

RIDER'S HANDBOOK

General Rules & Class Descriptions

ART OF THE BRIDLEHORSE



BCBHA

BC BRIDLEHORSE HERITAGE

ASSOCIATION

Contents

Section 1. Welcome and Expectations	2
Key Points	2
Recognition of Tradition	2
Inclusivity.....	2
Outlawed Equipment.....	2
Guiding Principles.....	3
Section 2. Equipment and Attire.....	4
Preferred Equipment	4
Outlawed Equipment	4
Rider's Attire	5
Section 3. General Rules	6
Automatic Disqualifications (ADQ)	7
Stallion Policy.....	7
BC Horse Council or Other Provincial Equine Insurance Policy.....	7
Helmet Policy	8
Cancellation and Refund Policy	8
Section 4. Description of Divisions.....	9
General Information	9
Divisions & Descriptions	9
Section 5. Description of Classes.....	11
Stockwork	11
Ranch Roping	12
Additional Guidelines	13
Ranch Horse Challenge	16
Ranch Horse Pattern and Diagram – see APPENDIX A	16
Judges' Notes	17
Expectations & Standards	18
Section 6. Explanation of Scoring Breakdown	20
Score Cards and Points – See APPENDIX B	20
Section 7. Acknowledgements	21
To Our Competitors	21
To the BC Bridlehorse Heritage Association Board of Directors	21
Art of the Bridlehorse Volunteers and Sponsors	22
Looking ahead	22
Section 8. Glossary of Terms.....	23

Section 1. Welcome and Expectations

Welcome Competitors!

The following section outlines the mission, principles, and expectations of the **BC Bridlehorse Heritage Association** and its annual event, **Art of the Bridlehorse**. This event serves as a platform for participants ranging from working cowboys to aspiring students, to demonstrate their skills, share their passion, and connect with a like-minded community focused on the art of developing the fine bridled stockhorse.

Key Points

Recognition of Tradition

- Special attention and preference will be given to riders who present themselves and their horses in traditional gear consistent with B.C.'s bridlehorse heritage and those of the old Californios (i.e., rawhide hackamore, horsehair mecate, and rawhide reins and romel if riding in the two-rein, and a get down rope if riding straight up in a Spanish Spade Bit). This reflects the ultimate commitment to the heritage, showcasing the time, effort, and care involved in developing a finely trained bridlehorse.

Inclusivity

- While traditional equipment is valued, the event recognizes that it can be costly, difficult to acquire, and requires specialized knowledge. Riders without traditional gear are welcome to participate, provided their equipment is not classified as 'Outlawed Equipment' and is used with good horsemanship, respect, and understanding. Those without traditional gear can still honour the heritage through their attire and riding style.

Outlawed Equipment

- To uphold the core values of the association and competition, certain equipment is prohibited. A complete list can be found in the handbook under 'Outlawed Equipment.'
- Any misuse of allowed equipment or any action recognized by any judge as "excessive force" or "unfair usage" will result in automatic disqualification (ADQ), with no refund of entry fees. This

Copyright © 2025 by the BC Bridlehorse Horsemanship Association and its directors. This Handbook was written by Christa Miremadi, Judy Bird, David Ciriani, Craig Bird, Brock Herman, Buddy Cardinal, Devanee Cardinal, and Amelie Zunk with consultation and input from Jasmine Bedford, Genevieve Fraser, and Kimberly Taylor. The authors retain sole copyright to this book. No reproduction of any kind of this material is allowed without permission of the authors.

Judging and Enforcement

- Judges will ensure all gear is used respectfully, prioritizing the welfare of the horse and adherence to the competition standards. Violations of these standards will lead to automatically Disqualified [ADQ].

Guiding Principles

Participants are expected to align with the show's core values which emphasize horsemanship, stockmanship, respect for the horse, cattle and fellow competitors, and upholding the traditions of B.C.'s Bridlehorse Heritage. This framework ensures a balance between celebrating historical traditions, fostering inclusivity, and maintaining a high standard of respect and care for the horses and livestock involved.

These guiding principles emphasize the core values of the Art of the Bridlehorse competition:

1. **Smoothness and Efficacy Over Speed:** Riders are encouraged to focus on precision, finesse, and skillful execution rather than rushing to achieve results. This highlights the artistry and mastery of horsemanship and stockmanship. A job done with careful precision that prioritizes the experience for the livestock and the horse over the speed with which it's completed will be recognized over a job done quickly in which the animal's welfare appears to be second to the speed at which it is completed.
2. **Priority of the Mental and Physical Well-Being of Horses and Livestock:** The competition underscores the importance of humane treatment, ensuring that the health, comfort, and mindset of both the horse and livestock are always made the priority.
3. **Respect for Horses, Livestock, and Fellow Competitors:** Participants are expected to demonstrate respect and camaraderie, fostering a positive and supportive environment. This respect extends to their horse, the livestock, teammates, competitors and show organizers alike, reflecting the spirit of sportsmanship and shared heritage.

