The Arabian Working Western Alliance
Ranch Horse Challenge
Class Procedures

Updated: August 10, 2026

Purpose:
The Ranch Horse Challenge class simulates a day of riding on a working ranch. It allows the horse and rider to demonstrate their ability to navigate obstacles and negotiate situations encountered daily on the range or trails. The purpose of the Arabian Working Western Alliance (AWWA) Ranch Horse Challenge is to create a sense of community and comradery in the Arabian Horse industry by providing an opportunity with incentives for the breeding, showing, and owning of traditional Western performance Arabian-blooded horses.

AWWA Ranch Horse Challenge Proceures:
The AWWA Ranch Horse Challenge is held each year at the Arabian Horse Association (AHA) U.S. National Championship Show. There are two divisions: one for purebred Arabian horses and the other for Half-Arabian/Anglo-Arabian (HA/AA) horses. Each class is open to any registered Arabian or HA/AA horse ages 4 years and older. AHA will award a National Champion, Reserve National Champion, and 8 Top 10 awards in each division. The AWWA will determine prize money. Payback amounts are determined by using the AWWA Payback Chart located below.

To participate in the AWWA Ranch Horse Challenge an exhibitor must complete BOTH the AWWA Entry Form and the AHA Entry Form found at their websites. For AWWA, go to www.arabianworkingwestern.com and for AHA go to www.ArabianHorses.org. Entry fees and all show fees must be paid in full to be considered properly entered and complete.

Four-year-olds who are AWWA Incentive Fund nominated compete concurrently in the AWWA Incentive Fund Futurity for additional prize money and awards which are set aside specifically for them. AWWA Incentive Fund nominated horses ages five and older compete for additional awards and prizes in the AWWA Maturity AOTR.

A random order of go will be posted no later than one hour prior to start of class.

Each horse in the Ranch Horse Challenge is presented individually riding the AWWA-designated pattern in accordance with class specifications set forth in the Arabian Division of the USEF rulebook section for Ranch Horse competition. The AWWA pattern will be available on the first day that the AHA U.S. National Show Office opens. The pattern will consist of at least six, but no more than ten maneuvers. Maneuvers will test and display the versatility and athletic capabilities of a horse able to perform in multiple working western disciplines. The course is not designed to trick or trap any horse. The intent is to reward a horse and rider team based on their level of expertise to work together. Judges will walk the course to confirm safety and suitability of course. Exhibitors will be allowed to walk the course prior to competition.

Examples of possible maneuvers include, but are not limited to:

Walk over obstacles	Extended Trot
Trot over obstacles	Hand Gallop
Lope over obstacles	Picking up feet
Pick-up & carry an object	Drag an object
Serpentine	Sidepass
Ground tie	Bridge
Change of lead	Gate
Turn on the hind	Load into a trailer
Back through or around	Rope a steer head
Roll back	Cattle pen

The AWWA Board of Directors will determine if a three-judge or five-judge scoring system will be employed. If a 5-judge system is utilized for the pattern work, one high and one low score is eliminated. The remaining three scores will be totaled to determine the final placings in the Ranch Horse Challenge.

Prior to the start of the class, three maneuvers will be selected by the call judge to serve in case of any ties. To break a tie, the scorer will first count up the total penalties as recorded on the three judges' cards utilized in the scoring. If a tie still exists, the maneuver selected as the #1 tie breaker on the call judge's card will be used. The horse with the better score will place over the other horse. If horses are still tied, the scorer moves to the maneuver selected as the #2 tie breaker on the Judge 2 card. The horse with the better score will place over the other horse. If horses are still tied, the scorer moves to the maneuver selected as the #3 tie breaker on the Judge 3 card. The horse with the better score will place over the other horse. If horses are still tied after utilizing all three selected tie-breaker maneuvers from all three judges' cards, any monies for the tied positions will be added together and divided by the number of horses tied. A coin toss will determine the winner of any awards.

Following the completion of the individual pattern work the Top 10 winners from the Ranch Horse Challenge will be announced back into the arena for award presentation. Each horse will enter the arena individually in numeric order by announcing Back Number, Horse Name, Exhibitor, Owner, Sire, Dam, and Breeder. They will line up in center of arena. Champion & Reserve Champion will be announced and presented for additional awards. Horses will exit arena in placing order with 10th place going out first, followed by 9th, then 8th, to continue in such order until Reserve, and lastly, the Champion. As horses exit the arena they will be announced by Placing, Score, Name, Exhibitor, Owner, Sire, Dam, Breeder, and Amount of Money won.

