

Cover



# IMHA OFFICIAL HANDBOOK

YOUR GUIDE TO THE RULES AND POLICIES OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL MUSTANG HORSE ASSOCIATION



# IMHA Overview

# IMHA Overview

## Purpose

The International Mustang Horse Association (IMHA) exists to promote, preserve, and celebrate mustangs beyond adoption, through education, competition, and community. All human members agree to uphold IMHA's mission, rules, and animal welfare standards.

## Tagline/Motto

"International Mustang Horse Association: Supporting Mustangs Beyond Adoption."

## Mission

The International Mustang Horse Association (IMHA) empowers mustang owners by providing resources, education, and community support to help their horses thrive beyond adoption. Our mission is to showcase the versatility of trained mustangs, create opportunities for owners to achieve their goals, through competition and development, and foster a strong network of educated enthusiasts dedicated to their success.

## Vision

The International Mustang Horse Association (IMHA) is dedicated to supporting mustang owners beyond adoption, helping them unlock the full potential of their horses. We aim to provide resources, education, and a thriving community where owners and trainers can set and achieve meaningful goals. By spotlighting the versatility and uniqueness of trained mustangs, we create opportunities for enthusiasts to connect, learn, and celebrate their horses across various disciplines. Through collaboration, competition, and advocacy, we ensure that adopted mustangs have a path forward to a successful and fulfilling future where their value is increased through competitive achievement.

## Values

- Humane, empathetic, and kind actions that prioritize horse welfare.
- Education rooted in horsemanship.
- Meaningful relationships between horses and humans, as well as within the community.

- A culture of encouragement and support.
- Mustang and human growth and development beyond adoption.

## Elevator Speech

The International Mustang Horse Association (IMHA) helps Mustang owners succeed beyond adoption. We provide resources, education, and a supportive community to showcase the versatility of trained mustangs and create opportunities for owners to reach their goals. Whether you're a trainer, rider, or simply passionate about these incredible horses, IMHA connects you with the tools and people to ensure your mustang has a successful and fulfilling future.

## History

The International Mustang Horse Association (IMHA) was founded in 2025 under Live Equestrian LLC to become the premier organization for registering mustangs and providing them a place to showcase their talents **throughout their entire career**—not just at adoption.

IMHA was started by [Scott DePaolo](#), [Wendy Hensley](#), and [Teddy Franke](#), each with deep roots in horsemanship, mustang training, and education. With firsthand experience placing, training, and promoting mustangs, they saw the need for an organization that could support these horses beyond the adoption pen.

IMHA is still being built—with the support of programs like Teens & Oregon Mustangs, and through the passion of countless horsemen, trainers, owners, and enthusiasts as well as the **first 78 founding members** who are dedicated to the future of the American Mustang. This is more than a registry. It's a growing movement to give mustangs a place to be recognized, to shine, and to thrive—for life. IMHA isn't just for professionals—it's for everyone who believes in the value, versatility, and heart of the mustang. Whether you're a trainer, a youth competitor, a weekend trail rider, or a lifelong mustang fan, there's a place for you here. Your mustang has a story. Let it be recognized. Get involved. Be counted. Ride with us.

# Membership

# Membership *(Owner/Exhibitor Required for individuals to earn points)*

IMHA opened its roster for membership in September 2025. As of January 1, the organization proudly recognizes 78 active, card-carrying members. These individuals were the first to step forward and help establish the foundation of IMHA, and they will forever be recognized as **Founding Members**. Their early commitment helped shape the standards, culture, and direction of IMHA from the very beginning.

## Divisions

### Amateur

An Amateur earns less than 50% of their income from horse-related activities. Amateurs may teach lessons, run camps, or offer limited equine services without losing amateur status. Amateurs may compete in amateur divisions or may elect to compete in professional divisions.

### Professional

A Professional earns 50% or more of their income from horse-related activities, including training, coaching, judging, or presenting horses. Professionals may compete in professional or combined divisions and may host IMHA-approved events and clinics. Professionals are not permitted to compete in amateur divisions unless the class is designated as combined.

### Youth

A Youth is any individual under the age of 18. Youth may compete in youth divisions through the membership year in which they turn 18. If a youth member's birthday occurs during an active membership year, they may complete that membership year as a youth competitor before transitioning to an amateur or professional classification.

## Amateur Status Rules

IMHA takes a flexible and practical approach to amateur status. IMHA recognizes that amateur participants often contribute meaningfully to the horse industry by teaching lessons, running camps, or offering services within their level of experience and ability. It's important to build the horse industry at a grassroots level by encouraging these opportunities while still promoting fair competition. IMHA divisions are structured to **allow**

**amateurs to compete in professional divisions** when they choose, and to allow show management to combine amateur and professional divisions when appropriate and clearly designated. Unless a show is specifically designated as a combined division, **professional riders are not permitted** to compete in amateur divisions.

- Amateurs found to be conducting professional activities related to horsemanship beyond 50% of their taxable income may be asked to change their status in the following year.
- Members may apply to change status from Amateur to Professional at any time, but not vice versa within the same competition year.
- Professionals may become amateurs at the beginning of the show year if their status changes

## Membership Suspension & Revocation

Membership may be suspended or revoked for:

Violations of IMHA Rules or the Animal Welfare Policy.

Unsportsmanlike conduct.

Fraudulent activity (e.g., falsified entries, misrepresented horse registration).

Failure to pay fees or fines.

Actions detrimental to the reputation and mission of IMHA

In the event of a perceived misconduct IMHA will convene a committee of review consisting of three professional members (MPs). These members will review the misconduct and make a recommendation for suspension or other disciplinary action to the IMHA directors. If the committee of review deems the alleged misconduct is unwarranted there will be no further action. Suspended members lose all membership privileges until reinstated.

## Appeals

Members have the right to appeal disciplinary actions to the IMHA Executive Directors.

Appeals must be submitted in writing within 30 days of the disciplinary notice. IMHA Executive Board will determine a course of action through a majority vote.

## Pricing and Benefits

### Adult Amateur Membership \$80

For individuals 18 years or older.

Must not earn more than 50% of annual income from equine-related professional activities.

Eligible for Amateur divisions in shows.

May not accept payment for riding horses in IMHA events that are not owned by the member.

