

# **MHCO Club Point Show Rules and Regulations (revised March 2023)**

## **Adoption:**

The following rules have been adopted by the MHCO October 29, 2004 (and revised on date above) and apply to the judging of halter and performance classes at MHCO Club Point Shows. All approved rules are to be observed by everyone connected in any way with exhibiting, setting up and judging of any MHCO Club Point show.

## **Rules:**

For horse shows, the Miniature Horse Club of Ontario (MHCO) follows the rules set out by the most recent rulebook of the AMHR, with the following variants:

1. All MHCO Club Point Shows are open to all registered and unregistered Miniature Horses, both A and B division. However, only registered horses are eligible for year-end points.
2. **Divisions:** Ages for exhibitors will be as of January 1 of the current competition year. Juniors are exhibitors 12 years & under, Youth exhibitors are 13 – 17 years of age. Age Groups may be combined when there are insufficient entries in one of the age groups. No cross entering between Divisions (e.g. Youth can go in Junior/Youth Obstacle Driving but not Adult Obstacle Driving as well).  
**Novice classes:** If offered, Novice classes are open to all exhibitors in their first year of showing on the MHCO Club Point Show Circuit only (exception: Novice/COOL Driving classes are open to any COOL Exhibitors). Ribbons will be awarded in this class. However no points will be awarded to Novice exhibitors but COOL exhibitors will receive points which will count towards year end Driving (Perpetual trophies, MHCO Honour Roll). No cross entering between Divisions (e.g. Novice/COOL Drivers may not go in any Youth, Adult or Open Driving Classes **with the exception of** Obstacle Driving). Once a Novice Exhibitor has moved out of the Novice Division, they may not move back into that Division. Exception: COOL Exhibitors may remain in the Novice/COOL Driving class indefinitely.  
**Mentored Classes:** If offered, Mentored classes are open to handlers who have never placed in a halter class at any Miniature Horse show. Each exhibitor is allowed one mentor (experienced show person) to come in the class with them. The mentor is not allowed to touch the horse but can help prepare the horse for the class, enter the ring with the exhibitor, give advice on handling and posing the horse and ring procedure. The mentor will step aside when the judge approaches. The class will be run as any regular halter class but will be judged 75% on the handler's ability and 25% on the horse's conformation. Horses will be placed from first to sixth and ribbons presented but not awarded year end points. The judge may give comments and advice to the exhibitors at the end of the class. Each entrant may bring their own mentor with them or one will be provided from volunteers at the show.
3. **Stallions:** Junior exhibitors (12 years old and under) may not show a stallion in any class. Youth competitors (13 to 17 years of age) can show stallions of any age in open classes and Youth halter obstacles but may not show stallions of any age in any other Youth specific classes (e.g. Youth Showmanship, Youth Driving etc).
4. Measuring of competing horses will only be required if a protest has been placed with the show staff. The identity of the protestor must not be disclosed.
5.
  - a. Horses will not be eliminated from any performance class for wearing non-weighted shoes. The judge will not value the use of these shoes either for or against any animal as long as the shoes do not alter the natural gait of the horse.
  - b. Each horse can compete only once in any one class per show with the exception of COOL classes.
  - c. Exhibitors may be required to show the bite of the horse for the judge's inspection in each conformation class with the exception of gelding classes. The bite may be checked on any horse for the purpose of determining the Supreme Halter Horse
6.
  - a. Course diagrams must be posted well in advance of the start of the classes.
  - b. Course walks will be allowed (guided or not) for hunter, jumper, obstacles and/or cones, before the start of the classes. If two or more classes are using the same obstacles or jumps, all exhibitors may be requested to walk the course at the same time.
  - c. Course walks may be attended by show officials, competitors and their coaches. COOL or physically challenged exhibitors may 'walk' the courses with their grooms and/or attendants as required.
7. **Showmanship Patterns:** The MHCO might use showmanship patterns other than the ones in the AMHR rule book.