These principles promote a culture of thoughtful, respectful, and skillful horsemanship that aligns with the traditions and values celebrated by the **BC Bridlehorse Heritage Association**.

Section 2. Equipment and Attire

Preferred Equipment

As stated above, in keeping with the traditions of the old Californios as brought to B.C. in the mid-19th century, **Art of the Bridlehorse** and the **BC Bridlehorse Heritage Association** aim to do their part to preserve and promote the understanding and use of the following traditional gear:

- Hackamore/Bosal: Must be made of leather or rawhide with rawhide or rope core. Horses of any age are permitted to be ridden in a hackamore/bosal.
- Two-Rein: * **Horses in the two-rein must be five years of age or older with a full set of teeth.** Two hands are permitted on the under-bridle ONLY.
- Californio Style Bridle Bit with leather chin strap. Rawhide or leather romel reins with rein chains. * **Neck or get-down rope is required with this set-up,**
- **Horses in Spanish style spade bits must be six years of age or older. Horses are to be led by get-down rope, NOT by the bridle reins.**
- Aspiring towards the Californio Style Spade Bit is preferred and encouraged, especially for Pro and Intermediate divisions.
- Single or double jointed snaffle bits, loose ring or fixed bits, as well as other western leverage bits will be accepted, however special acknowledgement and reward in the form of ***Reflection of Heritage*** points will be given to those who are showing the time, effort and skill needed to prepare a horse to show in the equipment mentioned above.

Outlawed Equipment

- Chain chin straps are not permitted.
- Cable core or other unforgiving core material hackamores are not permitted.
- Twisted mouthpieces or mouth-pieces made up of **more than three moving sections** are not permitted.
- Tie downs, running martingales or other auxiliary equipment are not permitted.
- Gag bits and mechanical hackamores are not permitted.
- Unfair or cruel use of ANY equipment will not be permitted.
- The Judges reserve the right to excuse any rider deemed to be using their equipment or treating any horse or livestock in an unfair manner and this **will not be disputed.**

Rider's Attire

Riders are expected to show respect for this event, **Art of the Bridlehorse**, our presenter, **BC Bridlehorse Heritage Association**, the judges, the suppliers of our cattle and the other competitors through dressing appropriately and with consideration for tradition.

- Full length pants
- Boots with a heel
- Long-sleeved shirt
- Cowboy hats (helmets are required for youth under 18 years of age)
- Leggings (chaps or armitas) are preferred but not required.
- Wild rags, vests and other more formal embellishments are encouraged.
- All riders under the age of 18 **MUST** wear a helmet.

BCBHA is dedicated to the safety of both horses and humans. This includes promoting respectful and willing partnerships that have properly prepared horses and riders participating in BCBHA events. Given the inherent risks of working with horses and livestock, BCBHA supports the use of a helmet in place of a cowboy hat for anyone who chooses to do so. Riders who choose to wear a helmet rather than a cowboy hat will NOT be penalized for this choice.

All youth (18 years old and under) are required to wear a helmet.

Section 3. General Rules

The priority for all riders who take part in **Art of the Bridlehorse** is to be in alignment with the show's **guiding principles and core values**:

- Show smoothness and efficacy over speed.
 - Prioritize the mental and physical well-being of their horse and the livestock.
 - Display respect for their horse, the livestock, and their teammates/fellow competitors.
1. The following rules and class descriptions were created by the BC Bridlehorse Heritage Association for the purpose of showing respect to our horses, livestock and facilities and to preserve the traditions and educate people in the beauty, efficacy and Art of the Bridlehorse.
 2. Judges' decisions are final and cannot be contested.
 3. All horses and cattle should be treated as if owned by the judges, whether in the arena or out.
 4. Riders should conduct themselves as though they were applying for a position on a crew.
 5. Riders are encouraged to dress themselves in typical cowboy/buckaroo fashion.
 6. Extra points in the form of ***Reflection of Heritage*** points WILL be given for:
 - Choosing to show your horse smoothly over just getting a job done.
 - Showing respect for the livestock and facilities, such as choosing to excuse yourself in order to save the cattle if they should become stressed enough that they begin to pose a threat to themselves emotionally and/or physically.
 - Dressing yourself and your horse in traditional attire.
 - Demonstrating an exceptional connection with your horse and the ability to communicate with subtlety and grace.
 7. **In order to respect the natural development of a horse:**
 - **No horse under the age of four years may be shown at the Art of the Bridlehorse.**
 - **No horse under the age of five years may be shown in the two-rein.**
 - **No horse under the age of six years may be shown straight-up.**

BCBHA promotes the safe handling of **all** horses in their events and may at any time revoke the right of **anyone** to participate who is deemed by the judges to interact with their horse in an unsafe or unethical way.

