Miniature Horse 4-H Project Newsletter

CANADA
4-H Nova Scotia

This Miniature Horse Project Newsletter contains information specific to the Miniature Horse Project. Please use it in conjunction with the General 4-H Information Bulletin, so that you are aware of Achievement Day completion requirements as well as general opportunities and information pertaining to all 4-H members. This Project Newsletter, as well as the General 4-H Information Bulletin, will be updated each year, if necessary, based on changes made at the 4-H Nova Scotia Leadership Forum.

Welcome to the 4-H Miniature Horse Project! This newsletter will give you an overview of the Miniature Horse project, answer some of your questions concerning expectations of the project and provide you with project ideas and some resources. Project newsletters are an excellent reference to keep on hand to refer to throughout the year. Enjoy your year in the Miniature Horse project and when working on your project, remember to "Learn to do by Doing." If you have any questions, please contact your Regional Program Coordinator (RPC).

Miniature Horse Project Work Requirements

Showmanship is the project work requirement for the Miniature Horse Project. On Achievement Day, Miniature Horse members must complete showmanship with their own registered 4-H Miniature Horse to complete the project work requirement.

Your miniature horse must be one (1) year of age or older, be a mare or gelding, and measure 38 inches or less at the withers. Miniature Horses measuring more than 38 inches will not be eligible to compete at County or Provincial level competition. Please note if a miniature horse is being used in cart class, it must be three (3) years of age or older. Only showmanship will be done at Achievement Day.

At County Shows, Exhibitions, and 4-H Nova Scotia Provincial Show "Showmanship", "Pleasure Driving", "Barrels/Poles in Cart" (alternating between Poles and Barrels each year), "Obstacle", and "Jumping" classes will be available. 2025-2026 is a Barrels Year.

Miniature Horse members may show in a halter which is suitable to their attire.

Insurance:

All members registered within an equine project are required to provide Proof of Insurance to be a member within their project. This must be Equestrian Nova Scotia or equivalent insurance. Insurance can be purchased at: https://horsenovascotia.ca/Membership-Types and will be required to be shown with Livestock Registration information (4-H NS AGM 2021).

4-H Insurance does not cover project animals. Insurance coverage for animal liability, injury, or death is the animal owner's responsibility.

Back Numbers: Back numbers for Miniature Horse will be assigned and provided at 4-H Nova Scotia Provincial Show.

Dress Code: This dress code will be enforced at 4-H Nova Scotia Shows.

- Expensive clothing is not necessary

- All clothes must be neat, clean, and fit properly
- Comfortable, closed toed boots. Boots to be polished
- Hair must be neat, not in face (use hairnet, tie back or put up under hat)

Helmets:

- All 4-H Members must wear a SEI-ASTM approved equestrian helmet that is properly fitted and fastened at all times when driving or riding in a horse drawn vehicle at 4-H events.

Showmanship:

- Dress pants, belt, long long-sleeved shirt with collar (if a jacket is not worn)
- Boots with a heel

Driving:

- Drivers should be dressed conservatively according to the style of the present day.
- Dress pants or Dress (recommended long sleeve), tailored suit or slacks, a coat or jacket must be worn while appearing in any class, unless excused from doing so by the judge.
- Gloves and aprons or lap robes are optional (AMHA Rulebook 2025).

Other Considerations:

- Junior members competing in Driving must have a header (an individual senior member or parent who can assist with the horse). Junior Members must also be accompanied by a person who must also wear a helmet in the cart during driving classes.
- Chewing gum is NOT allowed
- No talking between exhibitors while showing

Livestock Registration

4-H members must select their 4-H animals by May 1st of the current 4-H year and must submit livestock registration information to the RPC by May 15th of the current 4-H year. Livestock Registration will only be accepted through the online Livestock Registration Form; if you need assistance with this form, please contact your RPC directly. This information is necessary to assist with county show/exhibition planning, including judges, class schedules, awards, etc. The following information must be submitted for Livestock Registration requirements: name of member, junior member/senior member, proof of insurance, name of animal, sex of animal, breed of animal, and date of birth of animal.

4-H animals may be substituted between the registration deadline of May 15th and Achievement Day in the case of injury, sickness, disease or death of the animal. If an animal is to be substituted prior to Achievement Day, pre-approval from the RPC is necessary. A vet certificate may be required. After Achievement Day, no substitutions are permitted. 4-H members who complete their livestock project with their own registered/approved animal on Achievement Day may use another 4-H member's 4-H animal in a showmanship class at county show/exhibition and the 4-H Nova Scotia Provincial Show.

