

# How to Organize a 4-H Horse Club in YOUR County!!!



## Assess the interest in your county

- Be sure to include kids who own horses and those who do not. When trying to gauge interest, many counties will advertise an organizational Horse Club meeting at their school club meetings, in the newspaper and to their livestock or horse mailing lists.
- When you are setting up an organizational meeting, it is good to involve the parents as well. You may want to have a meeting with the adults first to decide on an organizational structure and then have a kick off party or cook-out as your first meeting to draw the kids

## Identify a volunteer or team of volunteers willing to take on a leadership role with your Horse Club

- Make sure the expectations on both sides are clear.
- Parents are great volunteers, but be sure your horse club leader is willing to work with all kids.
- Riding instructors are excellent potential horse club leaders. Be sure they will not favor one riding discipline over another and be sure they will involve all kids, not just those that ride or board at their barn.
- Remember, all volunteers must be screened and any who go overnight with kids or who are alone with kids (and most horse club volunteers do and are) must go through Certified Overnight Chaperone Training.
- Volunteers are crucial to the success of a county 4-H Horse Club. They offer the expertise, time and enthusiasm that is necessary to make your horse club function.



## Identify the County Extension person responsible for the county 4-H Horse Club

- Just as it is important to identify a volunteer to be a point person for the county 4-H Horse Club, it is imperative to have a County Extension contact for the horse club, too. This person can be a 4-H agent, an Ag agent, a program assistant, county secretary, or any other county Extension personnel, just so someone is responsible for keeping the volunteer leader and the Horse Club informed and so that the Horse Club knows who to come to with questions or problems.
- *A good working relationship between the county Extension personnel and the volunteer leader cannot be stressed enough!!! It is the basis for a successful 4-H Horse Club.*
- All registration forms, applications and skill workbooks (ex. Novice Horseman) must be signed by a County Extension Agent. This ensures eligibility of the 4-H'er, adherence to the rules, and permission from the county for a 4-H'er to participate in a statewide program or contest. The county agent's signature should be the last thing to go on the form, signifying that the information is accurate and correct.
- In some cases, the County Extension Agent may not have the subject matter expertise needed to make the judgement (ex. Novice Horseman book check). In this case, the agent can work with the Horse Club Leader and use his/her expertise to check the book, but the agent still signs the form. That is why it is so important to have communication, trust and a good relationship between the agent or volunteer. This cannot be stressed enough.



## Make Sure the Leaders Have the Skills and Tools They Need to Do the Job

- Many horse club leaders volunteer because they have tremendous horse knowledge. Many have not worked with kids a lot. Be sure you offer them the opportunity for youth development training.
- The opposite may also be true. Some great volunteers work with horse clubs and did not start with a lot of equine knowledge, but loved working with kids and learned the horse knowledge as they went along.



## Communication is the key to success!

- Per the county delivery system, information is sent from the state office to all county offices pertaining to horse related programs, events, and contests. No information is sent directly to volunteer horse club leaders. It is the county's responsibility to pass along the horse related information to their horse club leaders.
- Difficulty in receiving information is cited as Horse Club Leaders' major frustration, so you can head this off by having an organized system of information dissemination to your horse club. What works best in most counties is to have a horse club folder or mail box that the volunteer leader checks regularly.
- When items are sent from the State 4-H Office, we attempt to put a horse heading on all pertinent materials. This makes the horse related info easy to identify. If you would copy this information for your horse club leader and put it in their mailbox or folder, it ensures they get the appropriate information.
- Be sure to keep the original in the county office because many times, it contains a registration form that must be signed by the County Extension Agent and also, you will need an office copy if the leader loses their copy. Most event letters (Horse School, Judging, Quiz Bowl, Show) are on the web on the Georgia 4-H page in the Staff Only section and can be downloaded.



## Make sure all materials come through the county office

- Administration of your horse club correspondence should be handled through the county office. This is important for several reasons:
  - All information (letters, meeting notices, etc.) will be sent out to all participants and will be in a timely fashion.
  - This ensures there is no discrimination and all equality policies are followed.
  - The county office sees what is sent out and keeps abreast of the Horse Club activities.
- The county should keep the mailing list and send all correspondence. This list will be constantly updated by the horse club leader. The leader and the county office will need to work closely on this. There is no reason the horse club leader cannot have great input into the

content of the letters, but the County Extension Agent has the franking (or signing) privileges and will need to sign the letter.