Automatic Disqualifications (ADQ)

Automatic Disqualifications are possible under the following circumstances:

- If a horse or steer is deemed by the judges to have been treated unfairly.
- If blood is drawn on a horse or steer as a result of a rider's action or equipment. In this event, both the rider who caused the blood to be drawn and the team leader will be automatically disqualified.
- During the Ranch Roping class, any rider who pops their dallies before the unmounted rider is back in their saddle will be automatically disqualified.

Stallion Policy

BCBHA promotes the safe handling of **all** horses in their events, and may, at any time revoke the right of **anyone** to participate who is deemed by the judges to interact with their horse in an unsafe or unethical way, stallion or gelding or mare.

Stallions are permitted to show at the **Art of the Bridlehorse** provided that they are handled appropriately and under control at all times, however there are some limitations to who can show/ride/handle stallions at the Art of the Bridlehorse.

- Stallions are only permitted in the Intermediate or Pro division.
- Stallions must be stabled appropriately, and owners may be asked to purchase additional stalls in order to provide "buffer" space if it is required.
- At no time is anyone other than the rider who registered the stallion in the competition permitted to handle/ride the stallion.
- If show staff determine the stallion to be unruly, out of control, dangerous or otherwise disruptive to the event or to the safety of the other horses, riders or livestock, the show staff reserves the right to dismiss the stallion and the rider who registered him. Both will be expected to leave the show grounds immediately.

BC Horse Council or Other Provincial Equine Insurance Policy

Provincial equine insurance, such as that provided by Horse Council BC, is not required for event registration, however it is strongly recommended in order to ensure adequate coverage and protection for participants.

Helmet Policy

BCBHA is dedicated to the safety of both horses and humans. This includes promoting respectful and willing partnerships that have properly prepared horses and riders participating in BCBHA events. Given the inherent risks of working with horses and livestock, BCBHA and Art of the Bridlehorse supports the use of a helmet in place of a cowboy hat for anyone who chooses to do so. Riders choosing to wear a helmet rather than a cowboy hat will NOT be penalized for this choice.

All youth (18 years old and under) are required to wear a helmet.

Cancellation and Refund Policy

Registration for the event opens at the beginning of April. Due to limited spots, early entry is encouraged to secure participation.

Refund policy for withdrawals before August 1: A refund will be issued, minus \$100 office fee.

Withdrawals on or after August 1: The following options are available:

- Apply your entry balance as a credit toward next year's show.
- Arrange for a substitute to take your place.
- Contact BCBHA to check if there is a waiting list and whether your spot can be re-assigned.
- There are no partial refunds for missed or unridden classes.

Why This Policy? Organizing an event of this scale requires significant preparation and financial commitment well in advance. Expenses include securing the venue, judges, officials, volunteers, and clinicians; arranging cattle, stabling, camping; and preparing arenas and warm-up areas. By the two-week mark, most logistical costs have already been incurred. This policy ensures the financial stability of the event and allows us to maintain high-quality experience for all participants. ***Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.***

Section 4. Description of Divisions

General Information

1. Riders competing in **Art of the Bridlehorse** will be competing in one of the following divisions and will be judged in all three classes which make up their division.
2. Only one horse may be used per entry. If a rider wishes to compete with more than one horse, they must register each horse separately and each horse shown must complete their entire division.
3. Entry fees cover the judging fee for all three classes that make up each division.
4. A rider may choose not to participate in one of their three classes, but fees for unriden classes **will not be refunded**. *Please refer to Section 3 for our cancellation policy.

Divisions & Descriptions

Pro

Very experienced or professional cowboy/cowgirl. I.e., they do this for a living. Our highest level of competitor. This level will be expected to provide support to all other levels if needed.

- **Stockwork - Team Sort** – Designated three head sorts holding outside the rodear line.
- **Roping - Two Man Doctoring** – Two head catch.
- **Ranch Horse Challenge** – Ranch horse pattern including lope, simple or flying lead changes, obstacles and tasks.

Intermediate

Someone who is developing their skills and comfortable with breakaway roping.

- **Stockwork - Team Sort** – Designated three head sorts holding outside the rodear line.
- **Roping – Breakaway Ranch Roping** – Two head designated catch breakaway roping.
- **Ranch Horse Challenge - Pattern** – Including simple or flying lead changes, obstacles and tasks.

Novice

Someone who is new to this style and just getting started. (Novice riders can ask for a third teammate if extra support in the herd is needed, however this will be reflected in scoring.)

