



JUDGES RULES COMMITTEE
2025 NCHA Convention Agenda
June 21, 2025 ** 8:30 am – 10:30 am
Room – Lone Star F
San Antonio, Texas ** Grand Hyatt River Walk

1. Call to Order and Roll Call
2. Mission Statement
3. Judging Rules 1-21 Revisions, AMS-SAMS, Challenge System Revision
4. NCHA website feature or Facebook forum for affiliates to post show dates and get available judges to respond
5. Old Business
6. New Business
7. Election of Chairman & Vice Chairman
8. Adjournment



Mission Statement

"The NCHA promotes and celebrates the cutting horse, whose origin on Western ranches allows us to support ranching and its western heritage. By establishing rules for the conduct of cutting horse show. NCHA strives to give cutters a level playing field and a progressive class structure, which accommodates everyone from the beginner to the advanced competitor. NCHA draws on the diverse talents and background of its members, and encourages their participation in helping it achieve these goals."



JUDGING RULE 1

Each horse is required to enter the herd sufficiently deep enough to show their ability to make a cut. One such deep cut will satisfy this rule. Failure to satisfy this requirement will result in a three (3) point penalty. A horse will be given credit for their ability to enter the herd quietly with very little disturbance to the herd or to the **cow** brought out.

NOTE: If a cutter has not satisfied the deep cut rule on their first or second cut, on their last cut, a cow must be separated from the herd with the cutter's hand down before the first sound of the buzzer.

NOTE: In rule one (1) a judge must consider the condition of the arena and the cattle.

EXAMPLE 1: In a herd of cattle, a Cutter cuts two cows cleanly and is working the second cow when the buzzer sounds. Each time the Cutter cuts, they allow **some** cattle to come around them and **they** cut **a** cow.

RULING: If the Cutter rode to the edge of the herd and peeled **some cattle off the edge of the herd without entering the body of the herd** the judge shall rule that no deep cut was made and assess a three (3) point penalty.

NOTE: In ruling on Rule One, it is more important for a judge to consider the depth and route taken by the Cutter than it is to count the number of cows that move around their horse. It is necessary, however, for the Cutter to get behind some cattle before Rule 1 is satisfied.

EXAMPLE: 2 The cutter rides to the top edge of the herd, and then

(A) rides deep into the body of the herd by splitting the herd, turns and drives a cow up the middle and cuts that cow.

(B) waits for volunteers to leave the herd, turns and cuts one of them without entering the body of the herd

RULING:

(A) No penalty

(B) Assess a three (3) point penalty

EXAMPLE 3: Cutter A's horse walks quietly into the herd and remains quiet while Cutter A makes their cut. Cutter B's horse walks into the herd but is obviously nervous and moves excessively while Cutter B is making their cut.

RULING: Cutter A shall receive more credit for their cut than Cutter B.

EXAMPLE 4: After quitting a cow, a horse starts to lie **down with its legs underneath itself, but the horse is not on its side with all four feet extended in the same direction.**

RULING: No penalty but run content may be reduced in herd work depending upon the **effort** it takes to get the horse back to its feet.

EXAMPLE 5: As the cutter enters the herd, the horse kicks out at the rider's spur with a hind leg.

RULING: No penalty, however run content will be reduced in herd work.

JUDGING RULE 2

When an animal is cut from the herd, it is more desirable that it be taken toward the center of the arena, and credit will be rewarded for same. Additional credit will be given the horse which drives its stock sufficient distance from the herd to assure that the herd will not be disturbed, thereby showing their ability to drive a cow.

JUDGING RULE 3

Riding with a loose rein throughout a performance is a requirement. If the cutters reins are tight enough to attract the judge's attention, put a minus in the loose rein column and take one point off for each cow that they were tight on, and take those points off at the end of the run, just like a major penalty. This is the only case which we take 1-point penalties off at the end of the run, to increase the severity of this rule infraction. Remember riding with loose reins is a requirement.

JUDGING RULE 4

Credit will be recognized for setting up a cow and controlling it in a working position as near the center of the arena as possible.