## What are the Rules?

- The rules are there are no rules! At least not from the state level. Counties have the autonomy to set up their county Horse Club any way that meets the needs of their clientele. Of course, if counties or individuals participate in statewide contests or events, they must follow the rules for those contests.
- For example, the rules for participating in the State 4-H Horse Show are: (1) Participant must be an enrolled 4-H Club member, (2) 4-H'ers must own or lease their horse by a certain date, (3) must complete all or part of the Novice Horseman book. On the county level, the county can require more and many counties do. Some require a 4-H'er to attend a certain number of horse club meetings, participate in a fundraiser or community service project, do a demonstration, or other requirement. This is totally up to the county and will vary from place to place. **The State 4-H Office will not reverse the rules of the county 4-H office and no application or entry is accepted without the signature of the local County Extension Agent.**



## County of 4-H Enrollment

- As with all 4-H programs, the 4-H Horse Program requires the child to be enrolled in Georgia 4-H. A 4-H'er can enroll in the county they live in or the county in which they attend school. Also, Georgia 4-H offers the opportunity for a child to be enrolled in a county in which they do not live or attend school. The Awards Guidebook explains these special situations. However, positive youth development, not competitive advantage, should guide these decisions.
- All educational programs in 4-H, including horse clubs, are open to all youth. This means 4-H'ers may cross county lines to participate in non-competitive, educational meetings and programs. However, the 4-H'er must compete with their county of enrollment.
- If the decision is made for a child to enroll and compete in a county in which they do not live or attend school, a written agreement must be signed by the agent that is in their county of residence and the agent in

the county they wish to participate. This agreement must be updated each year. See the Awards Guidebook for more information.

## Activities of County 4-H Horse Club

- The structure of the county 4-H Horse Club can be as rigid or as loose as is deemed necessary by that individual county. Some clubs meet two times a month, some meet four times a year, most meet once a month. The examples in the packet, A How to Organize a Horse Club, are intended to give you ideas as you organize your county club.
- Involvement of 4-H'ers
- To the extent that you can, it is good to involve the youth in leadership roles, as in all 4-H programs. Most county horse clubs elect or appoint youth officers in addition to the adult leaders. This is just another way 4-H horse clubs can teach life skills to 4-H'ers and allow them to develop leadership skills.

## Involvement of 4-H Horse Club in total 4-H Horse Program

- 4-H horse clubs are just one of the many venues 4-H uses to entice young people to get involved, participate, learn subject matter skills and develop life skills that enhance them as a total person and enrich their lives. The 4-H horse program is so popular because it happens to be a subject matter that many young people enjoy.
- It is very important that 4-H horse clubs understand and remember that the 4-H Horse Program is part of the larger program of Georgia 4-H, which is a youth development organization. Therefore, it is important to remember that while equine is the vehicle that is used to deliver subject matter, positive youth development should be the basis of everything we do in the Georgia 4-H Horse Program.
- *In competitive events, sportsmanship, character and ethics should be emphasized as much as the subject matter and should be practiced just like other skills are practiced!*

## Utilize a variety of adult leaders

- County 4-H horse clubs can be so active and demanding it is easy for a volunteer to get burned out. It is a good idea to use several

volunteer adults rather than have one person do it all. It usually works best to have one overall leader or co-leaders, but utilize other adults as horse judging team coach, horse quiz bowl coach, meeting program chairman or even refreshment chairman or phone committee chairman. Delegation is the name of the game! One person cannot do it all and it will make your club stronger to have more adult involvement.

- Time limits are important. Volunteers are more apt to lend their service if they know it is for a finite time period. Also, if everyone knows all terms are for one year only, it will be easier to change leadership and you won't be in the awkward position to fire a volunteer.
- Written job descriptions are also important. If a volunteer knows exactly what is expected, it is easier to have follow through.



## Involve all kids in your horse club

- With so many styles and disciplines of riding and even different stables and riding instructors within a discipline, it is very easy for cliques to develop. When planning your horse club programs, be sure to offer programs that appeal to all riding disciplines (ex. Farriers, vets, etc.). It is educational for all kids to understand not only their riding discipline, but others as well. Therefore, it is good to visit many types of barns. For example, you could visit a reining horse farm one month and a saddle seat farm the next. Promoting harmony between riders of all disciplines will make your horse club run more smoothly.
- Along those same lines, be sure to offer programs and activities for kids who own horses as well as those who do not. Many 4-H'ers will not have the facilities, finances or parental support to own their own horse. In fact, the only statewide event that requires owning (or leasing) a horse is the State 4-H Horse Show. Therefore, to keep these kids interested and involved, you will need to plan some "off horse" activities as well. Quiz Bowl and Horse Judging are good for all kids.