- **Stockwork - Team Sort** - Designated two head sort; one steer to the rodear line and one steer through two barrels.
- **Roping - Ranch Roping** - One head catch breakaway, head or dummy roping.
- **Ranch Horse Challenge - Pattern** – Trot or lope accepted. Gate assistance accepted.

Green Horse

Someone who is riding a horse of any age, being **ridden in a bosal or snaffle only**, who is new to this work and competing for experience, not prizes. (Green Horse competitors can ask for a third teammate if extra support in the herd is needed, however this will be reflected in scoring.)

**** This division is intended to give young horses positive exposure. Participants will receive a Certificate of Completion and a score, but no prizes will be awarded. ****

- **Stockwork - Team Sort** - Designated two head sort: one steer to the rodear line (no hold) and one steer through two barrels.
- **Roping - Ranch Roping** - One head catch breakaway, head or heel or dummy roping.
- **Ranch Horse Challenge - Pattern** – Trot or lope accepted. Gate assistance accepted.

Youth

Anyone The Youth division is open to riders under 18 years of age. **All Youth division participants are required to wear a helmet.** Intermediate-level youth riders may be moved up to the Intermediate division. Those needing extra support in the herd may request a third teammate, though this will be reflected in their scoring.

- **Stockwork - Team Sort** – Designated two head sort: one steer to the rodear line and one steer through two barrels.
- **Roping - Ranch Roping** - One head catch, breakaway, head or heel or dummy roping.
- **Ranch Horse Challenge - Pattern** – Trot or lope accepted. Gate assistance accepted.

Scoring

- * Please note that the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place Division Prizes are awarded according to the combined scores for all three classes of that division. To be eligible to receive a prize, the horse/rider team must compete in all three classes within that division.
- * 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners will be acknowledged for each class (e.g., Intermediate Stockwork, Novice Ranch Horse Challenge, Pro Roping) and winners will receive a certificate of Acknowledgement. Prizes are awarded for Division winners.
- * The Green Horse class will have 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners. These will be presented with a certificate of acknowledgement; however, this division is designed to provide experience and exposure to a young or green horse and is NOT considered a prize division. Entry fees for the Green Horse division are lower to reflect this.
- * Green Horse, Youth and Novice divisions may choose to ask for three teammates rather than two. The third teammate would be used to provide support to the youth, Novice or the Green Horse, in order to allow for the Youth, Novice or Green Horse to succeed in a task. If a third teammate is utilized it may be reflected in the points awarded.

Section 5. Description of Classes

Below is a list of classes and class descriptions along with scoring information. Each rider will complete their class in a way that is specific to the ability level and the expectation that we hold for riders/horses in that division.

Stockwork

The stockwork classes are designed to showcase the art of sorting cattle using traditional, respectful methods, showing consideration for the livestock and an understanding of the use of angles. Each class will have a six-minute time limit to ensure that the event can run smoothly and on schedule, however rushing or pushing horses or cattle beyond what is a reasonable demonstration of good horsemanship and stockmanship will result in a loss of points. Scoring is set up in a way to allow for an unfinished job to be eligible to receive a score, so running out of time does not eliminate your opportunity to place in a class. Bonus points are awarded for a completed job. Below you will find the class descriptions for each division.

Youth, Green Horse and Novice Stockwork Divisions

Each rider may select **two or three teammates** to assist them.

- The **third teammate** is optional and can only help if needed to support the herd or complete the task.
- This is a TWO cow sort.
- The rider will be given **two numbers**, each corresponding to a specific steer.
- The rider must **sort each steer** from the herd, **one at a time**, in any order they choose.

First Task:

1. Sort the first designated steer from the herd.
2. Move the steer past the designated rodear line.
3. Once the steer crosses the rodear line, its task is complete — it may return to the herd.

Second Task:

1. Sort the second designated steer.
2. Guide this steer between two marked barrels.
 - You may maneuver the steer between the barrels either:
 - **Before** it crosses the rodear line, or
 - **After** it has crossed the rodear line and is being brought back toward the herd.
3. Once the second steer has returned to the herd, the task is complete.

Scoring Notes:

- If you are unable to guide the second steer between the barrels, you can still earn points by getting it across the rodear line.

- Successfully maneuvering the second steer **between the barrels** will award you the full **10 points**.
- **Assisting teammates** can help as the youth sees fit, but:
 - The rider must clearly demonstrate their own skills to earn points.