### **Adult Professional Membership - \$100**

For individuals 18 years or older who derive income from equine training, instruction, or related services.

Eligible for Open/Professional or similar divisions.

May conduct clinics, training, and accept payment for equine services.

May be asked to serve on temporary governance or disciplinary committees.

Are expected to help maintain IMHA standards and policies.

Are eligible to apply to become Mustang Professionals (MP's)

### **Youth Membership - \$50**

For individuals under 18 years old.

Eligible for youth-only classes, awards, and programs.

Must compete only in youth divisions.

Requires parent or guardian consent.

Membership cost is \$50 annually

## **Membership Requirements**

- Must complete an official IMHA Membership Application. (Online)
- Membership is for one calendar year from the date the application is received.
- **Membership will auto renew unless the member cancels payment in their online profile.**
- Members must agree to abide by all IMHA Rules, Code of Conduct, and the Animal Welfare Policy.
- Must notify IMHA of any changes in contact information or membership status (e.g., Amateur to Professional).

# Horse Registration

# Horse Registration (required for horses to earn points)

## Mustang Eligibility Requirements

### Origin

Only mustangs adopted through the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Forest Service, or another recognized government adoption program subject to the Wild Horse and Burro Act are eligible for IMHA registration at this time.

### Identification

Each mustang must have a freemark, chip or other identifying mark, which serves as the primary unique identifier for IMHA registration. The freemark number must match the paperwork submitted with the application. Photos must be submitted with an application for registration.

## Registration Types

### Temporary Registration

Available for mustangs under active BLM adoption status (not yet titled).

REGISTERED MUSTANG	REGISTRATION NUMBER	
<i>Mustang Sally</i>	00000	
OWNER OF RECORD JOHN SMITH	IMHA MEMBER NUMBER N/A	SEX M
DATE OF REGISTRATION 08/07/2025	DATE OF CAPTURE UNKNOWN	
ID/TAG/CHIP/FREEMARK 10000000000000	ESTIMATED BIRTH YEAR UNKNOWN	
WILD TO WINNING NOMINATION YES		
		
TEMPORARY REGISTRATION - 2025/2026		

## Sealed Registration

Available for titled mustangs (ownership officially transferred from BLM to adopter, verified by BLM Title Certificate).

REGISTERED MUSTANG	REGISTRATION NUMBER	
<i>Mustang Sally</i>	00000	
OWNER OF RECORD JOHN SMITH	IMHA MEMBER NUMBER N/A	SEX M
DATE OF REGISTRATION 08/07/2025	DATE OF CAPTURE UNKNOWN	
ID/TAG/CHIP/FREEZEMARK 10000000000000	ESTIMATED BIRTH YEAR UNKNOWN	
WILD TO WINNING NOMINATION YES		

SEAALED REGISTRATION



## Required Documentation

Applicants must submit: A completed IMHA Mustang Registration application form (online)  
A frezemark number and photo (for Temporary Registration).  
A copy of the BLM Title Certificate (for Sealed Registration).  
Four clear focused photos in good lighting from the front back and either side.

## Registration Fees

Temporary Registration: \$45 — valid for one calendar year; **points earned will transfer once the horse is sealed.**

Sealed Registration: \$90 — one-time, permanent registration for titled mustangs.

Transfer of Ownership: \$25 — required within 30 days of a change in ownership to maintain points.

There will be a late fee of an additional \$25 for transfers received after 100 days.

## Rules Regarding Registration

Owners may apply for Sealed Registration upon receiving the BLM title.

The horse's freemark must be verified by photo and number again at the time of sealing.

All points earned during the Temporary Registration period transfer to the permanent record.

A horse that is already titled may immediately apply for a sealed registration and is not required to have a temporary registration.

## How to Register

1. Complete the IMHA Mustang Registration Form (available online).
2. Attach required BLM paperwork, clear freemark photos, and horse photos.
3. Pay the applicable registration or transfer fee.
4. Receive a unique IMHA Registration Number - required for all IMHA approved events.

*Please allow 20 business days for the registration certificate to be mailed.*

*If a registration number is needed sooner it can be requested by email.*

## Point Accumulation Rules

Mustangs must be officially registered (Temporary or Sealed) before they can earn points in IMHA events.

Points will not be applied retroactively for activities prior to registration

Horses with expired Temporary Registration will not earn points until renewed or sealed.

All points earned under a Temporary Registration will be applied to a Sealed Registration when it is submitted.

## Transfer of Ownership

IMHA must be notified within 30 days of any transfer of horse ownership.

The new owner must submit:

- A transfer form (back of registration certificate)
- A \$25 transfer fee to maintain continuity of the horse's points and records.

All accumulated points remain attached to the horse's IMHA record.

## Verification & Inspections

IMHA reserves the right to verify any mustang's freemark and identity through photos, inspections, or microchip scanning at events if identity questions arise.

Falsified identification or documents will result in cancellation of registration and forfeiture of all accumulated points and awards.

## Policy Review

IMHA reviews registration and identification policies annually to ensure alignment with standards and best practices

## **Wild to Winning Incentive**

The Wild to Winning Incentive Program is an exclusive IMHA program created to reward owners and exhibitors who commit to their mustangs early in their competitive careers. By enrolling a horse at the time of initial IMHA registration, participants demonstrate confidence in the horse's future potential and make an early investment in its development and success.

Enrollment in the Wild to Winning Incentive Program is available only at the time of initial IMHA registration and is not offered retroactively. Horses not enrolled during registration are permanently ineligible for Wild to Winning participation, regardless of later performance or ownership changes. This requirement ensures fairness, transparency, and consistent tracking from the beginning of a horse's show career.

The purpose of the Wild to Winning Incentive Program is to offer additional awards and recognition to those who choose to support and develop their mustangs before competitive outcomes are known. Incentive recognition is earned through participation in IMHA-approved events and IMHA-recognized partner events and is awarded in addition to standard IMHA points.

Participants in the Wild to Winning Incentive Program may be eligible for additional awards, year-end recognition, and promotional opportunities as defined and announced by IMHA each season.

### **Awards**

It is a requirement for all approved shows to offer Wild to Winning awards in addition to awards for placings. The type and value of the awards is left to the discretion of the show manager.

# Events/Shows

# IMHA-Approved Event Types

The International Mustang Horse Association (IMHA) recognizes and approves a variety of **Shows/Events** designed to promote the versatility, welfare, and responsible development of mustangs.

