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Hot Springs County Hosts 4-H Ranch Horse Show

Hot Springs County 4-H hosted the first ever County 4-H Ranch Horse Show in Arkansas on March 7 at Whiskey Ridge Ranch Arena in Malvern. Classes for the show included Ranch Trail, Reining, Ranch Riding, Ranch Roping and Ranch Cutting. Judging services were donated by Earl Pepper. The High Point Exhibitor went to Dusty Walters.

The Ranch Horse Division started in Arkansas 4-H about two years ago and is gaining popularity rapidly. We want to wish these youth and all the others competing in upcoming District events good luck!



Pictured left to right are Dusty Walters, Witt Walters, Michaela Moder, Hannah Helms, Audri Winfrey, Javani Gonzales and Brody Smith.

Arkansas 4-H District and State Show Are Just Around the Corner

By the time this issue has hit your hands, many youth in Arkansas will have been preparing for District and State 4-H horse shows for 2015. There are four district 4-H horse shows that are followed by the state 4-H roping in May and the state 4-H show in July. In order to be eligible to show at the state 4-H horse show, exhibitors must show at their respective district show first.

To find out when/where your district show is, you can contact your county extension agent or check our website at <http://www.uaex.edu/farm-ranch/animals-forages/horses/>. All registration is done through 4-H online. Each show has its own registration deadline, so be sure to check those dates as well.

The 4-H horse shows have an impressive array of classes. You will find

speed, halter, dressage, english, western and ranch horse classes. We are also proud to award a buckle to each class winner, saddles to division all-around winners (Judged Performance, Speed and Ranch Horse, for a total of five saddles) at the state show.

From the state show, exhibitors will be eligible to represent Arkansas at the Southern Regional 4-H Horse Show. This year, it is in Perry, Georgia, and we expect to have several contestants from Arkansas.

District 4-H horse shows for 2015 are scheduled as follows.

- Southwest District Horse Show, May 29, 2015, at Saline County Fairgrounds
- Northwest District Horse Show, June 6, 2015, at Pauline Whitaker Arena in Fayetteville

Mark Russell, Assistant Professor - Equine, Editor

- Delta District Horse Show, June 16, 2015, at White County Fairgrounds
- Central Arkansas District 4-H Horse Show, June 23, 2015, at White County Fairgrounds.

4-H Championship Roping

- May 30, 2015, at Saline County Fairgrounds. Classes include Tie-Down Roping, Team Roping and Goat Tying. Boys and Girls Divisions.

The State 4-H Horse Show

- July 14-17, 2015, State Horse Show, White County Fairgrounds in Searcy

Special Events at the State 4-H Horse Show

- ◇ Western Horsemanship and Showmanship Clinic
- ◇ Horse Judging Contest
- ◇ Hippology Contest
- ◇ Speaking Competitions



Ranch cutting at last year's state horse show.

For questions about the 4-H Horse program or any other Extension horse related issues, please contact Mark Russell at 501-671-2190 or email mrrussell@uaex.edu. You can also check this site regularly for updates: <http://www.aragriculture.org/horses.htm>.

Halter Breaking Your Horse

Last month I wrote about getting a two year old ready to ride and listed some drills you and your horse can work on to make the riding process a little easier when the time comes. This month, I'd like to continue that discussion and talk about the "halter breaking" portion in greater detail.

Getting your horse halter broke can and probably should be the very first type of training you do with your horse. In reality, it can start the first week or so they are on the ground. However, you don't want to leave the halter on the baby all the time due to safety concerns. With a halter on, your foal (or grown horse for that matter) takes the risk of getting caught on objects in the pasture or paddock. If it were to get caught on something, much damage can be done in a hurry, causing serious injury or death.

First and foremost, most halter breaking sessions for young or older horses do not need to last for more than 10 to 15 minutes at a time. Here are some other considerations:

- The longer you work with your horse, the greater stress levels tend to be. Shorter amounts of time achieved on a consistent basis have proven to be easier on the horse both mentally and physically.
- Like most training activities, halter breaking is best done in an area that is comfortable for the horse. If you are halter breaking a foal that hasn't been weaned, the best location is most often a stall. You can lead the mare in the stall and allow her to eat while you work with the foal. This area should be comfortable for both foal and mare.