Intermediate and Pro Stockwork Divisions

- The rider chooses two team members to assist/support them in this task.
- They will be given three numbers correlating to three steers. They will sort each steer out of the herd one at a time in consecutive order.
- Once each steer has been taken out of the herd and across the rodear line, it will be held outside the rodear line until all three steers have been sorted.
- The task is complete when all three designated steers have been sorted and taken across the rodear line in the designated order. If any steer returns to the herd before all three steers have been taken across the rodear line, the rider must begin again. *
 - * For example: If the rider's numbers are 1, 2 and 3, the rider must take steer #1 first, 2 second and #3 last. If #1 returns to the herd while the rider is sorting #2, the rider must let #2 go and begin again with #1. If steer #2 returns to the herd while the rider is sorting #3, as long as steer #1 has stayed across the rodear line the rider may simply re-sort #2 before sorting #3.
- The task is complete once all three steers have been sorted in order and the third steer has crossed the rodear line. Once this has occurred, all three steers will be allowed to return to the herd.
- Assisting team members can be used however the rider chooses, but the rider must demonstrate their abilities in order to receive points.

Ranch Roping

Like the stockwork classes, Ranch Roping highlights traditional cattle-handling techniques that prioritize respect, efficacy, and low-stress handling—essential skills in real-world ranch work. Whether examining, doctoring, tagging, or branding, the ability to calmly and effectively restrain and lay down cattle is fundamental to ranching.

The Bridlehorse Heritage we honour today stems from the old Californios and vaqueros, who took great pride in preserving the integrity of their livestock and performing tasks with minimal stress. After all, an animal that loses unnecessary calories in the field translates to lost dollars at the sale. Riders should remember that the cattle used in this show will be sold, reinforcing the importance of smooth, controlled, and respectful handling.

Each class will have a **six-minute time limit** to ensure the event stays on schedule. However, riders should avoid rushing or pushing their horses or cattle beyond what is considered a reasonable demonstration of good horsemanship and stockmanship, as doing so will result in a loss of points. **Below are the class descriptions for each division.

Judges' Notes: Even though these events are timed, they are not speed events. Success is

measured by displaying skillfulness and definitive execution, not just how fast you go. The finesse of both rider and team in setting up cattle for rope shots, positioning equine partners correctly, and working together seamlessly are just as important as successfully making the catch, and will be scored accordingly.

Youth/Green Horse - Ranch Roping

Dummy Roping Option (Six-minute time limit)

- Youth and Green Horse riders will participate in **dummy roping only**.
 - *If a Youth Rider or Green Horse rider wishes to **use the breakaway on a steer**, they must first obtain permission from the judges.
- The rider will select **two (or three) team members** from the pool of **Intermediate or Pro** competitors to assist them. A third teammate may be used if needed, but scoring will reflect the rider's individual demonstration of skill.
- The team will first sort their designated steer from the herd, guide it **around the barrel**, and return it to the herd.
- **Once the steer has rejoined the herd, the rider will rope the dummy.**
- The run is **complete** when the rider successfully ropes the dummy or has used all three loop attempts. If unsuccessful, they will be thanked for their run and asked to exit the arena. *Riders asked to leave will still receive a score for horsemanship, stockmanship, teamwork and reflection of heritage but will not receive a score for the roping component or the completion of task.

Additional Guidelines

1. **Assisting team members** may be utilized as the rider sees fit, but **the judged rider must actively demonstrate their abilities** to earn points.
2. If a rider requires a **third teammate**, this will be permitted, but scoring will be based on the individual rider's displayed skills.

Novice - Ranch Roping (Six-minute time limit)

- The rider will approach the judges and advise if they will be roping the dummy or request the opportunity to head rope a steer.
- Riders may choose between **roping a dummy** or **breakaway roping** designated cattle.
- The rider being judged will select **two (or three) team members** from the pool of **Intermediate or Pro** competitors to assist them.
- **Time starts** when the rider crosses the **rodear line**.
- The rider will be assigned **one steer** and will decide between breakaway roping and roping a dummy.
- If a rider requires a **third teammate**, this will be permitted, but scoring will be based on the individual rider's displayed skills.

Breakaway Roping Option

- The riders must enter the arena **with their team members** and proceed to sort and rope **one designated steer**.

- The rider should ideally expose their designated steer from the herd before roping it and **breaking away**.
- Once the steer has broken away, the rider must then sort the steer out of the herd, guide it **around the barrel**, and return it to the herd.
- **The task is complete** once the steer has successfully rejoined the herd.
- If the rider fails to successfully head their steers within the three allotted attempts for each, the run will be considered incomplete. The rider will still receive points for horsemanship, teamwork, stockmanship and reflection of heritage but will not earn points for the roping component or the completion of task.