Events can run as **"IMHA Produced Events"** or as **"Endorsed Events"** using the judging standards of other organizations. IMHA can approve and endorse events from most professional equine organizations, provided that **they have a written standard of judging**. This includes any breed organization that has an **"all breed" class or similar** or will allow mustangs into their competitions.

Here are a few **examples** of recognised organizations.

## **Breed & Registry Organizations**

*American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA)*

*American Paint Horse Association (APHA)*

*Appaloosa Horse Club (ApHC)*

*Arabian Horse Association (AHA)*

*Pinto Horse Association of America (PtHA)*

## **Sport Horse & English Disciplines**

*United States Equestrian Federation (USEF)*

*United States Dressage Federation (USDF)*

*United States Hunter Jumper Association (USHJA)*

*United States Eventing Association (USE)*

## **Working Equitation**

*World Association for Working Equitation (WAWWE)*

*United States Working Equitation (USWE)*

## **Ranch, Stock & Working Horse Organizations**

*National Reined Cow Horse Association (NRCHA)*

*National Cutting Horse Association (NCHA)*

*National Reining Horse Association (NRHA)*

*American Ranch Horse Association (ARHA)*

## **Trail, Endurance & Distance Riding**

*American Endurance Ride Conference (AERC)*

*Competitive Trail Ride Association (CTR)*

*North American Trail Ride Conference (NATRC)*

## Endorsed Shows/Events Vs IMHA Produced Shows/Events

### Endorsed Shows/Events

An "Endorsed Show/Event is a show that IMHA approves (through our show approval process) and awards points to members and registered horses for participating in. The show is **under the jurisdiction and standards of the outside organization** and IMHA is added in so members/horses can earn recognised points at that event.

### IMHA Produced Shows/Events

An IMHA show is one that falls under the jurisdiction of IMHA alone and is subject to IMHA show standards. Score sheets and **IMHA carded judges** are required

### Arena Based Events (Typically Shows)

IMHA approves arena based competitive events hosted, produced, or otherwise run by outside organizations. The main requirement for an outside organization is that it has a clearly defined **written standard of judging**.

### Trail-Based Events

IMHA approves trail based events that take place outside the arena, are competitive in nature. Trail participants are awarded points for miles in competition at a rate of 1 point per every 5 miles.

Additional trail points are earned using IMHA's traditional class scoring system.

## Non mustangs in IMHA shows

An IMHA member exhibiting a non-mustang is ineligible for IMHA points

**Non-mustangs are allowed (and expected) to compete against mustangs in IMHA "endorsed shows."**

**Non mustangs are not eligible to participate in IMHA produced shows**

Non-mustang can be included in the total number of exhibitors in an endorsed show to help a show meet the required minimum number of horses for an approved show. (There is a 5 horse minimum for a show to qualify for points)

Non mustangs can compete and win endorsed shows, but neither the horse or exhibitor will earn points.

# IMHA Points

# International Mustang Horse Association (IMHA)

## Horse & Rider Points

IMHA points are awarded to horses and riders together to reflect the partnership between horse and rider.

### General Rules

When a horse earns IMHA points, the rider earns the same points  
This applies to class placement points, overall Show Championship points, participation points, and trail competition points (with limitations noted below)

## Show Competition Points (Includes In Hand Shows)

IMHA points are awarded based on class placings as follows:

Placing.....	IMHA Points Earned
<b>1st Place.....</b>	<b>5 points</b>
<b>2nd Place.....</b>	<b>4 points</b>
<b>3rd Place.....</b>	<b>3 points</b>
<b>4th Place.....</b>	<b>2 points</b>
<b>5th Place.....</b>	<b>1 point</b>
<b>6th Place and below.....</b>	<b>0 points</b>

## Trail Competition Points

IMHA trail competitions are scored using the same placement-based point system as IMHA-approved shows.

Placement in trail based competition are awarded as follows:

Placing.....	IMHA Points Earned
<b>1st Place.....</b>	<b>5 points</b>
<b>2nd Place.....</b>	<b>4 points</b>
<b>3rd Place.....</b>	<b>3 points</b>
<b>4th Place.....</b>	<b>2 points</b>
<b>5th Place.....</b>	<b>1 point</b>

**6th Place and below..... 0 points**

## Show Championship Points

In addition to class placings, IMHA awards an Overall Show Championship at each IMHA-approved event. The Show Champion is determined by the cumulative IMHA points earned across all eligible classes entered by a horse at that show.

Show Championship Point Awards

IMHA Show Championship points are awarded to the top five (5) overall high-point horses using the same placement system as individual classes:

Show Championship Placement IMHA Points Awarded

<b>Placing .....</b>	<b>IMHA Points Earned</b>
<b>1st Overall (Champion) .....</b>	<b>5 points</b>
<b>2nd Overall (Reserve Champion).....</b>	<b>4 points</b>
<b>3rd Overall (Top 3) .....</b>	<b>3 points</b>
<b>4th Overall (Top 4) .....</b>	<b>2 points</b>
<b>5th Overall (Top 5).....</b>	<b>1 point</b>

## Trail Championship Point Awards

IMHA Trail Championship points are awarded to the top five (5) overall horses at the conclusion of a completed trail circuit or series, using the same placement system as individual classes:

If a trail competition is conducted in such a way that there are multiple scoring events per ride, championship placings may be awarded for that individual ride.

**Trail Championship Placement IMHA Points Awarded**

<b>Placing .....</b>	<b>IMHA Points Earned</b>
<b>1st Overall (Champion) .....</b>	<b>5 points</b>
<b>2nd Overall (Reserve Champion).....</b>	<b>4 points</b>
<b>3rd Overall (Top 3) .....</b>	<b>3 points</b>
<b>4th Overall (Top 4) .....</b>	<b>2 points</b>
<b>5th Overall (Top 5).....</b>	<b>1 point</b>

## Additional Rules

### Mileage Points (Trail Based Competition)

IMHA awards involvement in competitive trail and endurance riding.

In a trail based event, Two (2) IMHA points are earned for both horse and rider for every five (5) miles completed in competition.

## Show Participation Points (Show or Arena Based Competition)

IMHA awards Participation Points to recognize involvement and experience in IMHA-approved competition.

