

Horse shows at fair test young riders' skills

By Sam Dieter

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Young riders will get the chance to show their skills at the Thomas County Fair with a pair of horse shows at the fairgrounds.

The open class horse show will be at 8:30 a.m. Saturday at the small horse arena on the west side of the fairgrounds. The 4-H horse show, open only to 4-Hers, will be at 9 a.m. Monday at the same place.

The 4-H show will be divided by age: one category for riders 7 to 9 years old, one for 10 to 13 and one for 14 and over. The open class show includes categories for 7 to 9-year-olds, 10 to 13, 14 to 18 and 18 and over.

The open class show has events in English pleasure, English equitation, bareback horsemanship, western pleasure, western horsemanship, reining, barrels, poles, flags and trail. There will be a 6-and-under section for some of these events.

The 4-H show has horsemanship instead of western horsemanship and does not include a six-and-under category.

Both shows also include haltering events: ten in all, in open class for mares and geldings of different ages, as well as haltering events

for young kids. The 4-H show will have halter categories for mares and geldings, 10 in the mare category and eight in the geldings.

Clint Milliman, who used to work with 4-Hers as the agriculture extension agent for the county, said the riders are generally younger. The intermediate, 10 to 13 category, tends to be larger than the 14 and over, for instance.

"As they get older, some of them quit doing it," he said.

The open class show includes non-4-Hers, including grownups who do not fit into the 7- to 18-year-old age limits for club membership. But Milliman said the show consists mostly of either 4-Hers who want to compete twice, or other kids the same age.

As for the events those kids prefer, they generally involve racing.

"There seems to be more and more (interest) in the speed events," Milliman said, "like the poles and the flags."

These kids generally make it to a bunch of shows in the area, he said, including shows outside 4-H. Diann Gerstner, currently the county's sole extension agent, said there are around 30 kids who sign up for the 4-H show each year, and anywhere from 35 to 50 who sign up for the open class section.



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A pair of young riders lined up with their entries at last year's open class horse show at the small horse arena. There will be shows again for both open class riders and kids in 4-H.



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