Dummy Roping Option

- Riders choosing to rope the dummy **must inform the judges** at the start of their run.
- The rider will select **two team members** to assist them.
- The team will first sort their designated steer from the herd, guide it **around the barrel**, and return it to the herd.
- **Once the steer has rejoined the herd, the rider will rope the dummy.**
- The run is **complete** when the rider successfully ropes the dummy or has used all three loop attempts. If unsuccessful, they will be thanked for their run and asked to exit the arena.
- **Additional Guidelines**
 1. **Assisting team members** may be utilized as the rider sees fit, but **the judged rider must actively demonstrate their abilities** to earn points.

Intermediate – Breakaway Roping (Six-minute time limit)

- The rider selects **two team members** for assistance.
- The rider is assigned **two steers** to sort and rope.
- **Time starts** when the rider crosses the **rodear line**.
- The rider will be assigned **two steers**, which can be sorted and roped in any order.
- The rider must **sort the first steer**, ideally exposing it from the herd before heading it.
- The rider is allowed a **maximum of three loops** per steer to complete the roping.
- Once the **first steer** has broken away, the rider will proceed to **sort out the second steer**, ideally exposing it from the herd before roping it. They will have a **maximum of three loops per steer** to complete this task.
- If the first three shots are unsuccessful, the competitor will move on to the next assigned numbered steer, where three more shots may be taken.
- If the rider fails to successfully head their steer(s) within the three allotted attempts for each, the run will be considered incomplete. The rider will still receive points for horsemanship, teamwork, stockmanship and reflection of heritage but will not earn points for the roping component or completion of task. If one run is complete and the second is not, the rider will still receive points for the completed catch.
- **Time stops** when the rider successfully completes the task or six minutes has elapsed.

Pro - Hard Roping (Eight-minute time limit)

- The rider will select **two team members** from the **Pro** or **Intermediate** pool to assist them. This event will be a **two-head doctor** format.
- The rider will have **three attempts** to **head** their designated steer and an additional **three attempts** to **heel**.
- **Time starts** when the first rider crosses the **rodear line**.
- The rider will be assigned **two steers**, which can be headed/heeled in any order.
- The rider **must both head and heel** in this event but may decide the order in which they do so for the two designated cattle.

Roping Process

- **Heading**

The rider will sort their designated steer, ideally exposing it from the herd before attempting to **head** it.

- The rider is allowed **three loops** to complete the heading.
- Once successfully headed, **teammates will take turns** until the steer is successfully **heeled**.

- **Heeling**

- The rider being judged will ask one of their team members to enter the herd, sort, and **head** their second designated steer, exposing it from the herd.
- The rider will then attempt to **heel** the steer, with a maximum of **three loops** allowed.

- **Ground Crew and Team Member Roles**

- The **ground crew** (not assigned by the rider) will set ropes once a steer has been successfully roped.
- The **third team member** will be responsible for keeping the herd back, ensuring the safety of the crew doctoring.

- **Completion and Scoring**

- **Time stops** once the animal has been laid down.
- If the rider fails to successfully **head or heel** their steers within the **three allotted attempts** for each, the run will be considered **incomplete**. The rider will still receive points for horsemanship, teamwork and stockmanship but **will not earn points for the roping component**. If one run is complete and the second is not, the rider will still receive points for the completed catch.
- If the rider runs out of loops or **times out and the steer is roped**, the judges will **stop scoring the lead rider**. The team must immediately move the steer to the **stripping chute** to have all ropes removed.
- **Judges will continue to monitor animal welfare** even after the time limit has expired. Disqualification, including of the rider's supporting team members, is possible at any point if **proper care and handling of cattle are not maintained**.

Ranch Horse Challenge

The Ranch Horse Challenge Division provides the opportunity to acknowledge and reward the well-rounded ranch horse and the rider who guides them. It honours the traditional roots of the Bridlehorse Heritage in B.C. that can be traced back to the Spanish conquistadors and their mounts. Well-schooled in the foundations of what makes a good working partner—bravery, willingness and athletic ability—these reliable partners were highly developed in the balance, stamina, strength, flexibility and versatility which made these horses so ideal for the tasks of the “New World.”

In the Ranch Horse Challenge class, riders will showcase their ability to guide their mount through a simple Ranch Horse Pattern that includes a series of tasks that would be commonplace on any ranch. The emphasis is on smooth, quiet, subtle guidance that prioritizes partnership and the comfort of the horse, staying in line with the values of the **BC Bridlehorse Heritage Association**.

Each division has specific requirements regarding speed, obstacles and the ability to perform tasks, either mounted or dismounted. These are listed in the following section.

Riders may have someone call out the pattern during this event without any point deductions.

These tasks, depending on the division, may include things like:

- The ability to open/close a gate
- Circles of specific sizes at varying speeds
- Transitions to and from various gaits
- Coordination and willingness to cross simple obstacles
- The ability to pick things up or drag things from Point A to Point B
- The ability to ride a straight line without the assistance of a fence or rail
- The ability to go from fast-paced, high-energy activities to calm and quiet ones.