Each horse entered and competing a class earns one (1) IMHA participation point. The rider or handler also earns one (1) participation point for that class.

## Non Approved Show Points

IMHA will allow registered mustangs and members to earn points at non approved shows at a lower earning rate. Our desire is to encourage more approved shows across the US and beyond, however we also desire to give mustangs the opportunity to shine even if they lack access. As IMHA grows the ability to earn points at non approved shows will likely decrease as more approved shows become available. During the 2026 show season members and registered horses may earn  $\frac{1}{2}$  **point per class** entered.

No points are added for placings in individual classes, however the top three spots are awarded for those who win in an overall, or champion or similar at a rate of **Points per class 3 points for Overall Champion, 2 points for Reserve Champion, and 1 point for Top 3.**

Members who wish to be credited must submit a show bill that clearly shows their name and member number, which classes were entered, the name and registration number of the horse entered, and bears a **signature of a judge, manager or show official.**

Use separate show bills for additional horses.

Failure to provide the correct info will result in point credit denial.

# Judging

# Judging

## Judge's Cards

Judges cards are issued to **IMHA professional members** in two forms:

- **IMHA carded Judge** - Able to Judge IMHA produced shows.
- **IMHA Endorsed Judge** - An endorsement for existing judges carded or credentialed by other organizations so they can judge IMHA mustangs as part of outside shows/events they already represent.

*Example: Tom is a NRHA judge who will be judging a local reining horse show next month. He also has his IMHA endorsement card. That means the show manager can apply to have the reining be an IMHA approved show. Tom can judge the show according to the NRHA standards he is familiar with, and any IMHA mustangs that enter and place will earn points through IMHA. Tom (and show management) is responsible for ensuring a show summary is returned to IMHA.*

IMHA will approve events from most professional equine organizations, provided that **they have a written standard of judging**. Here are **examples** of recognised organizations.

### **Breed & Registry Organizations (provided they have a class mustangs can compete in)**

American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA)

American Paint Horse Association (APHA)

Appaloosa Horse Club (ApHC)

Arabian Horse Association (AHA)

Pinto Horse Association of America (PtHA)

### **Sport Horse & English Disciplines**

United States Equestrian Federation (USEF)

United States Dressage Federation (USDF)

United States Hunter Jumper Association (USHJA)

United States Eventing Association (USE)

### **Working Equitation**

World Association for Working Equitation (WAVE)

United States Working Equitation (USWE)

### **Ranch, Stock & Working Horse Organizations**

National Reined Cow Horse Association (NRCHA)

National Cutting Horse Association (NCHA)

National Reining Horse Association (NRHA)

American Ranch Horse Association (ARHA)

### **Trail, Endurance & Distance Riding**

American Endurance Ride Conference (AERC)

Competitive Trail Ride Association (CTR)

North American Trail Ride Conference (NATRC)

## Judges Responsibilities

All IMHA Judges are responsible for upholding the values, and integrity of the International Mustang Horse Association while ensuring fair, consistent, and humane evaluation of horses and exhibitors.

- Judge classes according to the standards of the discipline or organization they represent.
- Place the welfare of the mustang above competition or personal preference
- Evaluate horses and exhibitors fairly, consistently, and without bias
- Apply class standards accurately and consistently
- Maintain professionalism in conduct, communication, and decision-making
- Avoid conflicts of interest and recuse themselves when appropriate
- Treat exhibitors, officials, volunteers, and fellow judges with respect
- Support a positive, educational, and sportsmanlike show environment
- Event-Specific Responsibilities
- Clearly communicating with show management regarding class standards and expectations
- Judging only classes they are properly credentialed to officiate
- Ensuring that IMHA-designated classes are evaluated correctly for point eligibility
- Ensure accurate recording of placings and results.
- **Ensure a full and complete Show/Event summary is returned to IMHA**
- Return any needed incident report forms that are full and complete
- Representation of IMHA

IMHA Judges serve as representatives of the organization and are expected to: Conduct themselves in a manner that reflects positively on IMHA and the mustang community, Support IMHA's mission of ethical training, responsible ownership, and lifelong success of mustangs, and uphold IMHA's Code of Conduct and Animal Welfare Policy at all times.

## Judge Eligibility

Applicants for an IMHA Judge's Card must:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Demonstrate in writing relevant equine experience in training, instruction, competition, evaluation, or professional horse work. Equivalent experience may be considered at IMHA's discretion.
- Be in good standing with any equine organizations under which they currently hold credentials (if applicable)
- Submit an IMHA Judge's Card application online
- Complete the required IMHA online judge education course
- Provide a minimum of three references, including:
  - At least two character references
  - Be fluent in reading and writing the English language
  - At least two professional equestrian references
- Review and sign the IMHA Judge's Code of Conduct
- Agree to uphold IMHA rules and the IMHA Animal Welfare Policy

## Judge Scope of Authority

IMHA Judges may officiate only within the scope of:  
Their existing external judging credentials (for Endorsed Judges), and  
Any additional **discipline approvals** granted by IMHA

IMHA-approved events are required to utilize an approved IMHA Judge to ensure points are awarded correctly and event results are submitted to IMHA.

## Code of Conduct – IMHA Judge

***As an approved Judge for the International Mustang Horse Association (IMHA), I acknowledge that judging represents a position of trust, authority, and responsibility. I commit to placing the welfare of the horse above competition results, convenience, personal interest, or external influence and will comply fully with IMHA's Animal Welfare and Anti-Doping policies. I will judge fairly, consistently, and impartially, without favoritism, bias, or discrimination.***

***I will conduct myself with honesty, integrity, professionalism, and transparency in all judging-related activities and will avoid any actions, statements, or behaviors that could bring discredit to IMHA, the American Mustang, or the broader equine industry. I will refrain from judging any event where a personal, financial, or professional conflict of interest exists.***

***I will treat exhibitors, officials, volunteers, and fellow judges with professionalism and respect and commit to continued education and familiarity with IMHA rules, scoring rubrics, and judging standards. I understand that failure to uphold this Code of Conduct or IMHA policies may result in disciplinary action, including suspension or revocation of judging privileges.***

Violation of this Code of Conduct may result in review, suspension, or revocation of an IMHA Judge's Card.

