

SECTION 9 YOUNG HORSE AND YOUNG PONY

These rules and some Young Horse/Pony tests have been updated, effective from 1 August 2025. Clubs wishing to conduct YH Events using rules and tests dated prior to 1 August 2025 will be permitted to do so until **30 September 2025**.

National Young Horse (YH) competitions are a series conducted throughout Australia composed of qualifying competitions and an Australian final.

9.1 General conditions

All provisions in this section apply to both Young Horse and Young Ponies unless explicitly specified otherwise:

- a) For athletes with a disability, refer rule 5.18 with the addition that double bridles are not permitted in competition for 4 Year Old (YO), 5YO, 6YO Young Horses and Ponies
- b) in principle, the YH competitions will consist of one round at qualifiers and two rounds at the State Young Horse Championships and Australian Young Horse Championships
- c) in all 5, 6 and 7 year old YH FEI tests the trot is to be executed sitting unless specified rising
- d) in 4 year old FEI YH tests the trot work is rising unless sitting is specified
- e) a third round where a guest rider rides the horses is optional
- f) judging score sheets to be used for 4, 5, 6 and 7 year old YH competitions are available on the EA website
- g) at all 4, 5, and 6 year old competitions, the judges must sit together, in 7 year old competition the technical judge/s sits at C and the judges assessing the quality sit together at E or B
- h) horses will be judged on walk, trot, canter, submission and perspective as a future dressage horse, including standard of training on the basis of the Training Scale
- i) competitions will be Official but will not attract grading points
- j) horses may qualify for the Australian Young Horse Championships from 1 August of the year they turn 4, 5, 6 or 7 until the closing date of entries to the Australian Young Horse Championships
- k) riders must turn 10 years of age or over in the calendar year of competition
- l) all Young Horse results must be forwarded to EA for recording on the EA data base
- m) the competitor's state of origin must appear in the results for State and Australian Championships
- n) results for all competitions and rounds showing the mark for trot, walk, canter, submission and perspective for each horse and the technical mark for 7 year olds must be available online or in hard copy
- o) if a horse leaves the arena with all four feet during a 4 year old State Championships or qualifying competition this will not entail elimination but will incur a technical fault of 0.5% to be deducted. This rule does not apply to the Australian YH Championships in the first and second round but will apply to the consolation round.
- p) Errors of Course and technical faults (see [Annex E](#)) to be subtracted once score has been converted to a percentage score:
 - 1st error – 0.5 percentage point
 - 2nd error – 1.0 percentage point
 - 3rd error – Elimination
 - 0.5% to be deducted for each technical fault
- q) where two rounds are held the mark from the first round will not carry forward to the second round

- r) to determine the placing if there is an equal percentage for the first three (3) places: add the marks for “submission” and “perspective” and divide by two; the rider/horse combination with the higher average mark will be ranked highest. If still tied, the “submission” mark will decide. If still tied, the combinations will be equally placed

9.1.1 Judge requirements

In general:

- 4, 5 and 6 year old Young Horse competitions must only be judged by at least 2 EA or FEI-accredited Young Horse judges
- 7 year old Young Horse competitions require one technical judge of at least B level at C to judge the technical execution of the test. Plus, two other judges who must be at least EA YH qualified sitting together at E or B to judge the quality and standard of training as per the usual Young Horse assessment. – if one is a D level judge the 2nd judge must be at least C level
- in commanded tests, the judges will sit together at E or B. However, where the arena layout does not provide room for this positioning the judges may sit at C
- in all EA and FEI Young Horse tests (including qualifying events) the judges will sit together at C
- judges and YH specialists must adhere to the requirement of [Rule 1.8 Conflict of Interest](#) and declare any conflict of interest

a) [State Championships](#)

For State Championships, all competitive rounds must be judged by either FEI Young Horse judges or EA accredited Young Horse judges. There may be a third judge who is a recognised foreign Young Horse specialist. In the 7 year old competition there must be a third judge to assess the technical components who must be at least EA B level.

b) [Australian Championships](#)

- a) for 4, 5 and 6 year old competitions and rounds (excluding Consolation rounds) the Ground Jury must consist of 3 judges with 1 being an accredited FEI Young Horse judge (for 5 and 6 year old's one must be a Foreign FEI Young Horse judge). The third judge can either be an FEI Young Horse judge, an EA Young Horse judge or a foreign Young Horse specialist
- b) for 7 year old Young Horse competitions, the Ground Jury must consist of three judges, two must be FEI Young Horse judges plus one other technical judge who must be at least EA A level.
- c) Consolation rounds for horses are to be judged by 2 EA or FEI Young Horse judges, or a combination of both

c) [Ponies](#)