EXAMPLE 1: *Cutter A cuts cleanly and works three cows. They work their second cow entirely on the left one-third of the arena. Cutter B has a similar work, except they hold their cows much nearer the center of the arena.*

RULING: *Cutter B shall receive more credit for their work than Cutter A. The judge shall be careful not to penalize Cutter A; however, Cutter B must receive more credit.*

EXAMPLE 2: *During a work, the Cutter trails their stock just enough that the cow runs from wall to wall and is never set up and held near the center of the arena.*

RULING: *The horse which allows its stock to run from wall to wall, because they are trailing, or which rolls out on its turns and lacks control shall not be credited under this rule.*

NOTE: *The degree of difficulty presented by the stock cut out shall weigh heavily on the judge's decision. Credit must be given to the horse which meets the challenge of a hard charging, fast moving animal without loss of working position and control. Where other considerations are equal, the horse which works a longer time should receive greater credit.*

JUDGING RULE 5

If the cutting horse or its rider creates disturbance at any time throughout their working period (21/2 minutes), they will be penalized:

a. *Any noise directed by the contestant toward the cattle will be penalized one (1) point.*

EXAMPLE 1: *While attempting to make a cut, the Cutter intentionally makes noise to manipulate the cow/cattle. This noise is clearly audible to the judge.*

RULING: *Assess a one (1) point penalty (C)*

b. *Each time a horse runs into the herd, scatters the herd while working or picks up one or more cows, it will be penalized three (3) points. A wild cow leaving on its own would not be considered picking up cattle.*

Note: *The definition of a wild cow as it pertains to rule 5.b., is a cow that goes into motion on its own (not caused by the cutter).*

Note: *At the first sound of the buzzer, the run is terminated. The entire cow must enter working area of horse. The working area of the horse is defined as the entire cow being in front of the horse's head.*

EXAMPLE 1: *While in the process of cutting, the Cutter has some cattle separated from the herd to cut the desired cow. The cutter separates one cow from the others and begins to work. The other cattle/cow did not return to the herd and rejoin the cow being worked. The cutter continues to work his/her original cow and quits legally.*

RULING: *No penalty.*

NOTE: *Picking up cattle will not be charged in this instance, because the remaining cattle/cow had not rejoined the body of the herd. The cattle/cow in this instance would have been considered "traffic".*

EXAMPLE 2: *While in the process of cutting, the Cutter has some cattle separated from the herd to cut the desired cow, he/she comes close enough to the herd to cause one (1) or more cows to enter the working area of the horse.*

RULING: *Assess a three (3) point penalty for picking up cattle.*

EXAMPLE 3: *The Cutter quits legally, and one or more cows leave the herd almost simultaneously.*

RULING: *In the judge's opinion the Cutter ran into the herd and caused the cattle to leave, prior to quitting, assess a three (3) point penalty.*

NOTE: *Even though the Cutter quits before a cow enters the working area of the horse, a three (3) point penalty will be charged if the judge is certain the disturbance was caused by the Cutter.*

EXAMPLE 4: *While the Cutter is working a cow at a reasonable distance from the herd, another cow voluntarily leaves the herd and stops in such a position that the working horse's normal pattern causes the cow to enter the working area of the horse.*

RULING: *No penalty, as no disturbance of the herd occurs.*

c. The judge shall stop any work due to the contestant working the horse in an unprofessional manner, disturbance of the cattle by the contestant, or excessive training of the horse by the contestant. Any contestant failing to stop immediately after the first whistle will be whistled out again. *The judge is responsible for reporting the double whistle violation. It is the Judges responsibility to be prepared and have a whistle and a rule book at all judging assignments.*

EXAMPLE 1: The Cutter is making an honest effort to show his/her horse, but the horse is not working properly. The Cutter runs through the cattle more than once, severely disturbing the herd.

RULING: The judge will blow his/her whistle and terminate the run.

NOTE: Even though the Cutter was not training or abusing the horse, they were creating a disturbance of the cattle.

EXAMPLE 2: After losing a cow, the Cutter cuts another cow and stops their horse each time the cow stops. In the judge's opinion they are training their horse.

(A) They do not jerk or excessively cue their horse.

(B) They are excessive training their horse.

RULING:

(A) Score the cutter sixty (60)

(B) Terminate the run and score the cutter a zero (0).

