



Routt County Horse Fact Sheet

Welcome to an exploration of the 4-H horse project! This project can be a lot of fun, and it certainly involves a wide range of activities and opportunities. This fact sheet will help you determine whether the 4-H Horse project might be right for you. The mission of 4-H Youth Development programs is to assist youth in acquiring knowledge and developing life skills that will be with them as they become adults. As the 4-H member is taught technical subject matter about horses, life skills become part of the process. Life skills include building positive relationships with people, communication, decision-making and problem solving, managing resources and interacting in groups. Not only do members learn about horses, they better understand themselves.

Who is Eligible? 4-H is an informal educational program offered to youth ages 8-18 from all economic and cultural backgrounds. Members and volunteers live in town, rural, ranch and suburbs.

Members who have access to a horse or other equine (pony, mule or donkey) may choose to show that animal. A member may ride or show in-hand. Members without access to horse or other equine may participate in many of the project meetings/activities, but will be unable to participate in official 4-H shows. They are eligible to take part in the Horseless Horse project.

Often it is believed a 4-H member must live on a ranch to have an animal project. Actually, many 4-H youth are from non-ranching backgrounds. Animals can be owned or leased and kept at the member's residence or elsewhere. Leasing an animal avoids the initial cost of the animal and allows the member to use and care for the animal. Most leases are for a year-long period.

It is important to remember that owning or leasing a horse is a large responsibility. In owning or leasing, you make a commitment to provide the care the horse needs on a constant basis. Horses need to be fed a minimum of twice a day, 365 days a year. You can never put horse care off until another day – if you can't do it, you must arrange for someone who can. You may participate in a horse project if you do not own or lease an animal. In this case, the member learns about equine (horse) science and may participate in 4-H horse opportunities such as quiz bowl, judging, demonstrations and Horseless Horse.

To be able to ride your horse at the Routt County Fair 4-H Horse Show you must first pass your written and riding horse tests:

- To be able to ride at fair you must pass the written level one test and a riding level one test per discipline (English, Western, RHV).



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- Jumping – to be able to participate in jumping classes during the fair, horse and rider must be comfortable jumping a minimum height of 2'. Horse and rider must pass the written and riding level one test and pass the Jumping test (presented by your jumping leader).
- Roping – to compete in Roping at the Routt County Fair 4-H show you must pass the written and riding level one test and pass the Roping test (presented by your roping leader).
- To find out more about your written and riding tests please contact your Extension Office.

When is a Good Time to Start? The 4-H year goes from October 1 – September 30. Horse meetings may begin in the winter months and will pick up throughout the summer. All horse members must be enrolled and have their horse/s ID by May 1. This is a state rule and there are no exceptions on these dates.

What Horse or Horse Sport Should I choose? Selecting a horse is a matter of personal choice. There are no specific breeds or horse sports recommended for 4-H project animals.

Draft horses and ponies as well as mules and donkeys are suitable for fitting and showmanship, but their suitability in mounted classes may vary. Although the term horse is most often used, a member may use an equine as a project animal, including ponies, miniature horses, donkeys and mules.

Basic Facilities – All you need to know about horse facilities cannot be described in this small space, but the following provided you with information to get your planning started if you are going to house your horse on your own property:

1. Check the zoning laws to be sure horses are permitted.
2. Provide adequate housing. The area should be clean, dry and free from drafts, with adequate sunlight and ventilation. A full size horse needs a minimum of a 10x10 foot stall and a 10x12 is highly preferred.
3. Allow space for handling feeds and equipment as well as for properly handling manure. Waste disposal is very important and may be regulated by your community.
4. Plan for adequate utilities. Horses must have access to water. Electricity will be helpful for lighting, using clippers, etc.
5. Provide an adequate, well fenced exercise area.

Equipment to Get Started – You will need to purchase or borrow all the items you will need for your project animals. Some items can be obtained second hand. Costs vary widely – you can check local tack stores, catalogs and the internet to get an idea of prices. Here is a list of the basic horse care equipment you will need:

- Saddle (including “fitting” – girth and stirrups)
- Bridle
- Saddle Pad



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- Halter
- Lead Rope
- Grooming Kit (combs, brushes, hoof pick)
- Buckets (2 feed, 1 water)
- Stall Cleaning Tools
- First Aid Kit

Annual Feed and Care for an average horse: Note – Expenses will vary widely based on size and metabolism of animal, access to growing pasture, amount of work performed by the animal, health needs, etc.

- Hay – 175-200 bales per year per horse
- Grain – 3-5 50 pound bags per month per horse
- Hoof Care – trim or shoe every 4-8 weeks
- Veterinary Care – Annual or semi-annual vaccination and dental care: additional if chronic health conditions, illness or accident.
- Bedding – if needed
- Miscellaneous – Supplements, fly control, dewormer, etc.
- Additional expenses – Entry fees, training fees, riding lessons, etc.

There are always unanticipated and incidental costs associated with animal ownership. You can cut your initial investment in tack and equipment by participating in equipment swaps and used tack and clothing sales. Quality used equipment is frequently available.

Record Books: Routt County requires youth to maintain a written record of the 4-H/FFA project in order to be able to exhibit at the Routt County Fair. The record books summarize the income and expenses for your project, awards earned and learning experiences. The record books will be reviewed at your July club meeting and need to be turned in by September. You can download your animal record book on the Colorado 4-H Website: <https://co4h.colostate.edu/program-areas/colorado-4-h-project-information/>, scroll to the bottom of the page, and click on “Download All e-Records Here.”

