state-level project team.



Contest Resources

NOTE: In an instance where there is a conflict of information between sources, the most recent source (publication date) will prevail. For example, if there is a conflict between *Equine Science and Horse Smarts*, *Horse Smarts* would be considered correct as it is a newer publication.

Resources - Junior Division

- HH** - *Horse and Horsemanship*, 2001 edition. National 4-H Council. <https://shop4-h.org/collections/animal-agricultural-science-curriculum>
- H1** - *Horse 1-Giddy Up and Go*, **2015 edition**. National 4-H Council. <https://shop4-h.org/collections/animal-agricultural-science-curriculum>
- H2** - *Horse 2-Head, Heart & Hooves*, **2015 edition**. National 4-H Council. <https://shop4-h.org/collections/animal-agricultural-science-curriculum>
- H3** - *Horse 3-Stable Relationships*, **2015 edition**. National 4-H Council <https://shop4-h.org/collections/animal-agricultural-science-curriculum>
- H4** - *Horse 4-Riding the Range*, **2015 edition**. National 4-H Council. <https://shop4-h.org/collections/animal-agricultural-science-curriculum>
- H5** - *Horse 5-Jumping to New Heights*, **2015 edition**. National 4-H Council. <https://shop4-h.org/collections/animal-agricultural-science-curriculum>
- HRS** - *Horse Science*, 2001 edition. National 4-H Council. <https://shop4-h.org/collections/animal-agricultural-science-curriculum>
- HSM** – *Horse Smarts: An Equine Reference and Youth Activity Guide*, American Youth Horse Council. <https://www.ayhc.com/shop>
- NA** - *The Normal Animal*. Veterinary Science Unit 1
- AD** - *Animal Diseases*. Veterinary Science Unit 2
- ES** - *Equine Science – Basic Knowledge for Horse People of All Ages*, by Jean T. Griffiths. ISBN # 978-1-929164-42-4. Available at: <https://www.ayhc.com/shop>

Resources – Intermediate Division

Junior Division references listed above, PLUS:

- ID** - *Illustrated Dictionary of Equine Terms*. New Horizons Education Center, Inc. Alpine Publications, PO Box 7027, Loveland CO 80537. Ph:1-800-777-7257.
- HSM** – *Horse Smarts: An Equine Reference and Youth Activity Guide*, American Youth Horse Council. <https://www.ayhc.com/shop>

Resources – Senior Division

The following references should be used for the Senior Division.

- HSM** – *Horse Smarts: An Equine Reference and Youth Activity Guide*, American Youth Horse Council. <https://www.ayhc.com/shop>
- ID** - *Illustrated Dictionary of Equine Terms*. New Horizons Education Center, Inc. Alpine Publications, PO Box 7027, Loveland CO 80537. Ph:1-800-777-7257.
- HIH** – *Horse Industry Handbook*, The American Youth Horse Council. 4093 Iron Works Pike, Lexington, KY 40511- Ph: 800-879-2942
- LEWIS** - *Feeding And Care Of The Horse*, 2nd edition, by Lon D. Lewis Williams and Wilkens, P. O. Box 1496, Baltimore MD 21298-9724 Ph: (800) 638-0672
- CAHA** - *Coloring Atlas of Horse Anatomy*, by Robert Rainer and Thomas O. McCracken. Order from Alpine Blue Ribbon Books, P.O. Box 7027, Loveland, CO 80537-0027
- ES** - *Equine Science – Basic Knowledge for Horse People of All Ages*, by Jean T. Griffiths. ISBN # 978-1-929164-42-4. Available at: <https://www.ayhc.com/shop>
- NEW in 2026! EVANS** - *The Horse*, Third edition, by Evans, Borton, Hintz, Van Vleck. W. H. Freeman and Company.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

TBA

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Maryland 4-H Horse Program Website: <https://extension.umd.edu/programs/4-h-youth-development/program-areas/animal-sciences/4-h-horse-program>