## 8. YEAR END AWARDS

- a. All individual classes will be awarded year end awards (with the exception of “demonstration classes”) Points as follows: 1<sup>st</sup> = 6, 2<sup>nd</sup> = 5, 3<sup>rd</sup> = 4, 4<sup>th</sup> = 3, 5<sup>th</sup> = 2, 6<sup>th</sup> = 1. Championship class points (Supreme = 3 points, Grand = 2 points, Reserve = 1 point). If a class is cancelled on the day of the show, any horse that was entered by the due date and is at the fairgrounds ready to show will be awarded one point.
- b. Unregistered horses must be measured at their first show, have a picture and name for the horse. They are not eligible for year end points unless their registration papers arrive before September 15.
- c. In determining trophy winners for cumulative point awards for all of the year end awards, ties will be broken using the following criteria:
  - i. Most 1st place ribbons.
  - ii. If still tied, head to head competition (i.e. when the horses in question face each other, who placed higher most
  - iii. If still tied, there will be 2 champions.
  - iv. High Point Perpetual Awards (e.g. Halter Horse of the Year, Performance Horse of the Year) will be awarded regardless of gender. Halter points to be accumulated in all Conformation classes (does not include Colour/Showmanship) includes Champion & Reserve & Supreme classes. Performance points to be accumulated in all Halter Obstacle, Hunter, Jumper, and Driving classes but not Showmanship classes. Some year end trophies may have specific stipulations with regard to what classes qualify for points.
- d. MHCO Honour Roll Program: The MHCO Honour Roll Program is a perpetual show point program started in 2013 which recognizes and gives lifetime MHCO Club Show Points to MHCO member horses that show on the MHCO Club Point Show circuit. All points are recorded and tracked by MHCO Club Point Show Secretary and awarded annually at the MHCO Spring General Meeting. In order for a horse to receive MHCO Honour Roll points, the owner must be a current MHCO member in good standing. The membership must have been received at least 15 days prior to show date in order to qualify for points. MHCO Honour Roll scoring is based on points earned at all MHCO Club Point Shows and remains on the MHCO Club Point Show Records for the lifetime of the horse. The MHCO Honour Roll Program has three levels: Bronze, Silver and Gold. To achieve MHCO Honour Roll status, a horse must score the following number of points:

**Halter Honour Roll = All conformation classes (does not include Colour classes, Showmanship)**

**Bronze Level = 50**

**Silver Level = 100**

**Gold Level = 150**

**Performance Honour Roll = Halter Obstacle or Hunter or Jumper (does not include Showmanship or Driving)**

**Bronze Level = 20**

**Silver Level = 40**

**Gold Level = 60**

**Driving Honour Roll = All Driving classes (does not include Novice Driving, only COOL Driving)**

**Bronze Level = 100**

**Silver Level = 200**

**Gold Level = 300**

**Points System used for MHCO Honour Roll (MHCO Club Point Show point system used by MHCO Club Show Secretary)**

**1st = 6 pts**

**2nd = 5 pts**

**3rd = 4 pts**

**4th = 3 pts**

**5th = 2 pts**

**6th = 1 pt**

**Reserve Champion = 1 pt**

**Grand Champion = 2 pts**

**Supreme = 3 pts**

9. For daily show trophies, participants do not need to be members of the MHCO.
10. To be eligible for MHCO Club Point Show Series year-end awards, the following applies:
  - a. All exhibitors must be fully paid members of the Miniature Horse Club of Ontario for the current year. Memberships must be received a minimum of 15 days prior to the show date in order to qualify for points.
  - b. All exhibitors must pre-enter for each individual show by deadline to be eligible for points earning. Entries must be in the secretary's hands by midnight 2 weeks preceding the show day.
  - c. All exhibitors must have had their horses entered and shown in the specific class in at least 60% of the shows in the MHCO Club Point Show series (e.g. if there are 5 shows, you must attend 3 shows to be eligible for year end points – includes hosted shows).
  - d. All Shows may be subject to fees set by the host venue (e.g. Fair Board Membership Fees as well as class entry fees). These fees are in addition to the MHCO Admin fee (see below). All fees must be paid in full prior to showing in classes.
  - e. All exhibitors must pay the MHCO Admin Fee at each show: There will be a \$7.00 for members/\$12.00 for non-members Admin fee per horse if entered into a show before the 2 week deadline. If a horse is entered after the 2 week deadline, but before the show date, there will be a \$14 admin fee per horse for members. If a nonmember enters after the 2 week deadline, the admin fee will be \$24 per horse. If member enters a horse the day of the show, there will be a \$20 late Admin fee. When the \$20 late Admin fee per horse is being charged, the regular Admin fee of \$7.00 per horse is waived (this will still keep your horse eligible for year end points).
  - f. At the discretion of the MHCO Show Committee/MHCO Executive & BOD, an exhibitor may be charged a \$25 "No Show" Penalty if the exhibitor pre-enters a show and then does not show up at all on show day without notice 24 hours prior to show day. This \$25 "No Show" penalty fee must be paid prior the exhibitor showing at the next MHCO Club show; all points will be suspended until this fee is paid. This fee must be paid prior to the last show of the season to qualify for year-end high points. If this fee is not paid, all points accumulated are forfeited. Note: this "No Show" Penalty fee does not apply for scratching one horse out of show if multiple horses are being shown by this exhibitor at this same show nor does it apply to class changes for horses of this exhibitor still competing at the same show. It only applies to a complete no show of an exhibitor and their horses.
  - g. For MHCO Host Shows, all criteria must be met as per "Host Package" guidelines (i.e. all forms must be accurately completed and be submitted on time).
  - h. Unregistered horses are not eligible for year end points unless registration papers arrive before September 15.