In staying consistent with the guiding principles and core values of the **BC Bridlehorse Heritage Association**, the Ranch Horse Challenge classes, like the stockwork and roping classes, will prioritize the well-being of the horses. It is expected that riders will show their horse smoothly and with subtle, quiet guidance. Six minutes will be given for each horse/rider team.

Ranch Horse Pattern and Diagram – see APPENDIX A

Judges' Notes

Judges will be looking for the following demonstrations:

- 1. The ability to demonstrate a variety of consistent, rhythmic gaits.**
 - Whether showcasing a working/long trot, a lope or a walk, a horse's gait should remain even and rhythmic.
 - The gait should appear to be within the horse's natural ability level.
 - There should be a distinct difference between a "collected trot/jog" and a "long trot".
 - Regardless of gait or level of collection, a horse should demonstrate relaxation, acceptance of the rider's guidance, and softness.
- 2. The ability to transition between gaits, perform stops, pivots, side pass and backing up willingly.**
 - The horse should accept the rider's guidance without head tossing, gapping at the mouth or wringing its tail.
 - All maneuvers should be executed with the lightest possible contact, emphasizing softness and precision.
 - Unless stated otherwise, pivots should be done on the hind end to encourage engagement and promote a healthy balance in the horse's body.
- 3. Demonstrate consistency in size and shape when performing circles.**
 - Circles of a determined size should be even and consistent in shape and size.
 - The horse should maintain their upright balance and hind end engagement throughout the circle, not falling in or falling on the forehand.
 - The horse should demonstrate a subtle bend in the direction of travel and should NOT display counter flexion.
- 4. Show the ability to wait between maneuvers and versatility between gates.**
 - After a stop or a pivot or when asked, a horse should be able to stand quietly and demonstrate an ability to wait for further instruction without fidgeting.
 - A horse should display the ability to go from fast maneuvers such as large loping circles to quiet, methodical maneuvers such as backing through a chute without fuss.
- 5. Showcase a quietness and willingness when "performing obstacles".**
 - Whether opening and closing gates or dragging a log, a horse should demonstrate confidence in their part of the task.
 - When crossing logs, they should demonstrate confidence and willingness to cross while also showing awareness of the obstacle and the ability to judge its distance/height.
 - These tasks are provided as an opportunity to showcase partnership. This should be clearly visible when executing these tasks.

* Youth/Green Horse/Novice divisions are allowed to trot rather than lope and can dismount to open/close gates and may be asked to lift or carry objects.

* Intermediate /Pro divisions will be expected to lope and open/close gates while mounted and may be asked to drag objects.

Expectations & Standards

Judges will seek out and reward those who embody the highest standards of practicality, stockmanship, and efficiency — the very qualities that keep ranches and agricultural operations thriving.

Judges should apply appropriate deductions when unnecessary stress is caused to the horse or cattle or when speed/hardness is used to make up for poor set-up.

The responsibility of the judge is to uphold the values essential to sound agricultural and stock-handling practices. In all classes, judges will prioritize productivity, efficiency, sustainability, safety, and workmanship. These are the cornerstones of practical ranch work and are to be reflected in every score awarded.

While these events are timed, it must be understood that speed alone is not the goal. Judges will be looking for competitors who demonstrate smooth, deliberate, and efficient work. The use of finesse, timing, and proper stockmanship is to be valued far above hurried or reckless action.

Judges will recognize and reward:

- Thoughtful planning and preparation.
- Competitors who handle stock with care, purpose, and control.
- Runs that display an absence of wasted movement and unnecessary commotion.
- Tasks performed with confidence, skill, and minimal disruption to stock.

Judges should apply deductions when:

- Excessive time is spent setting up for a task or handling stock.
- The competitor loses flow, struggles with control, or displays poor timing.
- Any action decreases the overall efficiency, productivity, or safety of the run.

Judges are expected to perform their duties with fairness, consistency, and integrity. All judging decisions are final and are to be respected without exception.

If adjustments or clarifications to class rules are necessary on the day of the event, they must first be approved in consultation with the BCBHA Board of Directors. Any changes must be clearly

communicated to all competitors prior to the start of the class.

Before each event, judges will hold a meeting to outline expectations, explain class-specific guidelines, what is not allowed, and address competitor questions. This meeting is essential to maintaining transparency, fairness, and consistency throughout the competition.

Section 6. Explanation of Scoring Breakdown

Scoring for all classes is designed to reflect the values of the **BC Bridlehorse Association** and **Art of the Bridlehorse**. Each class will be broken down to allow for horsemanship, stockmanship, smoothness and teamwork *to be* balanced against the ability to complete a task.