Following the presentation of the Top 10, any special awards will be given. Special awards may be Top Scoring Amateurs or Breeder's Recognition Award for example.

An exhibitor may show up to three horses in each of the AWWA Ranch Horse Challenge Divisions.

AWWA Incentive Fund Awards

Starting in 2023, the AWWA Incentive Fund was established to promote the development of Arabian-bred youngstock suitable for Working Western disciplines. To be eligible for the additional prize money from the AWWA Incentive Fund, a horse must be nominated prior to close of entries for that specific competition. Incentive Fund monies are created from Stallion Enrollments, Auction Proceeds, Nominations, and any Sponsorships. Go to the AWWA website for a list of Incentive Fund horses and more details. Nomination forms are available there.

The Incentive Fund is not a separate class. There is no additional entry fee for an Incentive Fund 4-year-old. All 4-year-olds compete on the same pattern during the Ranch Horse Challenge. All 4-year-olds are included in the Order of Go. The 15 highest scoring 4-year-olds who possess an Incentive Fund Certificate will be asked back to present for an In-hand Conformation portion. These 15 Incentive Fund Finalists will be excused to the paddock to unsaddle and prepare for the In-hand Conformation competition. The In-hand portion of the competition is only for the 15 Incentive Fund Finalists and is held after the Ranch Horse Challenge awards presentation.

Following the Ranch Horse Challenge awards presentation, the 15 Incentive Fund Finalists will be invited back into the arena in numeric order. Each horse will be announced into the arena by Back Number, Name, Handler, Owner, Sire, Dam, and Breeder. The exhibitor who rode the horse in the Pattern work must show the horse in the In-hand Conformation; however, exhibitors with more than one Incentive Fund Finalist may find a substitute handler for the other horse(s) providing the substitute handler is also an exhibitor at the show. Class procedure for the In-Hand Conformation will follow class specifications set forth in the Arabian Division of the USEF rule book for Ranch Horse Conformation.

To determine the final placings for the Incentive Fund finalists, the 3-judge Pattern score is added to Conformation placing points. Conformation placing points are earned from a total tabulation of judges' scores in the Conformation portion of the class. Each of the five judges will mark his/her card to place all 15 horses.

Once all the cards are turned into scorer, horses are excused to the paddock and asked to saddle back up. Tabulation points will be assigned to each place for each judge beginning with 15 points for first, 14 for second, 13 for third, and so on down to 1 point for 15th place. All five judges' tabulation points are added together. The horse with the highest tabulation score receives 20 Conformation points to be added to their 3-judge Pattern score. The horse with the second highest tabulation score receives 18 Conformation points to be added to their 3-judge Pattern score. The horse with the third highest tabulation score receives 16 Conformation points to be added to their 3-judge Pattern score. The pattern continues until the 10th highest tabulation score receives 2 Conformation points to be added to their 3-judge Pattern score. Horses that are tied on in-hand tabulation points stay tied with each receiving the same amount of Conformation points to be added to their 3-judge Pattern score. Any ties in the final combined scores are broken by the same method as described in the Ranch Horse Challenge using the three judges' cards from the original Pattern score.

The Incentive Fund Finalists with the ten highest scores will be announced back into the arena for award presentation. Each horse will enter the arena individually in numeric order by announcing Back Number, Horse Name, Exhibitor, Owner, Sire, Dam, and Breeder. They will line up in center of arena. Champion & Reserve Champion will be announced and presented for additional awards. Horses will exit arena in placing order with 10th place going out first, followed by 9th, then 8th, to continue in such order until Reserve, and lastly, the Champion. As horses exit the arena they will be announced by Placing, Score, Name, Exhibitor, Owner, Sire, Dam, Breeder, and Amount of Money won.

Bonus money is available to Incentive Fund 4-year-olds resulting from a breeding purchased from the AWWA Stallion Service Auction. It is not necessary for an Incentive Fund entry to be a finalist in order to receive the Auction money bonus.

AWWA Payback Chart

	Number of Entries							
Placing	1	2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-11	12-15	16+
1	100%	60%	50%	40%	35%	30%	25%	25%
2		40%	30%	30%	27%	25%	20%	19%
3			20%	20%	19%	19%	15%	12%
4				10%	10%	12%	12%	10%
5					9%	9%	10%	9%
6						5%	8%	7%
7							6%	6%
8							4%	5%
9								4%
10								3%