## **11. JUMPING**

- a. Jumps for the Jumper division may include a bounce jump set at 6 feet between standards.
- b. Jumper classes are to be timed: both rounds. The times in the first round are only to be used for placing the horses which are not eligible for the jump off, when there are less than 6 entries in this jump-off. The entries for the second round shall be made up of all exhibitors who are tied with the least number of faults incurred by knockdowns, refusals and circling and shall be placed above any horses who have not progressed to this round, no matter how the horses perform in the second round.
- c. When an automatic timer is used, it is up to the judge's discretion as to whether there is a blatant stopping of the timer by the handler before the horse reaches the end of the course. If so decided, the penalty incurred will be equal to a knockdown.
- d. Jump Off rounds may consist of fewer jumps; many or all of which will be raised.

## **12. OBSTACLE CLASSES (HALTER & DRIVING)**

- a. There need not be any course design changes between divisions and/or sub-divisions.
- b. The hoop used for turns on the fore or hind, in obstacle courses, should have an inside diameter of approximately 24" Larger hoops are to be used on courses where the hoop is passed over the horse.
- c. See more Driving Classes Rules below for more details.

## **13. DRIVING CLASSES**

- a. In the interest of safety, no person may be tied to the vehicle in any way during the competitions. A disabled driver may be attached for support, but must have a method of quick release.
- b. Whips - The MHCO strongly advises the carrying of whips at all times when driving. The whip must be of a suitable style and the tip of the lash must be long enough to reach the farthest horse's shoulder but must not reach past it.
- c. i. The MHCO strongly suggests, for safety, that all driving turnouts include breeching. However, breeching, martingales, side-checks and over-checks are optional in all classes. The use or not, of these harness parts, must in no way be reflected in the turnout scores.

- ii. All harnesses fitted with running martingales must also be equipped with rein stops (also known as martingale stops). Any exhibitors who use a running martingale without the addition of these stops will be excused from the ring.
- d. The use of dropped or flash nosebands is prohibited.
- e. Tongues may not be tied in any manner.
- f. Only bits sanctioned by the AMHR are allowed in driving classes. Bitless bridles (hackamore) or their use in conjunction with a bit are not permitted.
- g. All pleasure driving vehicles must be of the type to have a basket. Vehicles may be either 2 or 4 wheeled. In Team driving classes, any style of team harness or team vehicle (providing it is safe and suitable) may be used.
- h. Lap robes and aprons are optional and in no way should affect the turnout scores beyond the enhancing of the overall look of the turnout.
- i. The wearing of hard hats (safety helmets) is never to be penalized in turnout points. The MHCO strongly recommends that anyone, regardless of age or ability, wear an approved equine riding helmet while riding or driving in a horse drawn vehicle.
- j. Change of rein is normally performed on the rail unless otherwise approved by Show Committee and/or directed by the ring steward or judge.
- k. Method of Driving. Drivers may use a one or two-handed technique when driving. Judges shall not give preference to one technique or the other. Exceptions to this will only occur if the judge requests a pattern driven with a specific technique.
- l. All competitors may use a header at the line-up at no penalty. The header may assist at the stand but must not interfere in the back up. Headers MUST be inside the gate during the entire Youth and COOL/Novice Driving Classes. It remains optional for headers to be in the ring for Adult drivers.
- m. Under no conditions may the bridle or reins be removed from a horse while it is still put to a vehicle. Failure to comply will incur elimination. The horse must never be left unattended while put to a vehicle. Failure to comply will incur elimination. Elimination in these occurrences will include the removal of points and ribbons received in the driving classes at the show.
- n. GAITS:
  - i. HALT. Horses and vehicle 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 legs and be ready to move off at the slightest indication from the driver
  - ii. WALK. A free, regular and unconstrained walk of moderate extension is ideal. The horses should walk energetically, but calmly, with even and determined pace. The walk is a four beat gait
  - iii. SLOW TROT. (Pleasure Trot). The horse should maintain forward impulsion while showing submission to the bit. The horse should indicate willingness to be driven on the bit while maintaining a steady cadence.
  - iv. WORKING TROT. The pace is between the strong and the slow trot but more round than the strong trot. The horse must go 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 footprints of the fore feet. The degree of energy and impulsion displayed at the working trot denotes clearly the degree of suppleness and balance of the horses.
  - v. STRONG TROT. This is a clear, but not excessive, increase in pace and lengthening of stride while remaining well balanced and showing appropriate lateral flexion on turns. Light contact to be maintained. Excessive speed will be penalized.
  - vi. REIN BACK. Rein back is defined as a backward 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. The horse must move backward at least four steps in an unhurried manner with the head flexed and straight, pushing the carriage back evenly in a straight line. The driver should use quiet aids and light contact.
    2. Move forward willingly to former position using the same quiet aids.
- o. Large classes may be split by the judge, technical delegate or management if conditions warrant. The size of the ring should determine when a class should be split. In a small ring classes may need to be split even with a lower number of entries.
- p. Excessive use of the voice, shouting or whistling to the horse may be penalized at the judge's discretion. The driver should strive to control the horse's movements with discreet use of vocal aids.
- q. CLASS DESCRIPTIONS
  - i. WORKING
    1. A pleasure driving class in which entries are judged primarily on the suitability of the horse to provide a pleasant drive.
    2. To be shown both ways of the arena at a walk, slow trot, working trot and strong trot.