## **Maintenance and Review**

All Judge's Cards must be maintained in good standing. Judges are required to maintain a professional level membership. IMHA reserves the right to review, suspend, or revoke a Judge's Card for violations of IMHA rules, ethics, animal welfare standards, or failure to meet ongoing requirements. Judges must submit by e-mail, written evidence of continuing education or involvement in the equine industry on an annual basis to keep their card active. Acceptable activities may include, but are not limited to: attendance at judging clinics, seminars, or educational courses; participation in IMHA or other recognized equine organization training or conferences; active judging or officiating at equine events; professional work as a trainer, instructor, clinician, farrier, veterinarian, or equine professional; teaching, mentorship, or committee service; authorship or contribution to equine-related educational materials; or documented participation in research or welfare-related programs. Acceptable documentation may include certificates, proof of attendance, verification letters, judging assignments, or written summaries of participation.

# Mustang Professionals

# Mustang Professionals (MP) Membership

## Purpose

The Mustang Professionals (MPs) program is a professional membership designation within the International Mustang Horse Association (IMHA). MPs serve as trusted representatives of IMHA standards and play a key role in promoting ethical horsemanship, animal welfare, and organizational consistency.

## Eligibility Requirements

Applicants for Mustang Professional status must:

- Be current IMHA professional members in good standing
- Sign and agree to uphold the IMHA Code of Ethics for MPs
- Provide two professional references
- Provide two character references
- Submit a completed Mustang Professional application (Online)
- Application Review & Approval

All MP applications are reviewed by the Director of Governance & Operations.

Approval is granted at the sole discretion of IMHA and results in either approval or denial ("thumbs up / thumbs down"). Decisions are final unless otherwise determined by IMHA leadership.

## MP Access & Resources

Approved Mustang Professionals receive:

- A unique MP identification code
- Access to MP-only resources, tools, and materials on the IMHA website
- Eligibility for participation in IMHA committees, mentorship roles, and organizational initiatives as determined by IMHA leadership

## Roles & Expectations

Mustang Professionals are expected to uphold and actively promote IMHA's Animal Welfare, Ethics, and Integrity standards, assist in maintaining consistency and professionalism across all IMHA-approved activities, and serve as mentors, advisors, or committee members when requested. As recognized leaders within the organization, Mustang Professionals are also expected to act as positive representatives of IMHA within the broader equine community and model responsible, ethical horsemanship at all times.

## Status & Accountability

MP status is a privilege and may be reviewed, suspended, or revoked if a member fails to uphold IMHA standards, policies, or ethical expectations. **An MP must maintain a professional level IMHA membership to be active.**

## Code of Conduct – Mustang Professional (MP)

*As a Mustang Professional (MP) of the International Mustang Horse Association (IMHA), I acknowledge that MP status represents a position of trust, leadership, and professional responsibility.*

*I commit to placing the welfare of the horse above competition results, recognition, convenience, or financial gain and will comply fully with IMHA's Animal Welfare and Anti-Doping policies. I will train, handle, and represent horses using humane, ethical methods and will conduct myself with honesty, integrity, and professionalism in all IMHA-approved activities.*

*I will uphold IMHA standards and act as a positive representative of IMHA, the American Mustang, and the broader equine industry. When requested, I will contribute through mentorship, committee service, education, or advisory roles.*

*I understand that Mustang Professional status is a privilege, not a right, and that failure to uphold this Code of Conduct or any IMHA policy may result in disciplinary action, including suspension or revocation of MP status.*

# Animal Welfare

# IMHA Animal Welfare Policy

## Purpose

The International Mustang Horse Association (IMHA) is committed to the humane treatment, ethical training, and responsible care of mustangs in all IMHA-approved activities. This policy establishes minimum welfare standards for members, participants, event organizers, and officials, with horse welfare as the highest priority.

## General Welfare Standards

All IMHA participants must ensure that:

- Horses are treated with respect, patience, and fairness at all times
- Training and competition prioritize safety, soundness, and well-being
- Adequate food, water, shelter, rest, and recovery are provided
- Appropriate veterinary care, hoof care, and conditioning are maintained
- Neglect, mistreatment, or inhumane conduct is not tolerated
- Training & Competition Standards
- Training methods must be ethical, progressive, and appropriate to the horse's age, physical ability, and mental readiness
- Horses that are lame, ill, injured, fatigued, or distressed must not compete
- Horses showing signs of distress or injury must be withdrawn immediately
- IMHA competition is drug-free and subject to IMHA Anti-Doping standards

## Facility & Event Requirements

IMHA-approved events must provide:

- Safe footing and competition environments
- Humane transportation practices
- Adequate shade, water, and rest areas
- Proper stall, trailer, and holding conditions without overcrowding
- IMHA-approved officials and veterinary support on-site or on call
- Horses deemed unfit or in poor condition may be restricted or disqualified
- Zero Tolerance for Abuse or Neglect

## **Prohibitions**

IMHA strictly prohibits:

- Physical abuse or excessive force (discipline without a release)
- Neglect or failure to provide basic care
- Forcing injured or sick horses to train or compete
- Equipment or devices that cause pain, distress, or restrict natural movement
- Excessive or repeated stress that compromises welfare

## **Enforcement**

Failure to uphold IMHA animal welfare standards may result in disqualification, loss of points, suspension, or permanent removal from IMHA participation.

## **Commitment to Mustang Welfare**

IMHA exists to support mustangs in successful second careers through ethical horsemanship and responsible stewardship. All members and participants are expected to actively uphold and advocate for mustang welfare.

Contact: [office@IMHA.com](mailto:office@IMHA.com)

# IMHA Anti-Doping Policy

## Purpose

The International Mustang Horse Association (IMHA) is committed to fair competition and the health and welfare of all mustangs. This policy prohibits the use of substances or practices that artificially enhance performance, mask pain or injury, or alter a horse's natural behavior in IMHA-sanctioned events.

## General Rules

All mustangs competing in IMHA-sanctioned events must be free of prohibited substances.

Responsibility for compliance rests with the owner, trainer, and rider/handler.

## Prohibited Substances

- Prohibited substances include, but are not limited to:
- Stimulants
- Sedatives and tranquilizers
- Anabolic or performance-enhancing steroids
- NSAIDs beyond permitted thresholds
- Pain-relieving or numbing agents, including opioids, local anesthetics, and corticosteroids
- Hormones and growth promoters
- Herbal or alternative substances used to mask pain or enhance performance
- Masking agents and diuretics intended to interfere with drug detection
- Any substance—synthetic or natural—used to enhance performance, mask discomfort, or compromise horse welfare is prohibited.