## What resources are available?

- The Horse Industry Handbook is a notebook of materials developed by the American Youth Horse Council (AYHC). It covers most topics related to horse care and management and is a vital resource if you

plan to have a 4-H horse program in your county. It is the major resource for Horse Show, Quiz and a good source of material for DPA projects as well as Horse Club meetings. The cost is \$49.95 and Heather Kalino usually has copies for sale, which is faster than ordering from the AYHC. A Leader Guide is also available for an additional charge.

- For Horse Judging, there are 4-H manuals as well as a leader guide.
- The handbook for Horse Quiz Bowl is the Procedure for Play booklet. Sample questions are also available from past years from Heather Kalino. All questions are rewritten each year.
- The Extension Audio Visual Library has an extensive selection of video tapes that are horse related. Many are useful for practicing Horse Judging or for Horse Club meetings. Your county Extension office has a listing of these.

## Insurance

- As with all 4-H events, you will need to insure your local horse club activities. Most counties use American Income Life Insurance and that company typically is used for most statewide 4-H events as well. Some counties use what is termed the "Dollar a year policy." This policy covers a 4-H'er for one year and costs a dollar per person per year. With this policy you must insure all participants and the coverage is limited to accidents - illnesses are not covered. Also, if you are insuring a horse group, the cost is \$2 rather than one dollar. This dollar (\$2) a year policy is helpful when you have a group that is getting together often. It gives you a baseline of coverage in case you forget to get coverage one time. However, be advised that the coverage is less than you get with the 23 cents a day policy. 4-H does not endorse a particular company or intend to exclude any company for coverage. The American Income Life company has been widely used based on their competitive rates, benefits and history of excellent service.
- Whenever you have a big event or an overnight trip, you may choose to purchase a plan that offers both accident and sickness coverage, such as the American Income Life 23 cents a day insurance, even if you already have a dollar a year policy and certainly if you do not. The 23 cents a day policy (or plan 3 from American Income Life) is your best bet for coverage offered through this company. You will notice if the accident involves horses (or winter sports) the coverage is limited

to plan 1 rates. However, it is better to buy plan 3 coverage because for a few cents more, your non-horse related accidents and illnesses will be covered at the maximum rate. In other words, a 4-H'er who comes down with a virus at a trail ride that was insured at the 23 cents rate would be covered when the leader took her to the doctor, as would the child that tripped and sprained their ankle walking to the car. However, if the child has an accident involving a horse, the coverage is at the reduced rate.

- When you are participating at Statewide events (State Horse Show, Horse School, Horse Judging, Horse Quiz Bowl) the insurance is usually provided. Check your event letter or call the State 4-H office so you don't insure your kids if the insurance is already provided. This insurance covers transportation to and from the event also. You will need to know the policy number and travel with a claim form just in case someone needs to be treated on the way to an event.
- Be sure to refer to the Insurance brochures available at your County Extension Office. This information is subject to change and you want to be sure you have the most up to date information.



## Equine Liability Law

- There is a Georgia law entitled the Equine Immunity Act. This law states that "Under Georgia Law, an equine activity sponsor or equine professional is not liable for injury to or death of a participant in Equine Activities resulting from the inherent risks of equine activities, pursuant to Chapter 12 of Title 4 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated."
- This law also requires that horse owners comply with certain procedures including posting this warning in conspicuous locations. Please call Heather Kalino or Gary Heusner if you have specific questions or for more information.



## Finances

- Per University of Georgia Policy, all 4-H clubs must keep all of their funds in one county checking account and adhere to specific policies and procedures. This means that all county 4-H Horse Club Funds must be kept in this account. The Quick Books computer program that is used allows for separate funds to be kept within one account. Therefore, the horse club money can be managed separately while



still being in the general 4-H account.

- Methods of fund raising will vary from county to county. Some counties will do one overall fundraiser and divide the money between programs within the total 4-H program. Other county horse clubs will have separate fundraisers (with the knowledge and approval of the county extension office!) For their horse club alone.
- The amount of fundraising will vary from county to county as well. Some counties have very little budget and generally ask the members to absorb costs of activities. Other clubs have very successful fundraising activities and pay for all of the programs and activities of the horse club. Some counties will even raise enough funds to subsidize or pay for horse show or school for their 4-H'ers.
- Fundraisings, budgets and all other financial aspects of the Horse Club should be well discussed and coordinated by the county extension contact and the horse club leader. Funds and other gifts donated to 4-H can be considered by the giver as tax deductible gifts. However, be aware that the 4-H club is not exempt from paying sales tax.

 **GOOD LUCK Getting**  
**Started!!!** 