3. To stand quietly, both on the rail and while lined up, and to rein back. All entries chosen for a workout may be worked both ways of the arena at any gait requested by the judge and may be asked to execute a figure of eight.
4. At the start of class, exhibitors should enter the ring at the working trot and travel in a counter-clockwise direction.  
To be judged:  
70% on performance, manners and way of going of the horse.  
20% on the condition and fit of harness and vehicle.  
10% on the neatness of attire.

#### ii. REINSMANSHIP

1. A Pleasure driving class in which entries are judged primarily on the ability and skill of the driver.
2. To be shown at a walk, slow trot, working trot and strong trot. Drivers shall be required to rein back. All drivers chosen for a workout may be worked at any gait requested by the judge and may be asked to execute a figure of eight and/or perform other appropriate tests. \*
3. The driver should be seated comfortably on the box so as to be relaxed and effective. Either the one or two-handed method of driving is acceptable. Common to both methods, the elbows and arms should be close to the body with an allowing but steady hand enabling a consistent "feel" with the horse's mouth. Drivers should not be penalized or rewarded for using one general style over another.
4. At the start of class, exhibitors should enter the ring at the working trot and travel in a counter-clockwise direction.
5. \* In order to evaluate a driver's versatility, the judge may request a test involving driving with one hand.  
To be judged:  
75% on handling or reins and whip (if carried), control, posture, and overall appearance of the driver.  
25% on condition of harness and vehicle and neatness of attire.

#### iii. OBSTACLE DRIVING

1. Drivers must be allowed time to walk the course prior to the start of a class and to inspect each obstacle.
2. While walking the course drivers shall not alter, adjust or in any way move an obstacle, or any part thereof. Should a competitor have any question regarding a specific obstacle, he should call it to the attention of the technical delegate or show staff for clarification and/or adjustment.
3. If any part of an obstacle or start or finish marker is, at any time, disturbed or dislodged out of its sequence or driven backwards or driven twice, it will be considered driven incorrectly and be scored under the rules for each specific class.
4. The entire turnout (horse and vehicle) must pass through the marker if applicable. If the vehicle straddles a marker, score for disobedience will incur regardless of an actual disturbance. If the entire turnout passes outside the markers, the competitor will be judged off course. All wheels must pass through the start and finish markers to be considered driven correctly.