4-H Nova Scotia Provincial Show Class & Sections:

Class #2: Section #11: Miniature Horse Showmanship (top junior and top senior miniature horse showman from each county are eligible to compete at 4-H Nova Scotia Provincial Show)

The top two (2) junior and top two (2) senior miniature horses in the In-Hand division and the top two (2) junior and top two (2) senior miniature horses in the Driving division will represent the county at the 4-H Provincial Show (Leadership Forum 2025). They will be selected by the accumulation of points

at county show. The In-Hand division consists of Obstacles and Jumping, and the Driving division consists of Pleasure Driving and Poles or Barrels. Provincial Show qualification for each division is calculated separately and members can qualify for Pro Show in only Driving, only In-Hand, or both divisions.

Class #54: Miniature Horse

Section 1:	Junior Miniature Horse Pleasure Driving
Section 2:	Senior Miniature Horse Pleasure Driving
Section 3:	Junior Miniature Horse Poles or Barrels (in cart)
Section 4:	Senior Miniature Horse Poles or Barrels (in cart)
Section 5:	Junior Miniature Horse Obstacle (In-Hand)
Section 6:	Senior Miniature Horse Obstacle (In-Hand)
Section 7:	Junior Miniature Horse Jumping (In-Hand)
Section 8:	Senior Miniature Horse Jumping (In-Hand)

Note: Members must qualify in the "Pleasure Driving" class in order to participate in the "Poles or Barrels" class.

Please note that the National Farm Animal Code of Practice should be followed when housing animals for 4-H events.

These standards can be found at: http://www.nfacc.ca/

******Please note that at the 4-H Nova Scotia Provincial Show mini horse members or their county must be prepared to bring their own gate to close off the end of a standing for their mini horse. Gates should be approximately 4ft in length but length requirement can vary in some barns. The requirement to bring gates or not will be indicated in a Provincial Show Newsletter.******

Showmanship:

Appearance of Horse - conformation not to be a factor

- Conditioning
- Grooming (clean coat, mane & tail free of tangles, hooves properly trimmed and clean)
- Trimming (mane & tail pulled, trimmed, flowing according to breed and type, trim ears, long hair on jaw, legs and pasterns)
- Tack (Leather or nylon should be soft, supple and clean. All brass fittings or chrome fittings should be shined. All tack must be in good repair and fit properly)

Showing in Ring

- Leading – Enter the ring at an alert walk. Walk in the direction indicated by the judge (generally counter clockwise). Walk on the animal's left side holding the lead shank in your right hand near the halter. The remainder of the lead is held safely and neatly in the left hand. Animal should lead at a ready walk. When moving a horse individually, be sure the judge has a clear view of the animal's action. Allow the animal enough lead that it can move freely in a straight line. The exhibitor should perform the showmanship pattern as directed by judge or ring steward.
- Posing – When posing your animal, members should stand towards the front of the animal in a position that you can always see the judge. Animals are shown on the halves to facilitate easier movement between members and the judge. Members should lead their animal straight to the judge so they can evaluate the front leg movement. Once the horse is in front of the judge the animal should be squarely set up for inspection. Members should move around to the side of the horse as the judge walks around. The judge should have full view of the animal at all times. It shows greater control and

training if the horse stays still as the member moves from side to side. When the judge moves to their position in front of the horse the exhibitor should move to the left side of the animal. When animal moves from the judge it should travel in a straight line so the judge can observe the horse's rear leg movement.

- Poise and Alertness – The animal and the showperson should be alert at all times and aware of the judge's position. The showperson should exhibit sportsmanlike behavior. Show your animal at all times and respond quickly to questions and requests from judge.

Driving Classes:

"Pleasure Driving":
General Rules:

- Miniature horse must be three (3) years of age or older for safety reasons.
- The driving cart must have a basket.
- A whip must be carried in hand or on cart in all driving classes.
- Competitors should strive to present an appropriate turnout. "Appropriate" to indicate the balance and pleasing appearance of the combination of horse and vehicle. Factors determining the above include compatible size, type, and weight of horse and vehicle.
- It is the responsibility of each competitor to ensure that the harness and vehicle are in good repair, clean and fit properly, and structurally sound. Bridles should fit snugly to prevent catching on a cart or other pieces of harness, and under no conditions should a bridle be removed from a horse while it is still attached to a cart. Horses must be serviceably sound and must not show evidence of lameness, broken wind, or impairment of vision in both eyes. It is also the responsibility of each competitor to ensure that their horse or horses are physically fit to fulfill the tasks required of them.
- Horses should never be left unattended while attached to a cart
- The judge must excuse from competition an unsafe cart, or an unruly horse. It is permissible to talk to your horse in a subdued tone of voice, if necessary. Clucks for starting, "walk on" "trot" and "whoa" are the more accepted terms. Any tendency on the part of the driver to shout, whistle, or talk loudly to the horse should be curtailed. In the arena, the less said, the better. A driver should strive to control the horse's movements with minimal vocal aids.