NOTE: In judging a situation concerning simultaneous major penalties, only one penalty will be called with the larger penalty taking precedence over the smaller penalty. The exception to this rule is Rule 8.b., which concerns a Cutter using two hands on the reins.

JUDGING RULE 6

A horse will be penalized three (3) points each *time a Cutter allows the cow being worked to move inside of the back fence marker within one step, or three (3) feet of the fence. The outer limits of the designated back fence shall include any boards or other markers used to define this outer limit.* The back fence to be designated by *show management* before the contest starts. If any of the contestants voice an objection before the contest starts, *show management* shall take a vote of the contestants, and a “back fence” acceptable to the majority shall be designated and used.

EXAMPLE 1: The cow being worked bangs into the back fence *inside the back fence marker, the cow*

(A) is moving away from the *Cutter* when they quit.

(B) is moving toward the Cutter when they quit.

(C) returns to the herd.

RULING:

(A) Assess a three (3) point penalty *for a back fence violation.*

(B) Assess a three (3) point penalty for a back fence violation and a three (3) point penalty for an illegal quit (Rule 13). Total penalty of six (6) points.

(C) The judge will consider the two penalties to have occurred simultaneously unless the cow first moves away from the horse and then returns to the herd. When the penalties occur simultaneously, only the larger penalty of five (5) points should be assessed.

EXAMPLE 2: While in the process of cutting, the Cutter has *some* cattle separated from the herd. As the Cutter attempts to cut the desired cow, the cattle move *inside of the back fence marker within one step, or three (3) feet of the fence* then move back to the working area.

RULING: Assess a three (3) point penalty for a back fence.

EXAMPLE 3: A Cutter is working a cow that stops against the arena fence outside the back fence marker. The cow moves toward the horse until it is inside the marker.

RULING: Assess a three (3) point penalty.

EXAMPLE 4: The Cutter is working a cow that jumps out of the arena:

(A) *outside of the back fence markers.*

(B) *inside the back fence markers.*

RULING:

(A) *No penalty*

(B) *Assess a three (3) point penalty for a back fence (Rule 6).*

NOTE: In judging a situation concerning simultaneous major penalties, only one penalty will be called with the larger penalty taking precedence over the smaller penalty. The exception to this rule is Rule 8.b., which concerns a Cutter using two hands on the reins.

JUDGING RULE 7

*If, whether on its own or at the direction of the rider, a horse turns the wrong way so that its tail is **pointed** toward the cow being worked, a five (5) point penalty for turn tail will be assessed.*

EXAMPLE 1: *While in the process of making their cut, the cutter has **some** cattle separated from the main herd. As the cutter attempts to cut the desired cow, the horse turns away from the cow/**cattle** so severely that the horse's tail points toward the cow or separated cattle.*

RULING: *The Cutter is assessed a five (5) point turn tail penalty.*

EXAMPLE 2: *During the process of making a cut, the cutter directs their horse to make a 360-degree **turn***

(A) while still in the main herd.

(B) after the cutter has some cattle separated from the main herd.

RULING:

(A) No penalty

(B) Assess a (5) point turn tail penalty.

EXAMPLE 3: *The Cutter has put their hand down and the horse is working a cow*

*(A) **when the** horse attempts to turn their tail toward the cow. The Cutter **reins his/her horse and** stops the horse before they **can** completely turn away from the cow.*

(B) when the horse turns away from the cow so that the horse's tail points toward the cow being worked.

RULING:

(A) This is not a case of turning tail. Assess a five (5) point penalty for horse quitting a cow (Rule 14)

(B) Assessed a five (5) point turn tail penalty.

JUDGING RULE 8

*While working, a horse will be penalized one (1) point each time the reins are used to control or direct (to rein) the horse. A one (1) point penalty shall also be charged whenever a horse is visibly cued in any manner. If the reins are tight enough that the bits are bumped at any time, they shall be penalized one (1) penalty point (B) per occurrence in the 1-point penalty column, even though the hand of the rider does not move. In addition, put a minus in the loose reins column per cow and take off **one point (1) per cow** at the end of the run to increase the severity of this rule infraction. (Rule 3)*