- a) in all 4, 5 and 6 year old competitions and all rounds excluding Consolation rounds, the Ground Jury must consist of 3 judges, including a minimum of 1 FEI-accredited Young Horse judge (Australian or foreign) and 2 EA Young Horse judges
- b) Consolation rounds for ponies are to be judged by 2 EA or FEI Young Horse judges, or a combination of both

9.1.2 Dress and saddlery

The following conditions including Section 5 and ANNEX E apply:

- a whip is permitted to be carried in all age groups at qualifying events
- a whip is permitted to be carried in the 4 year old age group (only) at the State and Australian Championships
- a whip is not permitted to be carried in the 5, 6, 7 year old competition arena at the State and Australian Championships. The whip must be dropped before entering the space around the competition arena or the rider will entail a technical fault of – 0.5% deducted from the final percentage.
- the minimum diameter of the mouthpiece of the snaffle bit must be at least:
 - 14mm for horses – refer to rule 5.11.3.2
 - 10mm for ponies – refer to rule 5.11.3.2

9.2 Conduct of qualifying events

- organisers of qualifying events have the choice of using either or both of the YH tests in each age group ridden at State and Australian Championships.
 - 4 and 5 year old commanded tests can be ridden 1 or 2 horses at a time in the arena.
 - If 2 horses/ponies are ridden at a time, the test must be commanded.
 - 6 year old commanded tests can be ridden 1 or 2 horses at a time in the arena.
 - It is recommended that 6 year olds be ridden 1 horse at a time in the arena and callers are permitted.
 - If 2 horses are ridden at a time the test must be commanded.
 - 7 yr old horses to be ridden 1 horse at a time in the arena. Callers are permitted.
 - When both YH tests in each age group are ridden at the same event it is recommended that the commanded test is ridden first. The OC can determine the number of horses permitted in the second test and if a qualifying score is required
 - results from both rounds may be used as qualifiers providing different judging panels are used for each test.
 - in commanded tests, the judges will sit together at E or B. However, where the arena layout does not provide room for this, the judges may sit at C. For all other EA and FEI YH tests the judges will sit together at C. For 7 yr old horses the technical judge will sit at C and young horses judges at E or B.
- a) Refer 9.1.1 for more information relating to judges

Tests to be ridden in Qualifying events

Age	
4 YO Horses/Ponies	EA YH test for 4 year olds (commanded)
	FEI test for 4 year olds
5 YO Horses/Ponies	EA YH test for 5 year olds (commanded)
	FEI Preliminary test for 5 year olds
6 YO Horses	EA YH test for 6 year olds (commanded)
	FEI Preliminary test for 6 year olds
6 YO Pony	EA YH test for 6 year old ponies (commanded)
	EA Final Round test for 6 year old ponies
7 YO Horses	FEI Preliminary test for 7 year olds
	FEI Final test for 7 year olds

9.3 State Young Horse Championships

For 4, 5, 6 and 7 year old horses and 4, 5 and 6 year old ponies:

- a) only first round test as outlined in rule 9.6 below may be commanded
- b) states may conduct their own championships each year; however, horses may qualify for the Australian Championships without attending a State Championship
- c) competitions will be offered for 4, 5 and 6 year old horses/ponies and 7 year old horses
- d) the judge's and competitors' state of origin must be included in the start list, draw, program and results
- e) for judges please refer to rule 9.1.1
- f) Refer rule 9.6 for tests to be ridden

9.3.1 First round

- a) to be ridden 1 or 2 horses at a time under the direction of a caller unless specified below.
- b) 4 and 5 year old horses/ponies to be ridden one or two horses at a time in the arena
- c) If 6 year old horses/ponies ridden 2 horses/ponies at a time, the test must be commanded. If ridden one horse/pony at a time a commander is not compulsory.
- d) 7 year old horses to be ridden one horse at a time. Callers are not permitted.
- b) the mark from the first round will not carry forward to the second round

9.3.2 Final round

- a) the top 10 combinations from the first round are eligible for the final round. If there is equality of placings for 10th place, equal horses must be included in the final round provided they have attained a score of no less than 6.5 (65%) in the first round
- b) the mark from the second round will determine the final placings

9.3.3 Commentary

Ideally there should be commentary by the judging panel made available to the public on the final round or, if possible, both rounds.