Pleasure Driving Reinmanship

- Judged primarily on the ability and skill of the driver. To be shown both ways of the arena at a walk, collected trot, and working trot. Drivers shall be required to rein back. All drivers chosen for a workout must be worked both ways of the arena at any gait requested by the Judge and may be asked to execute a figure of eight and perform any other appropriate tests. To be judged 75% on handling of reins and whip (A whip must be carried in hand or on cart in all driving classes), control, posture and overall appearance of driver, and 25% on the condition of harness and vehicle, and neatness of attire.

Pleasure Driving Working

- Judged primarily on the suitability of a horse to provide a pleasant drive. To be shown both ways of the arena at a walk, collected trot, and working trot. To stand quietly, both on the rail and while lined up, and rein back. All entries chosen for a workout must be worked both ways of the arena at any gait requested by the Judge, and may be asked to execute a figure of eight.

Clarification of Gaits:

Gait requirements: Pleasure Driving is to be shown in both ways of the arena/ring at a walk, collected trot, and working trot. Horses will enter the ring counter-clockwise.

Walk: A free, regular forward moving 4-beat gait. The horse should walk energetically but calmly, with even and determined steps.

Collected trot: The horse should maintain forward impulsion while showing submission to the bit. The trot is slower and more collected.

Working trot: This is a clear but not excessive increase in pace and length of stride. The horse goes forward freely and straight, engaging the hind legs with good hock action, on a taut but light rein, the position being balanced and unconstrained. The steps should be as even as possible. The hind feet touch the ground in the foot prints of the forefeet. Excessive speed will be penalized.

Halt: Horses and cart should be brought to a complete square stop without abruptness or veering. At the halt, horses should stand attentive, motionless, and straight, with the weight evenly distributed over all four (4) legs, and be ready to move off at the slightest indication from the driver.

Rein back: This is a backwards movement in which the legs are raised and set down simultaneously in diagonal pairs with the hind legs remaining well in line. To be performed in two parts: (1) Rein back at least four steps, unhurried, with head flexed and pushing back evenly in a straight line using light contact and quiet aids. (2) Move forward willingly to former position using the same quiet aids.

Turnout

- Grooming and trimming of horse - 35 points
- Appearance of Exhibitor - 30 points
- Cleanliness, adjustment of tack, and appropriateness of harness and vehicle - 35 points

"Barrels in Cart"

1. Uses the regular cloverleaf pattern
2. Horses should be three (3) years of age or older with use of cart. The cart used can either be a 2-wheeled roadster or pleasure cart.
3. Make this a timed event and try not to let your mini break in trot, go off pattern, or knock over pylons.

"Pole Bending in Cart"

1. Six (6) poles/pylons to be used.

2. Gait required: Trot. One (1) break in trot is forgiven.

3. Miniature horses must be three (3) years of age or older for safety reasons.

4. The cart used can either be a 2-wheeled roadster or pleasure cart.

6. Follows regular poles pattern that can be found in the NS Light Horse Project Regulations and Standards booklet.

7. Disqualifications - off pattern, crossing start/finish line (except at beginning and end of pattern), and major gait break (not corrected immediately).

8. Time Penalties - Break in Gait and knocking over pole/pylon time penalty

In-Hand Classes (NEW for 2026!):

"Obstacle (In-Hand)":

In-hand obstacle courses are the equivalent to the trail class seen in the light horse project except you and your horse do them in halter and lead. Members will navigate their horse, in-hand, through a pattern containing at least 6 obstacles. Gaits/maneuvers may include walk, trot, halt, back up, side pass, pivot, and maneuvering the front and hind end of the horse.

Touching the horse is prohibited. Handlers are permitted to carry a whip, which can be used to guide the horse, but should not touch the horse. Using whip to hit the horse will result in elimination.

Typical obstacles are mailboxes, carry obstacles, cones, walking over tarps & bridges, jumping cavalettis, walk or trot poles, back through, sidepass, and many other things dreamed up by the course designer. Judges can dismiss any obstacle they deem unsafe or unfit to use. Suggested obstacles and examples can be found in the American Miniature Horse Association Rulebook under Obstacle Classes Halter/Driving letter I on pages S-55 to S-57.