## Permitted Medications

- Therapeutic medications may be permitted when:
- Medically necessary and prescribed by a licensed veterinarian
- Declared at entry with veterinary documentation
- Not used to gain competitive advantage or conceal unsoundness

IMHA reserves the right to restrict participation if medication use compromises fairness or horse welfare.

## **Statement of Integrity & Enforcement**

IMHA promotes ethical horsemanship, fair competition, and responsible stewardship of the American mustang. Failure to uphold IMHA clean sport or anti-doping principles may result in suspension and/or loss of points.

# Governance

# International Mustang Horse Association (IMHA) Governance Policy

## Purpose

The International Mustang Horse Association (IMHA) Governance Policy establishes the framework for organizational oversight, decision-making, and administration. IMHA operates as a for-profit entity and DBA under Live Equestrian LLC (LE) and is dedicated to advancing adopted mustangs through competition, education, and community engagement. This policy ensures responsible leadership, ethical conduct, and consistency as the organization grows.

## Organizational Structure & Ownership

IMHA is owned and administered by the principals of Live Equestrian LLC. Together, they form the Principal Leadership Team, which retains full authority over strategic, administrative, financial, and policy decisions for IMHA.

## Leadership Roles & Responsibilities

The Principal Leadership Team assigns the following leadership roles:

- Director of Governance & Operations – Teddy Franke  
Oversees rules, policies, governance systems, internal operations, and committee coordination.
- Director of Outreach & Events – Scott DePaolo  
Manages event sanctioning, partnerships, outreach initiatives, and event coordination.
- Director of Marketing & Membership – Wendy Hensley  
Oversees membership services, marketing strategy, branding, and organizational communications.

Each Director may assemble teams, appoint volunteers, and delegate responsibilities within their area of oversight. Collaborative crossover between Directors may occur as needed to best serve IMHA's mission.

## Decision-Making Authority

The Principal Leadership Team holds final authority over all policies, budgets, committee formation, rule enforcement, and disciplinary actions. Decisions are made by majority vote of the three principals.

## Mustang Professionals (MPs)

IMHA maintains a professional sub-division known as the Mustang Professionals (MPs). MPs are professional members who have completed additional requirements and agree to uphold IMHA's ethical, welfare, and conduct standards.

Eligible MP roles may include:

- Service on disciplinary, rules, or appeals committees
- Mentorship of amateur and youth members
- Advisory or educational contributions
- Representation of IMHA professional standards

MP participation is coordinated by the Director of Governance & Operations and governed by a separate MP Association policy.

## Committees

When governance-related needs arise, including but not limited to disciplinary actions, appeals, or rule reviews, the appropriate Director will appoint committee members. Mustang Professionals will be prioritized for committee service when applicable.

All committee members must agree to:

- Confidentiality requirements
- Conflict-of-interest disclosure
- Recusal standards where applicable

Committee recommendations are advisory unless otherwise specified and remain subject to final approval by the Principal Leadership Team.

## Rulebook Review & Updates

The IMHA Rulebook is reviewed and updated as the organization evolves, with a minimum of one annual review.

*For the **2026 competition year**, IMHA plans quarterly administrative or procedural updates; however, **show formats, scoring systems, and point standards will remain consistent throughout the competition year to ensure fairness and continuity.***

## Transparency & Ethics

IMHA is committed to ethical conduct, fairness, and transparency. All leaders, members, judges, officials, and committee participants are expected to comply with:

- IMHA governance policies
- Codes of Conduct
- Animal Welfare and Anti-Doping policies

The Principal Leadership Team may publish key decisions, policy updates, or reports at its discretion to support organizational transparency.

## Policy Review & Amendments

This Governance Policy is reviewed annually. Amendments may be adopted by majority vote of the Principal Leadership Team. Emergency amendments may be enacted immediately when necessary and ratified at a later date.

## Future Organizational Transition

It is the intent of the Principal Leadership Team to eventually establish IMHA as an independent legal entity, separate from Live Equestrian LLC, **This Governance Policy will be updated accordingly should that transition occur.**

# IMHA Show Rules

# General Show Rules

## Rules For IMHA Produced Shows/Events

### General Eligibility

- Horses do not need to be IMHA registered to compete however they must be BLM or forest service mustangs.
- Only IMHA-registered horses are eligible to earn points and IMHA achievement awards.
- Riders/Exhibitors are not required to be IMHA members to enter. Membership is encouraged and provides a discounted entry fee, plus eligibility for points tracking and year-end awards.

### Class Participation

- Horses may be shown Western, English, in any IMHA class, including in-hand divisions.
- Horses and riders will be judged by the standards of the discipline they represent:
- A forward seat rider is expected to demonstrate correct English equitation and position.
- A Western rider is expected to ride in a Western seat with appropriate posture and balance.
- A Dressage rider is expected to meet basic dressage seat and presentation requirements.

### Tack & Equipment

All tack must be safe, clean, and appropriate for the discipline declared by the rider.

### Bits and Rein Use

- Riders may use a direct rein (two hands) at any time when using a bit designed for direct reining (e.g., snaffle)
- When a leverage bit is used, the expectation is that the horse be shown in an indirect (neck rein) style.
- In-hand classes require a halter and lead, or other equipment as specified in the pattern.

## Exhibitor Conduct & Attire

- Exhibitors must present themselves in attire appropriate to the discipline they are representing.
- Neatness, safety, and respect for the horse will be considered in judging.
- Helmets are strongly encouraged in all divisions; youth riders are required to wear ASTM/SEI-certified helmets per event regulations.

## Judging Standards

- Judges will evaluate exhibitors by discipline standards, horsemanship, horse manners and movement, and class-specific criteria as published in the show program.
- The judge's decisions are final. Concerns may be filed with show management in accordance with IMHA protest procedures.

## Sportsmanship & Welfare:

- Exhibitors must uphold IMHA's Code of Ethics and Animal Welfare Policy at all times.
- Any mistreatment of horses, poor sportsmanship, or unsafe conduct may result in disqualification or removal from the event.