9.4 Australian Young Dressage Horse Championships

In Australian Young Dressage Horse Championships for 4, 5, 6 and 7 year old horses and 4, 5 and 6 year old ponies:

- a) only the first round 4/5/6 year old tests will be commanded; 7 year old test will not be commanded.
- b) commentary for the public is to be provided after each horse for the first, second and final rounds if possible.

9.4.1 Administration

- a) the draft schedule must be submitted to the EADC for approval at least four (4) months prior to the event
- b) the EADC must approve the appointment of the TD
- c) the TD must provide a report to the EADC within 21 days after the event
- d) the OC must provide a report to the EADC within 21 days after the event
- e) the judge's and competitors' state of origin must be included in the start list, draw and program

9.4.2 Judge requirements
Please refer to rule 9.1.1

9.4.3 Eligibility for Australian Young Dressage Horse Championships

- a) horses must qualify by achieving at least 6.5 (65%) at a Young Horse qualifying competition conducted under these rules at the age group they are entering
- b) competitors are to submit on the entry from 2 performances in the above-mentioned competitions for eligibility as detailed above. If performances are at events with 2 rounds, the entry form must state in which round the score was achieved
- c) horses may qualify with one performance; however, preference will be given to horses with 2 performances
- d) to verify the performance, details must be provided with the entry
- e) competitors will be ranked from the highest average of the two performances to the lowest
- f) the first round will be limited to 36 horses from each age group
- g) the acceptance list will be based on the highest ranked horses a reserve list in ranking order will be established
- h) in special circumstances, the OC can request permission from the EADC to increase the number of entries to the final
- i) imported horses that only have international qualifications may be accepted, provided proof of appropriate qualification in one or more overseas YH competitions accompanies the entry

9.4.4 Tests to be Ridden at Australian Young Dressage Horse Championships

For the tests to be ridden at Australian Young Dressage Horse Championships refer to rule 9.6.

9.4.5 First round for 4 and 5 year old horses and ponies

- a) to be ridden 1 or 2 horses or ponies at a time in the arena and will be commanded
- b) each group will be allocated at least 10 minutes
- c) each horse or pony will be awarded a mark for each of the requirements on the judging sheet and a final score calculated
- d) the mark from the first round will not carry forward to the second round
- e) all judges will sit together at E or B
- f) commentary to be provided – refer to [rule 9.4](#)

9.4.6 Final round 4 and 5 year old horses and ponies

- a) top 10 placings (including equals) from the first round will go forward into the second round provided they have attained a score of no less than 6.5 (65%) in the first round
- b) judges will sit together at C
- c) to be ridden one horse at a time
- d) commentary to be provided – refer to [rule 9.4](#)

9.4.7 First round 6 year old horses and ponies

- a) 1 horse/pony at a time in the arena is recommended, but may be ridden 2 horses/ponies at a time; test will be commanded.
- b) each group will be allocated at least 10 minutes
- c) each horse or pony will be awarded a mark for each of the requirements on the judging sheet and a final score calculated
- d) the mark from the first round will not carry forward to the second round
- e) all judges will sit together at E or B
- f) commentary to be provided – refer to [rule 9.4](#)

9.4.8 Final round 6 year old horses and ponies

- a) top 10 placings (including equals) from the first round will go forward into the second round provided they have attained a score of no less than 6.5 (65%) in the first round
- b) judges will sit together at C
- c) to be ridden one horse/pony at a time
- d) commentary to be provided – refer to [rule 9.4](#)

9.4.9 First round 7 year old horses

- a) the technical judge will sit at C. The judges assessing the quality will sit together at E or B
- b) to be ridden one horse at a time
- c) each horse will be awarded a mark for each of the requirements on the judging sheet and a final score calculated
- d) the mark from the first round will not carry forward to the second round
- e) commentary to be provided – refer to [rule 9.4](#)

9.4.3 Final round 7 year old

- a) top 10 placings (including equals) from the first round will go forward into the second round provided they have attained a score of no less than 6.5 (65%) in the first round
- b) judges will sit at C (technical) and two judges together at E or B (to assess the quality)
- c) to be ridden one horse at a time
- d) commentary to be provided – refer to [rule 9.4](#)

9.4.4 Third guest rider round for 4, 5, 6 and 7 year old horses. A guest rider round is at the discretion of the OC. The format to be determined by the OC.