Spacing and height for walk/trot over poles shall be:
a. Walkovers must be a minimum of twelve (12) inches up to a maximum of sixteen (16) inches apart.
b. Trot overs must be a minimum of sixteen (16) inches up to a maximum of twenty-four (24) inches apart.
c. Walk/trot over poles must be no more than six (6) inches from the ground to the top of the pole

Prohibited Obstacles: Flames, dry ice, fire extinguisher, animals, tires, stair steps, rocking or moving bridges, water box with floating or moving parts. Logs/poles elevated in a way that permits such to roll.

Attire & Tack: Handlers wear Western type showmanship outfits with a helmet or Western hat. Tack requirements for this class are simple -- the horse must wear a halter and lead. Any halter + lead (with or without chain) combo is allowed. Show halters welcome but not required.

"Jumping (In-Hand)":

For the In Hand Jumping class, the handler must navigate the horse over a series of jumps in a particular pattern. This is a timed event —the fastest time with the fewest faults wins regardless of way of going. The class begins and ends with the horse and handler passing through cones/timers. Circling once upon entering the ring and once upon leaving the ring is permissible, but not after crossing the starting line. The minimum age for a horse to enter a jumper class is 3 years old.

A jump off following the same course will be done if necessary for a tie breaker.

Faults are obtained by knocking down a rail (4 second penalty faults) or refusing a fence (3 second penalty faults). Causes for elimination in the Jumping class include going off course, circling between jumps (except to retake a fence after refusal), three refusals, carrying a whip, an unsound horse and fall of either horse or handler.

Before the start of the class the exhibitors are invited to walk the course.

The courses for Jumpers are usually a bit more complicated than a Hunter course. They can include roll backs, combinations, and broken lines. Course diagrams must show, with arrows, the direction each obstacle must be taken, and markers or a line must indicate the start and finish of the course.

Handlers are allowed to jump the fences with their horses. However, it is preferred that the handler swings out around the left side of the fence and lifts the lead over the standard as the horse jumps. The handler's hand follows the horse's head in the air, and most handlers maintain light but consistent contact with their horse throughout the course.

Jump Specifications:

- Courses are to include 5 to 8 jumps.
- Fences range from 12 to 24 inches in height and are to be a minimum of 5 ft wide.
- All jumps must include a ground line, and standards can be no higher than 40 inches.
- Jumps can include fillers such as boxes, gates, lattice, straw bales, and flowers.
- No solid fences/fixed rails. All jumps must be able to collapse for safety reasons.
- Jump spacing: a minimum of 18 feet between jumps, with the exception of a combination fence. Combination jumps should be set approximately 12 feet apart.
- It is recommended that jump rails be made of 1-1 1/2" schedule 40 PVC piping or other suitable lightweight material with jump cups. This is easier on mini horse legs

*** A guide for leaders and county show organizers on how to create jumps has been developed by the 4-H NS Horse Committee and will be added to the Miniature Horse Page of the 4-H NS website.***

Attire & Tack: Handlers wear Western type showmanship outfits. Because this is a timed event sneakers are allowed and hats/helmets are excused for this class only. Tack requirements for this class are simple -- the horse must wear a halter and lead. Any halter + lead (with or without chain) combo is allowed. Show halters welcome but not required. Front leg wraps and/or boots are optional.

Resources:

Equestrian Nova Scotia: 4-H Members do have the opportunity to join Equestrian Nova Scotia. There are both Individual and Family rates available and with membership comes Insurance - Accident and Liability, etc. There are also other insurance options available with the membership. For more information, contact Equestrian Nova Scotia at nsefmembership@sportnovascotia.ca or visit the website at www.horsenovascotia.ca.

The American Miniature Horse Official Standard of Perfection (taken/edited from the Official Website of the AMHA - www.amha.org/)

Project Meeting Ideas:

Veterinarian presentation on horse diseases; judging practices at neighboring horse stables; a session with a farrier about hoof care and proper shoeing; visit to a horse breeding farm; many horse breed organizations have audio-visual material, check with registered horse owners in your area; a session on proper care and safe tacking of your horse or pony; judging practices with other 4-H Clubs; fun trail rides or horse shows.