For example: Someone who rides well and considers their horse, the livestock and their teammates with respect but only two of their three steers **CAN** score higher than someone who sacrifices horsemanship or stockmanship to complete a task.

Another example: Someone who performs all the required maneuvers in their Ranch Horse Challenge class will only win if they can also demonstrate doing so with a high level of smoothness.

We do this by breaking all score cards down into four categories that will be valued as follows:

- **Execution of Task**
- **Smoothness**
- **Teamwork**
- **Reflection of Heritage**

Please Note:

Reflection of Heritage will be scored out of 10 points. To receive a full 10 points, we would expect to see a rider not only competing straight up in an old Spanish Spade Bit but also showcasing an **exceptional** degree of smoothness and competence. Full points for Reflection of Heritage will NOT be easy to attain; however, you do not have to be using traditional gear to reflect the heritage of the old Californios and receive Reflection of Heritage points.

One could demonstrate their reflection of heritage through their quiet, subtle communication, their ability to keep the cattle calm, their ability to read the cattle and use outstanding stockmanship to influence movement without upsetting the herd, or by traditional dress (hat, wild rag, vest), hackamores, mecates, and their overall ability to reflect our bridlehorse heritage.

Score Cards and Points – See APPENDIX B

Section 7. Acknowledgements

Thank you!

The **BC Bridlehorse Heritage Association** and **Art of the Bridlehorse** would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to everyone who participated in this unique competition! It is our intention to both preserve and promote traditional stockmanship and horsemanship, along with the rich history they embody, through education and events like this one.

To Our Competitors

This event would not be possible without the participation and dedication of so many skilled and passionate horsemen and women from across the province! Thank you for your willingness to travel, demonstrate, compete and share your knowledge while supporting your fellow riders and the BC Bridlehorse Heritage Association in our efforts to preserve and promote the traditional old Californio methods of horsemanship and stockmanship as they have evolved north of the border.

To our professional horsemen and women- a special thank you. Your dedication to these time-honored methods not only keeps them alive but also upholds ethical ranching practices and ensures they are passed on to future generations. Your daily commitment to preserving these traditions is invaluable, and we are truly grateful for your role in carrying them forward. Our Youth, Novice, and Intermediate riders rely on you for guidance, safety, and a positive example. It is a great responsibility, and we deeply appreciate your participation.

To the BC Bridlehorse Heritage Association Board of Directors

A heartfelt thank you to our dedicated team of Directors who work tirelessly year-round to sustain this association and support its members. Your efforts to unite the Bridlehorse community- across the province and beyond... **do not go unnoticed**.

Because of your commitment, those eager to learn and develop their bridlehorse skills can find the support they need, no matter where they live. Traditional bridlehorse gear makers can connect with those seeking their craftsmanship, and artists preserving this rich tradition through art and entertainment can reach their audiences.

Without the network built and upheld by the BCBHA, this event would not be possible. We are deeply grateful for all that you do!

Art of the Bridlehorse Volunteers and Sponsors

This event takes an army, and we are incredibly grateful to everyone who has contributed their time, financial support, services, expertise, and craftsmanship to the Art of the Bridlehorse. Without your generosity, this event simply would not happen.

Your contributions, whether through hands-on support, financial sponsorship, or in-kind donations- allow us to continue our mission of developing the fine bridled stock horse, supporting our ranching community, and preserving traditions brought north generations ago. The support of our sponsors also ensures that the Art of the Bridlehorse remains accessible to riders of all levels, with a special emphasis on providing opportunities for our youth riders.

Thank you for being an essential part of this tradition!

Looking ahead

Our goal is to unite the bridlehorse community in B.C., creating a space for learning, laughter, mentorship, and the celebration of the rich history and respectful practices of horsemanship and stockmanship that define the Art of the Bridlehorse—all while supporting the hardworking ranching communities that keep these traditions alive.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our sponsors, whose generosity makes it possible to uphold our mission and provide meaningful opportunities for riders of all levels. Your support ensures that these time-honored traditions continue to thrive for generations to come.

Until next year... Happy trails!

Section 8. Glossary of Terms

- Long/Working trot = Ground covering, engaged and forward two beat gait.
- Collected trot/Jog = Slower, shorter stride, two-beat gate.
- Lope = Relaxed three beat gait, western "canter".

Copyright © 2025 by the BC Bridlehorse Horsemanship Association and its directors. This Handbook was written by Christa Miremadi, Judy Bird, David Ciriani, Craig Bird, Brock Herman, Buddy Cardinal, Devanee Cardinal, and Amelie Zunk with consultation and input from Jasmine Bedford, Genevieve Fraser, and Kimberly Taylor. The authors retain sole copyright to this book. No reproduction of any kind of this material is allowed without permission of the authors.