- If the horse you are wanting to halter break is older and/or won't allow you to just walk up to them and touch them, take your time by making contact with them in small intervals. It is also best to not rope them. The younger the horse, the easier it will be to gain their trust. If possible, start making contact with your foal as soon as possible. If you wait till they are weaned, your own safety becomes a greater concern as the horse gets older. I have attempted to halter break horses that were 4 and 5 years old. It's a very stressful process for all involved.
 - ◇ You can feed them in a small area and work to gain their trust. Avoid sudden movements and be ready to take your time.
- Initially begin by rubbing on their head and neck. If you cannot successfully rub their poll and ears, getting a halter on them will be very tough. Halter breaking is much like riding: there isn't much need to progress to the next step until you have mastered the previous or current step. Take your time, there will always be "next time." After you can successfully rub their ears and poll for several minutes for a few days in a row, use the lead rope next. Complete the same tasks, only this time use the rope instead of your rope. Finally, use the halter to make contact. If your horse stands quietly and patiently, proceed to putting the halter on their head. The first few times you put the halter on, don't worry about leading them. Put it on and take it off several times. This part should be mastered before attempting anything more advanced. If you hurry the process in an effort to lead

them, stress may ensue and they could possibly try to avoid you when they see you and the halter coming towards them in the future.

- By this point, hopefully you can put the halter on them and take it off of them comfortably. You should now begin to think about leading. Start by simply flexing your horse to each side. The moment they flex and give their head to the pressure, you should release. Repeat this process several times. If your horse moves while flexing, that is certainly okay. Allow them to move freely during this process without pulling on the lead rope too much.
- After a few sessions of flexing and comfortably putting the halter on and taking it off, you should begin to ask for some type of motion with their legs. If there is any type of resistance from the horse or pulling back at this point, take a few steps back in the process and create more trust. If there is no resistance and your horse is listening, feel free to advance to asking for motion from your horse.

- o You are simply taking the flexing part of the previous exercise and asking for more movement when you pull to the side. This teaches the horse to move when there's some type of pressure. You are essentially asking the horse to step to the side and walk in a small circle. Any small step is good and should be rewarded. The first few times you ask for a step, be sure to emphasize the reward. It is best to not stand in front of the horse and pull. This teaches them to brace against the halter and lead rope rather than give to pressure. This can also create tension between you and the horse and can take away the trust you have hopefully gained at this point. The end goal of teaching a horse to lead in this manner is to be able to walk your horse in a circle with ease and slowly make that circle bigger and bigger over time to the point that you are eventually walking in a straight line. Don't forget to do both sides of the horse in this manner.

Tips for Teaching Your Horse to Tie

This article is part of a series that discusses getting your horse ready to ride. Last month I discussed various strategies for getting your young horse halter broke. This month I would like to discuss methods of teaching your horse to tie.

Part of the process of getting a young horse ready to ride is teaching them to stand tied while you saddle them or groom them. One of the benefits of teaching them to tie is that it also teaches them patience in the process. Your horse will be very difficult to groom and saddle if they don't know how to tie. And if they're difficult to saddle, the likelihood of them being easy to ride also will be slim at best.

Begin with being comfortable with haltering and leading. Just like in any subject area, it's much easier to master the current or previous level before advancing. Hopefully by this point you have been spending some time with your youngster and these tasks have been accomplished.

- The first time you tie them, make sure that you have used either a breakaway buckle on the lead rope or you have tied the rope in such a way that you can

pull it loose should the horse pull or sit back. You want to be able to release them immediately should the need arise.

- The first time they are tied, keep them tied for about 30 seconds. Then increase over time. Doing this will allow them to see that there is always an end. If they are patient and standing good, that end should come sooner.
- It is also a good idea to stand with them and give them some confidence when they need it. If they move around a lot, consider untying them and longe.
- Like many other training activities, if you can tie them in a place that they are comfortable – such as their stall or paddock – it will help them feel more comfortable.
- It is also wise to tie them to an object that is solid. Panels or gates are not solid and not meant to be tied to.

Keep the process as simple as possible. If you feel like your horse isn't handling being tied very well, it is better to back the pressure off and work only in small increments.