NOTE: The intent of Rule 8a is to prevent the Cutter from helping his/ her horse after a cow is clear of the herd. Judges **shall use common sense and** allow the Cutter to handle his/her horse enough to clear the cow that they selected to cut. In the application of this rule, the term “clear” means far enough out from the body of the herd that the Cutter has a reasonable opportunity to begin working and that all other cattle are at least behind their horse’s buttocks.

a. *A horse must be released as soon as the desired **cow** is clear of the other cattle, **and the cutter is no longer driving the cow forward**. Additional reining, cuing, or positioning will result in a one (1) point penalty for each occurrence.*

EXAMPLE 1: *While making his/her cut, the Cutter moves his/her hand up and down, side to side while selecting a cow to work. He/she **then releases their horse to indicate that the cutter is ready to begin working and** places their hand:*

*(A) **on the horse’s neck close to the saddle** and leaves it there while working:*

*(B) **on the horse’s neck close to the saddle first and then push their hand forward or moves it enough to cue his/her horse.***

(C) up the horse’s neck (too far forward).

RULING:

(A) No penalty.

*(B) **Assess** a one (1) point penalty **(B)** for each occurrence.*

*(C) **Assess** a one **(1)** point penalty **(G)** per cow.*

NOTE: The Cutter may rein his/her horse as much as necessary to make a cut. Clean, pretty cuts shall receive credit.

EXAMPLE 2: *The Cutter makes a cut and while waiting for the cow to begin movement **he/she** shakes **their** rein hand causing movement of the bridle reins:*

RULING: Penalize the Cutter one (1) point **penalty (B)** for each **occurrence**.

EXAMPLE 3: The Cutter cuts a cow that is walking away from the herd. The Cutter reins his/her horse until they **are clear** of the herd **and the cutter is no longer driving the cow forward**.

(A) The Cutter then releases their horse.

(B) The Cutter continues to hold contact with his/her horse by having their hand up and some tension on his/ her reins. They do not move their horse around; they are holding his/her horse's attention on the cow until the cow moves.

RULING:

(A) No penalty.

(B) Assess a one (1) point penalty **(E)**.

EXAMPLE 4: The Cutter selects a cow from a group of cattle that are moving around him/her. They step to that cow and rein **their** horse until **their** herd holders have the other cattle behind the **contestant's** horse's buttocks (cleared away). **The Cutter** continues to hold tension on **the** reins while the cow that they have cut trots several feet across the arena. When the cow stops and turns around, the Cutter stops his/her horse and reins it back to the cow before releasing it.

RULING: Assess a one (1) point penalty for each time the Cutter cues their horse. In this case, one (1) **point penalty (E)** for holding the horse going across the arena, one (1) **point penalty (B)** for stopping the horse, and one (1) **point penalty (B)** for reining it back to the cow. Total penalty of three (3) points.

b. The rider shall hold the bridle reins in one hand. A three (3) point penalty shall be charged if the second hand touches the reins for any purpose except to straighten them.

NOTE: In judging a situation concerning simultaneous major penalties, only one penalty will be called with the larger penalty taking precedence over the smaller penalty. The exception to this rule is Rule 8.b., which concerns a Cutter using two hands on the reins.

EXAMPLE 1: While working a cow, the cutter uses two hands on the bridle reins to **stop or** turn his/her horse around.

RULING: Assess a three (3) point penalty.

EXAMPLE 2: The Cutter drops one bridle rein and uses his/her free hand to retrieve it

(A) after they have obviously legally quit the cow and stopped their horse.

(B) while cutting a cow.

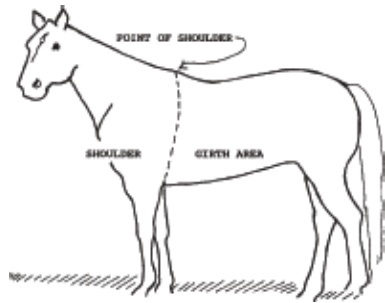
(C) while working a cow.

RULING:

(A) No penalty

(B) and (C) Assess a three (3) point penalty for using both hands on the bridle reins.

*c. A three (3) point penalty shall be assessed each time a horse is **spurred** in the shoulder.*



d. A toe, foot, or stirrup on the horse's shoulder is considered a visible cue. A one (1) point penalty shall be charged for each occurrence.