Contagious/Infectious Disease & Quarantine:

4-H members, leaders, parents and livestock owners are reminded that 4-H Achievement Days and shows are showcases for the 4-H program, and the agricultural industry in this province. They are reminded that infectious diseases can be transmitted during transport, as well as at the show. As such, it is strongly recommended for the protection of the public, participants, and the animals at the show, that animals having or showing signs of infectious diseases not be brought to shows. As well, livestock exhibitors and owners must understand that in attending 4-H Shows, there is a risk of their animal contracting disease regardless of the best efforts of all involved.

If you suspect that your animal has a contagious/infectious disease, please contact your local veterinarian immediately and learn more about the consequences, treatment, and transmission of the disease.

The brochure, "Fact Sheet: Animal Health and Safety Best Practices" is available. If you wish to receive a copy by mail or email, please contact your Regional Program Coordinator. It contains important information for all livestock members on this topic and will be critical to review with 4-H Clubs, livestock owners, and your local veterinarian when making decisions about attending 4-H Achievement Days and shows.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Activity Involving Animals</th></tr>
<tr><td>Involving Animals refers to activities in which members are working directly with animals or in a location with animals.

(Examples: Livestock members training, fitting and showing, clubs hosting livestock shows or petting farms, groups visiting fairs, farm tours.)</td><td>High-risk Activity
The nature of the activity or the presence of hazards pose a foreseeable risk of harm, illness, or injury to participants.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Risk Management Strategies
Safety information and recommendations contained in this safety checklist are believed to reflect best practice to reduce risk. The suggested risk management strategies are considered minimum standards for livestock handling.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Training and Preparation
☐ All youth members and their parents/guardians are informed of potential risks involved in the activity, as well as the safety rules and procedures.
☐ Instruction on safety precautions is received from a trained leader or an experienced instructor who is capable of demonstrating the skills and safety precautions.
☐ Animal behavior and handling techniques are reviewed by a trained leader or an experienced instructor who is capable of explaining animal behavior and handling techniques.
☐ All sessions are conducted in a safe environment.
☐ Safety rules and procedures are learned prior to participation.
☐ Skills/movements are learned in proper progression.
☐ All youth members and their parents/guardians are informed of the equipment/clothing required for the activity.
☐ Emergency contact and medical information for all participants will be on hand throughout the event, as well as dedicated phones for emergencies.
☐ A first aid kit will be available.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Supervision
☐ Adheres to Youth Safety Supervision Policy, Rule of Two and Supervision Ratios.
☐ Safety rules and procedures are enforced throughout the activity.
☐ Emergency action plan is in place to deal with accidents/injuries.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Facility
☐ Respect biosecurity protocols of the facility.
☐ Ensure activity area is free of hazards/debris.
☐ Proper lighting and ventilation, when applicable.
☐ Safety rules/regulations are posted/reviewed prior to the activity.
☐ Indoor facility has a clearly marked emergency exit.</td></tr>
</table>

- ☐ Animals should be worked with in an enclosed space, with proper safety exits, such as an arena or pen to prevent animals from getting loose.
- ☐ When in a public venue, use gates and signage to separate the public traffic flow from animal movement.
- ☐ When in a public venue have signage regarding handwashing and touching animals.
- ☐ Animals should be safely and securely tied or caged when not being handled according to animal welfare standards to keep animals and people safe.
- ☐ Animals should have access to food and water according to animal welfare standards.
- ☐ Handwashing stations to be available for members and the public after handling animals.

Animals

- ❑ Ensure animals are healthy and suitable for use in the activity.
- ❑ Where applicable, follow all animal transportation regulations.
- ❑ Where applicable, ensure animals are tagged properly.
- ❑ Where applicable follow quarantine recommendations after an event.
- ❑ Ensure animal owners are aware of their responsibility to have insurance coverage for their animals, 4-H Canada holds no insurance coverage for animals.

Equipment

- ☐ Equipment to be used is suitable and in good condition.
- ☐ Equipment should be cleaned and sanitized following best practices.
- ☐ Equipment is checked by a qualified person before every session.
- ☐ Halters and collars to be properly fitted to ensure good control and animal comfort.
- ☐ Instructions are given regarding the proper use and maintenance of equipment.
- ☐ Leaders check to ensure that each youth has the required materials prior to participation.
- ☐ Leaders ensure that there is a First aid kit and a designated emergency phone are available

Clothing/Footwear

- ☐ Appropriate and properly fitted footwear is worn. For example, steel toed boots are recommended for large livestock.
- ☐ Appropriate clothing is worn. For example: Helmets are required for horseback riding/driving.

Inclusion

- ☐ The activity is suitable to all participating youth member's age, ability, mental condition, and physical condition.