9.4.5 Champion of Champions prize

There may be a separate Champion of Champions prize for 4, 5, 6 and 7 year old horses and 4, 5 and 6 year old ponies. It is up to the OC to determine how the Champion of Champions is conducted and assessed.

9.5 Consolation finals

Any 4, 5, 6 and 7 year old horses and 4, 5 and 6 year old ponies that are not eligible to compete in the ~~second~~ final round will be eligible to compete in the Consolation final providing they have scored at least 6.0 (60%) in the first round. The Consolation final is to be judged by 2 accredited Young Horse judges sitting at C.

The tests to be ridden, refer rule 9.6

9.6 The tests to be ridden at State and Australian Championships*

	First Round	Second Round (inc. Consolation Finals)
4 YO	EA YH test for 4 year olds (commanded)	FEI test for 4 year olds
4 YO Pony	EA YH test for 4 year olds (commanded)	FEI test for 4 year olds
5 YO	EA YH test for 5 year olds (commanded)	FEI Preliminary test for 5 year olds
5 YO Pony	EA YH test for 5 year olds (commanded)	FEI Preliminary test for 5 year olds
6 YO	EA YH test for 6 year olds (commanded)	FEI Preliminary test for 6 year olds
6 YO Pony	EA YH test for 6 year old ponies (commanded)	EA Final Round test for 6 year old ponies
7 YO	FEI Preliminary test for 7 year olds	FEI Final test for 7 year olds

*All Young Horse tests and scoresheets are available to download from the Equestrian Australia website. See www.equestrian.org.au

9.7 Selection of Young Horses to represent Australia overseas

The EA National Dressage Selectors will select the Australian representatives for the FEI World Breeding Federation for Sport Horses (WBFSH) Dressage World Breeding Championships for Young Horses based on merit and with reference to any EA Selection Policy, in addition to the FEI Rules, in conjunction with the WBFSH.

Only horses registered into WBFSH member studbooks at birth can be nominated and entered in the Championships.

Refer the current EA Selection Policy for details on the FEI WBFSH Dressage World Breeding Championships.

9.8 Guide for riders and judges

Judges will award a mark out of 10 (decimal points are permitted) for walk, trot, canter, submission and perspective as a dressage horse. Judges must consider the following questions when making their assessments:

- is the horse clearly demonstrating correct education according to the training scale?
- does the horse demonstrate a desirable picture of a dressage horse?
The fundamental criteria of paces, submission and perspective as a dressage horse are evaluated as follows:
 - the steps and strides must be in a regular rhythm and free from tension
 - keeping in mind the training level of the horse, special emphasis should be placed on:
 - a smooth and steady contact
 - the willing acceptance of the bit
 - a submissive poll in the three basic paces and in the different tempi and the transitions
 - flexion and bending
 - the harmonious development on both reins
 - suppleness
 - desire to go forward
 - ability to engage the hindquarters
 - potential to collect
- during the initial movements of the test, horses that still show signs of tension and concentration lapses, or even shying or unsettled, should be judged more benevolently than in a normal dressage competition
- minor mistakes should not be given weight if, in principle, the horse is demonstrating good movements and is demonstrating the adoption by the trainer of desirable training technique

- g) it is recommended that one of the judges provides a commentary after the completion of each horse's test in at least the second round but preferably for both the first and second round. This commentary is mainly for the benefit of spectators and the main purpose is to explain the rideability and strengths of the individual horse in relation to the demands at each level of competition, the quality of the three basic paces, and the horse's ability to perform as a high level dressage horse
- h) see FEI Dressage Handbook for further notes on the purpose of and judging of Young Horse competition
- i) for the 7 year old competitions the technical judge is looking at the way the horse copes with the demands of the test and the adjustability shown with the more difficult exercises asked for and the demand for collection, engagement and mobility. All judges have a clear focus on basics, a clear rhythm, sufficient swing in the back and engagement of the hindquarters, acceptance of the contact, lateral bend and suppleness. That the horse is balanced and straight in the work without tension and able to execute the flying changes and 1/2 pirouettes correctly
- j) the technical and quality scores are added together