JUDGING RULE 9

If a horse lets a cow that is being worked get back to the herd, it will be penalized five (5) points

EXAMPLE 1: *The cow being worked is making a strong attempt to return to the herd. The Cutter quits the cow after he/she has lost their working advantage. The cow leaves the working area and returns to the herd.*

RULING: *Assess a one (1) point penalty for loss of working advantage and a five (5) point penalty for a lost cow. Total penalty of six (6) points.*

EXAMPLE 2: *While working a cow, the cow out-maneuvers the horse and it is obvious that the horse is unable to stop the cow from entering the herd. The buzzer sounds before the cow physically enters the herd.*

RULING: *Assess a five (5) point penalty.*

NOTE: *At the buzzer, loss of a cow occurs the moment the horse can no longer regain its working advantage, regardless of if the rider's hand is up or down. For a loss to occur during the work, the cow must return to the herd.*

NOTE: *In judging a situation concerning simultaneous major penalties, only one penalty will be called with the larger penalty taking precedence over the smaller penalty. The exception to this rule is Rule 8.b., which concerns a Cutter using two hands on the reins.*

JUDGING RULE 10

If a rider changes cattle after visibly committing to a specific cow, a five (5) point penalty will be assessed. A Cutter shall be committed whenever he/she makes **a move** to a specific **cow** **when there is separation between that cow and other cattle**, and that move clearly and obviously indicates a specific animal has been selected.

NOTE: All reviews on change of cattle must be reviewed at normal speed (no slow motion).

EXAMPLE 1: During the process of cutting a cow, the Cutter drives a group of cattle away from the herd. Before the Cutter attempts to cut one of these cows, **one or more** cows leave the herd and walk to a position nearby but do not join the first group of cattle.

(A) The Cutter steps to the first group of cattle and cuts one of them.

(B) The Cutter reins away from the first group toward the second group and cuts one of them.

RULING:

(A) and (B) No penalty.

NOTE: A Cutter commits to a single animal, not to a group of cattle.

Two (2) or more cows are considered a group.

EXAMPLE 2: During the process of cutting a cow, the Cutter drives a group of cattle away from the herd.

(A) looks at a brown cow but does not attempt to move his/her horse toward the brown cow. He/she then cuts a red cow.

(B) moves his/her horse toward a brown cow **with separation** and reins once to move his/her horse in the direction it starts. He/she then cuts a red cow.

RULING:

(A) No penalty

(B) Assess a five (5) point penalty for changing cows.

EXAMPLE 3: The Cutter enters the herd and drives **a single cow** out, as that cow moves around his/her horse, a group of cattle come out of the herd **and join the cow that has been separated**. The Cutter releases their original cow and cuts one from the group.

RULING: Assess a five (5) point penalty.

EXAMPLE 4: During the process of cutting a cow, the Cutter steps toward a cow to stop the flow of cattle. That cow stops and other cattle also stop thereby forming a group of cattle. The Cutter then cuts any cow from that group.

RULING: No penalty.

NOTE: A judge must allow a Cutter to stop a group of cattle and then cut from that group. A judge shall not consider the Cutter visibly committed to that lead cow unless there is separation between the lead cow and the rest of the flow, and the Cutter attempts to cut that cow.

EXAMPLE 5: During the process of cutting a cow, the Cutter starts a group of cattle around his/her horse. The Cutter selects a cow and reins his/her horse toward it and the cow is separated. The herd holders attempt to drive the other cattle away; some cattle turn and rejoin the cow that is already cut. The Cutter separates their original cow from the others without the group rejoining the herd or moving to the back fence. The Cutter

(A) releases their horse and does not cue the horse in any manner.

(B) releases their horse and then picks up their hand to separate the original cow from the others

(C) does not release their horse until all other cattle have cleared and are at least behind their horse's buttocks.

RULING:

(A) No penalty; credit shall be given for the horse staying with the original cow

(B) Assess a one (1) point penalty each time the Cutter reins their horse (Rule 8)

(C) No penalty but should affect run content in herd work

EXAMPLE 6: The Cutter is working a cow. Another cow that has previously escaped the turnback horses decides to return to the herd. As the returning cow approaches,

(A) the Cutter does not cue his/her horse, and the horse does not switch to the returning cow.