Registering for the Routt County Fair: All 4-H/FFA members enrolled in an animal project MUST register for the Routt County Fair through FairEntry by July deadline. This is where you will pick the classes you/animal will be showing in at fair. If you have questions on the classes please contact the Extension Office and/or your project leader.

Set Up for the Fair: Your club will be assigned a set of stalls/pens for your animals. The number of stalls or pens your club is assigned depends on the number of animals you are exhibiting. Space allocated each year depends on the overall number of animals in the fair. Prior to the fair the Extension Office will communicate with all members on the pen configuration at fair. You must provide your own feeders, waterers and shavings. No paper shavings allowed.



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Displays: Each year at fair there is a theme. You might work with your club or not to decorate your stalls at fair. It is common to include the following information: club name, animal's name, exhibitors name, weight and breed. Make sure to thank and recognize your sponsors and previous year's buyers. You will need to bring all the supplies for your club/pen display, as well as the materials needed to hang it. Zip ties, wire, rope, etc., are commonly used. Make sure the banner/display is hung securely and is safely out of your animal's reach and does not hinder the use of the stall door.

Supplies for Fair: A successful experience at the fair requires having the right supplies. Following are some things you will most likely need. **PUT YOUR NAME ON EVERYTHING!!!**

- **Bedding** – You will want to purchase your shavings before arriving at fair. We do not provide shavings and they will not be For Sale at fair. No paper shavings allowed.
- **Broom** – Keep your assigned area and walkways neat.
- **Feed** – Your animal will need feed throughout the fair.
- **Bucket** – You will need a bucket to haul fresh water to your animal.
- **Chairs** – You will spend a lot of time in the barn area, so you may want to bring chairs. Remember to keep the aisle area open for fair guests at all times.
- **Extension Cords** – The fairgrounds did some major upgrades to the electrical in the livestock barn in 2017. The following has been requested of all electrical cords used in the barn:
 - Only 12 gauge cords can be used in the MPB
 - No cords longer than 25 feet
 - The cords must have a ground prong
 - The cords have to be in condition with no rips, frays, etc.
 - The Superintendents will be monitoring this throughout the week.
- **Grooming Supplies** – Make sure to bring grooming brushes, soap, spray bottles, etc., normally used to wash and groom your animal.
- **Show Attire** – read your Routt County 4-H Handbook to make sure you are following the 4-H Dress Code and show attire.
- **Rake or Shovel** – you will need to remove droppings and soiled shavings from your animal's pen area frequently. Stalls and pens need to be maintained throughout the fair. This will also help reduce flies in the barn area.
- **Wheel Barrow** – You will need to haul dropping and soiled shavings from the barn to the designated waste area.

Showing – There are several disciplines of horse riding to choose from.

- **Showmanship Classes:** All disciplines of horse riding (Western, English, RHV, Roping, and Gymkhana) must participate in the 4-H Horse Showmanship class. This class is judged on the handler's ability to present the horse to the judge. The horse is not judged in this class except as it pertains to its responses to the handler.



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- Halter: Class is judged on the conformation (bone structure, muscling, balance) of the horse.
- Western: Western Riding, Horsemanship, Reining, Trail
- Ranch Horse Versatility (RHV): Ranch Horsemanship, Ranch Reining/Individual Cow Work, Ranch Trail, Cutting
- English: Any combination of 3 or 4 classes - Hunt Seat Equitation, Hunt Seat Over Fences, Hunter Hack, English Hack, or English Control
- Gymkhana: Riders are scored on speed and control of horses – Barrels, Poles, Flags, Keyhole

Awards – all classes will be awarded ribbons and points for 1st-6th place.

- Showmanship: All members regardless of discipline need to show in Showmanship. Awards for Grand and Reserve Champion in each age division. Grand and Reserve Champion showman will have the opportunity to participate in Round Robin.
- Halter: Awards for overall Grand and Reserve Champion Halter Horse to be presented at fair. Halter Classes do not count towards horse and rider overall award points.
- Western: Awards for Grand and Reserve Champion Western Performance in each age division. Horse and rider team must participate in three (3) or more classes in the western division to be eligible for Western Performance Awards.
- Ranch Horse Versatility (RHV): Awards for Grand and Reserve Champion RHV in each age division. Horse and rider team must participate in three (3) or more classes in the RHV division to be eligible for Ranch Horse Versatility Awards.
- English: Awards for Grand and Reserve Champion English Performance in each age division. Horse and rider team must participate in two (2) or more classes in the English division to be eligible for English Performance Awards.
- Gymkhana: Awards for Grand and Reserve Champion Gymkhana in each age division. Horse and rider team must participate in three (3) or more classes in the gymkhana division to be eligible for Gymkhana Awards, Musical mounting does not count towards overall points.
- Overall Awards: A Horse and rider pair will be eligible for Overall High Point Awards. The pair must participate in four (4) out of the six (6) divisions (Showmanship, Western, Roping, RHV, English, Gymkhana) in order to be eligible for this award. THE HORSE AND RIDER PAIR WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE IF THEY DO NOT SHOW IN ALL THE CLASSES TOGETHER. Riders may show multiple horses, but only one horse (identified during fair entry) can be classified as the All-Around Horse.

Summary – A 4-H horse project is a big commitment, but it pays big dividends. 4-H members who care for animals learn about and practice decision making, responsibility, record keeping and time management.



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Youth who take advantage of 4-H opportunities develop good communication skills as well as leadership skills. As you enroll in the project, be sure your whole family is ready for the commitment and has counted the costs.

The horse project is more than caring for a horse: it is a project which builds skills that carry through a lifetime.