## Individual Class Rules

### Showmanship

**Description:** A handler presents their mustang in-hand, executing a set pattern that demonstrates control, responsiveness, and style.

Judging Criteria:

- Accuracy of the pattern and handler's positioning
- Horse's response to subtle cues (set-up, pivots, straight lines)
- Clean presentation of both horse and exhibitor
- Team impression and overall polish

Scoring Notes: Higher marks are awarded for crisp execution and smooth communication. Deductions for missteps, poor spacing, lack of attention, or failure to follow patterns.





# Sample Score Sheet

International Mustang Horse Association

In Hand Obstacles & Compulsories



-1½ = Extremely Poor, -1 = Very Poor, -½ = Poor, 0 = Baseline, +½ = Good, +1 = Very Good, +1½ = Excellent

**Degree of Difficulty Additions**  
One Rein hand  
Horsemanship  
Overall Appearance

**Penalties**  
Refusal  
Off Pattern  
Excessive spur or bit

**In hand Trail**

Judge Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Show: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Base Score is 70

Back Number	Walk through L	Trot over poles	Side Pass Poles	Bridge	Trot to Mailbox	Noodles	Pole Drag (by handler)	Gate	Discretion	Total

-1½ = Extremely Poor, -1 = Very Poor, -½ = Poor, 0 = Baseline, +½ = Good, +1 = Very Good, +1½ = Excellent

**Degree of Difficulty Additions**  
Smoothness  
Crisp transitions

**Penalties**  
Horse crooked to pattern  
Off Pattern

**In Hand Compulsories**

Base Score is 70

Back Number	Trot right circle	Trot left circle	Stop at cone	Right Side pass	Left Side Pass	90° Forhand turn	90° Haunch turn	Back	Discretion	Total

## MOUNTED -OBSTACLE/FREESTYLE

**Description:** This two-part class tests both groundwork versatility and precision. In the first phase, handlers guide their mustangs through a trail pattern, negotiating obstacles that highlight responsiveness, patience, and willingness. In the second phase, the horse performs a modified in-hand reining pattern where compulsory maneuvers—such as pivots, backing, and controlled stops—are demonstrated.

Judging Criteria:

Trail Pattern: calmness, accuracy, and willingness in negotiating obstacles

Compulsories: correctness, straightness, and smooth execution of maneuvers

Handler’s control, positioning, and presentation throughout both phases

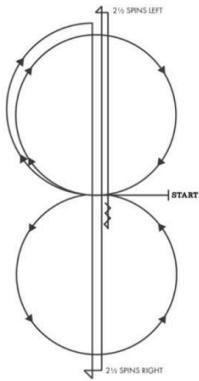
Scoring Notes: Credit is given for fluid transitions, precision, and soft communication.

Penalties may include refusals, resistance, off-pattern execution, or unsafe handling.

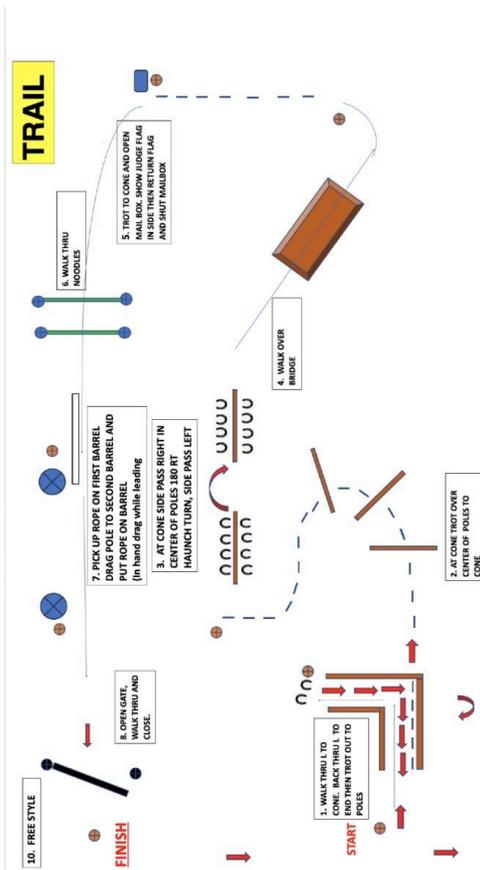


# Example Pattern

## COMPULSORY PATTERN



- Trot to center of arena, stop. Start pattern facing towards judge
1. Beginning on the right lead lope one circle to the right. Change leads to the left.
  2. Complete one circle to the left. Change leads to the right and go to the top of the arena.
  3. Run down center of arena past the end marker and come to a sliding stop.
  4. Complete 2 1/2 spins to the right.
  5. Run to the other end of the arena, past the end marker and come to a sliding stop.
  6. Complete 2 1/2 spins to the left.
  7. Run past the center marker, stop, back at least 10 feet.



# Sample Score Sheet



-1½ = Extremely Poor, -1 = Very Poor, -½ = Poor, 0 = Baseline, +½ = Good, +1 = Very Good, +1½ = Excellent

Trail Judge Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Show: \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

**Degree of Difficulty Additions**  
 One Rein hand  
 Horsemanship  
 Overall Appearance

**Penalties**  
 Refusal  
 Off Pattern  
 Excessive spur or bit

Base Score is 70

Back Number	Walk through L	Trot over poles	Side Pass Poles	Bridge	Trot to Mailbox	Noodles	Pole Drag	Gate	Discretion	Total

-1½ = Extremely Poor, -1 = Very Poor, -½ = Poor, 0 = Baseline, +½ = Good, +1 = Very Good, +1½ = Excellent

**Degree of Difficulty Additions**  
 One Rein hand  
 Flying lead change  
 Horsemanship  
 Overall Appearance

**Penalties**  
 Changing rein holds  
 Over/Under spin  
 Off Pattern  
 Excessive spur or bit

**Compulsories**

Base Score is 70

Back Number	Right lead lope and lead change	Left lead lope and lead change	Rundown and Stop	Right Spin	Rundown and stop	Left Spin	Stop & Back lead change	Discretion	Total

## In Hand - Precision Pattern

**Description:** The Precision In-Hand Class is designed to evaluate accuracy, control, and effective communication between handler and horse through a defined in-hand pattern of deliberate maneuvers.