#### r. GENERAL RULES FOR OBSTACLE DRIVING CLASSES

- i. If you have been eliminated for any reason, the judge will blow a whistle and you should immediately leave the ring.
- ii. Should there be any difficulty entering the arena, competitors may request permission from the Judge to be led into the arena by their groom.
- iii. If timed, each competitor will be timed by stop-watch or by an electronic timing device, from the moment the nose of the horse crosses the start line until the nose of the horse crosses the finish line, both marked by cones. Start and finish gates are always to be used for timing of each round.
- iv. Disobediences are penalized as stated in the individual class specifications. They are defined as follows
  1. A run-out is defined as evading or passing an obstacle to be driven or the finish line.
  2. A refusal is defined as stopping and stepping back or sideways before an obstacle.
  3. Stopping in front of an obstacle without dislodging it and without backing up followed immediately by driving cleanly through is not penalized.
  4. If the halt is prolonged or if the horse backs even a single step voluntarily or not, a refusal is incurred.
- v. If it becomes necessary to stop a competitor for any reason (marker blown over, unauthorized animal or person on course, etc.) a signal will be given and time stopped. The driver will be allowed to go back far enough to regain momentum and wait. A signal will be given when the driver must resume the course. The timing watch will be restarted when the competitor reaches the point at which time was stopped.
- vi. Circling is defined as any form of a circle, which causes the driver to cross the original track between two consecutive obstacles except to retake an obstacle after a refusal or run-out.

s. **ELIMINATIONS:**

i. **Off-Course:**

1. A driver is off-course when he deviates from the designated pattern shown on the diagram by consecutive number and drives an obstacle out of order before correcting the deviation.
2. Any disobedience committed while correcting the deviation must be scored.
3. Failure to follow a continuous line in a course diagram will not be considered off-course unless an obstacle is taken out of order. Exception: any line indicating the required path to negotiate a complicated obstacle must be followed. This must be clearly indicated on the course diagram.

ii. **Outside Assistance:** A driver shall be eliminated if a groom or passenger touches the reins, whip or brake or if he receives assistance from any source.

t. **PENALTIES:**

i. Knocking over a start or finish marker - 5 seconds.

ii. Knocking down or dislodging obstacle -5 seconds. (Only one penalty can be incurred for a knock down in a single obstacle whether one or both balls are knocked down ) Penalties are only incurred for knocking down an obstacle (i.e. one or both balls of a single obstacle).

iii. Break to canter (3 or more steps):

1st break	5 seconds
2nd break	5 seconds
3rd break	5 seconds
4th break	Elimination
Prolonged canter	Elimination

iv. **Disobediences:**

1. When competitors attempt to pass through an obstacle and their horse shies away from the obstacle at the last moment without hitting any part of the obstacle.
2. When the horse runs away, or, in the opinion of the judge, the competitor has lost effective control.
3. A disobedience will incur a 5 second penalty for the first, a 10 second penalty for the second and elimination for the third instance. Competitors do not incur any penalties if they stop in front of an obstacle, without knocking down any element and then immediately drive cleanly through.
4. When competitors attempt to pass through an obstacle and their horse shies away from the obstacle at the last moment without hitting any part of the obstacle.
5. Failure to pass through the start/finish line will cause elimination.

**14. CRUELTY:** Evidence of any cruelty, abuse or inhumane treatment to a horse, in or out of the ring, will not be tolerated by the Show Management and shall result in disqualification of the horse and that exhibitor for the balance of the show. The offender will be barred from the show area for the duration of the show. The results shall be the forfeiture of all trophies, ribbons, awards, and points for that show and the exhibitor may be taken out of eligibility for year end points for the year in question. The show management may also notify authorities of the incident.

**15. DRESS CODE:**

All participants are expected to show in appropriate show clothing attire:

- no blue jeans
- collared shirt or blouse (Refer below for 4H exclusion)
- no bare shoulders
- no logo shirts
- dark coloured footwear to be worn in all but performance ranked classes (refer below for clarification)
- Performance classes: Only in the Hunter, Jumper and Obstacle classes will participants be allowed to change their footwear to either running shoes or sports shoes (i.e. cleat shoes.) These shoes must be of a neutral colour. (I.e. black, brown or white; bright or neon colours are not acceptable)

Any complaints regarding inappropriate dress being worn, will be left to the discretion of the Show Chair & MHCO Executive present. (This could include demerit points being awarded to the participant and/or excusal from the Class.)

4H Clubs who are competing at MHCO shows, shall be allowed to wear their 4H Club uniforms (e.g. polo shirts with 4H Crests or a 4H crested T-Shirt, with dark coloured pants, etc.)

**\*\*In all cases the MHCO strongly encourages participants to dress appropriately for safety at all times\*\***

**16. SHOW SEASON:** The MHCO Club Show season will be from October 1 to September 30 each year.