(B) the Cutter anticipates that a change might occur and reins his/her horse to prevent it. The horse's attention is momentarily diverted toward the returning cow, but they do not change cattle.

(C) the Cutter's horse switches its attention and makes a move with the other cow. The Cutter reins the horse back to the original cow.

(D) the Cutter's horse changes to the returning cow.

RULING:

(A) Reward credit to the Cutter. The amount of credit rewarded depends upon the exact circumstances of the situation.

(B) Assess a one (1) point penalty for reining the horse (Rule 8) and should affect run content.

(C) Assess a five (5) point penalty for the change and a one (1) point penalty for reining the horse (Rule 8). Total penalty of six (6) points.

(D) Assess a five (5) point penalty.

EXAMPLE 7: If the Cutter is committed to a cow, but before he/she is clear of the herd, or traffic, their horse abruptly attempts to change to a different cow.

(A) The Cutter had not released his/her horse and immediately reined it back.

(B) The Cutter had dropped his/her hand indicating their horse was on the desired cow.

RULING:

(A) No penalty but would affect run content in herd work

(B) Assess a five (5) point penalty.

JUDGING RULE 11

When a horse loses its working advantage, misses a cow, or is working out of position, it will be penalized (A) 1 point, or (F) 1 point.

DEFINITION OF TERMS:

Loss of working advantage is defined as: *When a horse goes by a cow to the degree that they lose their position to maintain control of the cow.*

A miss is defined as: *A response of the horse to the action of the cow being worked, resulting in a loss of working advantage. **Penalty (A)***

Working out of position is defined as: *The position of the horse in relation to the cow being worked, being consistently either too short or too long in working to control a cow. **Penalty (F)***

EXAMPLE 1: *While working, the cutter's horse goes by a cow. The cow turns,*

(A) the cutter maintains their control and working advantage of the cow

(B) the cutter regains their control and working advantage of the cow within a short distance.

*(C) it is necessary for the cutter to make a hard run before **regaining control and working advantage of the cow.***

RULING:

(A) No penalty should be charged a horse which maintains control after going past a cow to cause it to turn. The horse that can maintain working advantage over a cow that presents a severe challenge shall receive credit.

(B) No penalty, this is not an obvious miss but can affect run content.

*(C) Assess a one (1) point penalty **(A)** for losing the working advantage*

NOTE: *If it is not obvious, it is not a penalty.*

EXAMPLE 2: *While working, the cutter's horse goes past a cow and loses its working advantage.*

(A) The cutter reins the horse back and, after taking several steps, the horse regains its working advantage.

(B) The cow stops and turns away; the cutter quits without regaining its working advantage

RULING:

*(A) Assess a one (1) point penalty **(A)** for losing the working advantage also, assess a one (1) point penalty **(B)** for reining the horse. Total penalty of 2 points.*

*(B) Assess a one (1) point penalty **(A)** for losing the working advantage.*

NOTE: *The cutter may not avoid a one (1) point penalty for losing their working advantage or being out of position by quitting a cow, even though the quit is legal under (Rule 13).*

EXAMPLE 3: *While working, the cutter's horse is extremely long in one direction and extremely short in the other direction. The cutter continues to work in this manner.*

RULING: *Assess a one (1) point penalty **(F)** per cow, a minus (-) in controlling a cow and reduce run content accordingly.*

NOTE: *A judge should acknowledge that a loss of working advantage, a miss, and/or working out of position, can result in a minus (-) in run content.*

JUDGING RULE 12

Unnecessary roughness, such as a horse pawing, biting, or kicking cattle, will be penalized three (3) points. **Penalty (E)**

EXAMPLE 1: While in the process of **cutting or working a cow**, the Cutter's horse:

(A) attempts to bite the cow but does not make contact.

(B) nuzzles a cow

(C) obviously bites the cow

(D) kicks a cow

(E) paws a cow

RULING:

(A) and (B) No penalty

(C), (D) and (E) Assess a three (3) point penalty (E)

EXAMPLE 2: During a run, the Cutter's horse:

(A) strikes with its front foot but misses the cow.

(B) kicks at the cow but does not make contact.