Competitors will complete a posted pattern consisting of movements that may include straight lines, circles of specified size, halts, backing, transitions between walk and trot, and directional changes. The pattern tests the handler’s ability to guide the horse’s body with clarity, consistency, and correct positioning while maintaining balance, rhythm, and willingness throughout the pattern.

The pattern will be timed, not to reward speed, but to encourage consistent flow, preparation, and purposeful forward movement. Exhibitors are required to complete the pattern within a designated time window. Performances completed faster or slower than the prescribed timeframe may be penalized, as both rushing and lack of forward intent detract from accuracy, balance, and quality of execution.

Judging will be based on:

- Accuracy and correctness of figures and geometry
- Consistency of pace, rhythm, and straightness
- Smoothness and clarity of transitions and halts
- Willing, guided response and body control of the horse
- Handler position, effectiveness, and overall precision of execution

Patterns for the Precision In-Hand Class are created specifically for IMHA competitions and combine technical elements drawn from groundwork, showmanship, and in-hand training traditions. These patterns are original IMHA designs and are not discipline-specific tests. This class is appropriate for horses and handlers with a solid foundation in basic in-hand maneuvers and is intended to reward thoughtful, accurate horsemanship across a variety of training backgrounds.

Example Pattern/Score Sheet: coming soon...

---

## Mounted - Precision Pattern

**Description:** The Precision Ride Class is designed to evaluate accuracy, control, and effective communication between horse and rider through a defined mounted pattern of deliberate maneuvers.

Competitors will ride a posted pattern consisting of movements that may include circles of specified size, straight lines, transitions between gaits, stops, and directional changes. The pattern tests the rider's ability to guide the horse's body with clarity, consistency, and

correct positioning while maintaining balance, rhythm, and willingness throughout the ride.

The pattern will be timed, not to reward speed, but to encourage consistent flow, proper preparation, and forward intent. Exhibitors are required to complete the pattern within a designated time window. Rides completed faster or slower than the prescribed timeframe may be penalized, as both rushing and lack of purposeful movement detract from accuracy, balance, and quality of execution.

- Judging will be based on:
- Accuracy and correctness of figures and geometry
- Consistency of pace, rhythm, and balance
- Smoothness and clarity of transitions
- Willing, guided response and body control of the horse
- Rider position, effectiveness, and overall precision of execution

Patterns for the Precision Ride Class are created specifically for IMHA competitions and combine technical elements commonly found in dressage, reining, and stock horse pattern classes. These patterns are original IMHA designs and are not discipline-specific tests. This class is appropriate for horses and riders with a solid foundation in basic maneuvers and is intended to reward thoughtful, accurate horsemanship across a variety of riding backgrounds.

Example Pattern/Score Sheet: coming soon...

---

## Rail & Trail

**Description:** The Rail & Trail Class combines traditional rail work with obstacle challenges. Horses must demonstrate obedience, consistency, and responsiveness to the rider, while also showing confidence and adaptability when called to negotiate obstacles. Horses that are able to perform up to a higher obstacle level will always outscore horses that perform only at lower levels.

### Format

- Rail Work
- Riders begin on the rail under judges' command (walk, trot, canter, reverse, halt, etc.).
- Riders must maintain spacing and a steady, consistent pace.

## Obstacle Calls

- Obstacles are placed on the inside track or center of the arena, each marked with a visible number (1, 2, or 3).
- When the judge or announcer calls a rider number and obstacle number, that rider must leave the rail to negotiate one of two obstacles with that number.

## Obstacle Levels

- There will be a total of six obstacles in the class: two for each level of difficulty/gait (two walk, two trot, two canter). Of the two obstacles in each gait, riders will only be required to ride one obstacle of that level.
- Obstacle 1 (Walk): pole weave, flag barrel, object drag.
- Obstacle 2 (Trot): trot poles, hanging ride-through obstacles.
- Obstacle 3 (Canter): Raised pole or small jump, narrow passage, low bridge, cone or pole weave, rubber mat, Garrocha circle or similar

# Example Pattern

## IMHA Rail & Trail Class Description and Scoring

Horses are scored on smoothness consistency and quality of movement.  
Working gates are acceptable as long as they are consistent.  
Horses may pass each other to the inside.  
Exhibitors will be given three obstacles: one to walk, one to trot, and one to canter.  
There will be two obstacles in each category. They will be slightly different. Exhibitors may choose the one that best shows their horse.

Exhibitors will begin the class at judges command on the rail. The judge will request transitions and maneuvers to satisfy their scoring.

The judge will then call an exhibitor number followed by an obstacle number. The exhibitor will proceed to one of the two obstacles with that number and perform the obstacle. They will then return to the rail maintaining the gate and riding tempo throughout. The Judge will conclude the class when scoring is satisfactory.

**Penalties:** Wrong Lead, Refusals,  
Changing rein holds.

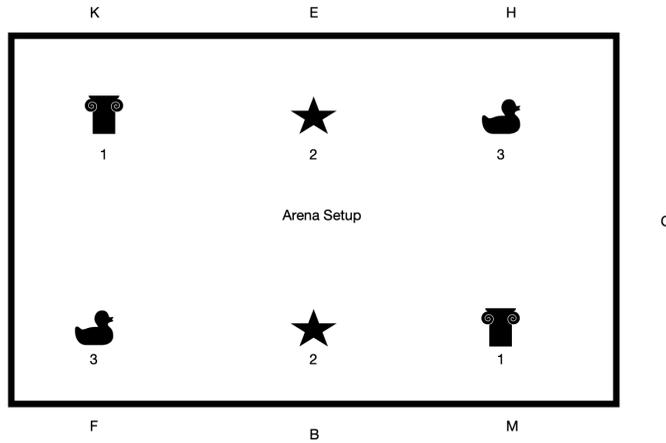
**Elimination:**  
Excessive Spurring  
Three Refusals  
Unprompted departure from the rail

Exhibitors may ride western or english and should wear attire consistent with their discipline.

Exhibitors may use leverage bits, direct pressure bits, or traditional hackamores. (This excludes gags or bits with a sliding fulcrum or mechanical hackamores.)

Bits designed to be ridden with one hand must be presented that way, and horses shown in one hand will earn a higher degree of difficulty at the judges discretion.

Exhibitors are expected to be consistent in their rein holds



# Sample Score Sheet