(C) horse kicks out with one or both hind legs or jumps into the air slinging its head and hopping up behind.

RULING:

(A), (B) and (C) No penalty, but this type of unusual behavior would detract from the run and cannot have a positive influence on the point value awarded for that run.

JUDGING RULE 13

A contestant may quit a cow when it is obviously stopped, turned away, *backing up, has fallen*, or behind the turnback horses and the turnback horses are behind the timeline. A penalty of three (3) points must be charged if the animal is quit under any other circumstances.

DEFINITION: “Obviously stopped” means that in a slow-motion video at 1/16th (.06) speed, a cow has all four feet on the ground for five or more seconds. In real time, this is less than one second.

NOTE: When a cow is in an obviously stopped position and simply picks up one foot and replaces it *and remains obviously stopped*, the quit would be considered clean. This would not include the final step of a “slow walking” cow *or the first step of a cow going back into motion*.

EXAMPLE 1: *The Cutter is working a cow, and the cow stops while facing the Cutter’s horse. As the Cutter is quitting, the cow:*

- (A) simply replaces a foot and stands still.*
- (B) starts to back away from the Cutter.*
- (C) moves its head from side to side but does not move its feet*
- (D) moves into the Cutter’s horse*

RULING:

- (A), (B), and (C), No penalty.*
- (D) Assess a three (3) point penalty.*

EXAMPLE 2: *The Cutter is working a cow that takes them deep into the corner of the arena. The cow turns into the Cutter’s horse, the Cutter:*

- (A) waits until the cow has traveled a sufficient distance to clearly show the judge the cow is moving away from their horse before initiating the quit*
- (B) quits the cow in the turn.*

RULING:

- (A) No penalty,*
- (B) Assess a three (3) point penalty.*

NOTE: No imaginary line will be considered in applying this rule. The cow’s relationship to the cutting horse (turned away) is the only thing to consider in applying this rule.

EXAMPLE 3: The Cutter is working a cow that falls to the ground. The Cutter quits the cow:

(A) while the cow is lying on the ground.

(B) after the cow has fallen and is returning to its feet.

(C) after the cow has returned to its feet and is moving into the horse.

RULING:

(A) and (B), No penalty

(C) Assess a three (3) point penalty.

EXAMPLE 4: While working a cow that has run behind the turnback horses and the turnback horses are behind the timeline, the Cutter quits the cow

(A) while it is turning toward his/her horse.

(B) while it is turning toward his/her horse after the cow has moved back between the Cutter and their turnback horses.

RULING:

(A) No penalty.

(B) Assess a three (3) point penalty.

EXAMPLE 5: The Cutter is working their cow. The Cutter initiates their quit by picking up their rein hand and/or taking their free hand off the saddle horn. The Cutter is uncertain if the quit is clean and immediately puts their rein hand down and/or their free hand back on the saddle horn. The Cutter then reinitiates the quit

(A) while the cow is moving away from the cutting horse or is stopped.

(B) while the cow is moving into the cutting horse.

RULING:

(A) Assess a one (1) point penalty (B) for reining

(B) Assess a one (1) point penalty (B) for reining, plus a three (3) point penalty for a hot quit. Total penalty of four (4) points

NOTE: The judge shall consider that a Cutter has initiated a quit when they pick up on their reins or places their free hand on their horse's neck, whether the horse stops instantly or not.

NOTE: A judge shall not consider a hot quit until the cutter has stopped working the cow.

NOTE: In judging a situation concerning simultaneous major penalties, only one penalty will be called with the larger penalty taking precedence over the smaller penalty. The exception to this rule is Rule 8.b., which concerns a Cutter using two hands on the reins.

JUDGING RULE 14

If a horse quits a cow, a penalty of five (5) points will be assessed.

NOTE: *At the first sound of the buzzer, the run is terminated.*

EXAMPLE 1: *The cutter legally quits a cow while in working position. The judge believes that the cutter's horse has lost contact with the cow.*

RULING: *No penalty; however, this should reduce run content.*

NOTE: *It is the judge's responsibility to call what happens. A judge shall never anticipate an error.*

EXAMPLE 2: *The Cutter's horse goes by a cow that has turned away or stopped, resulting in a loss of working advantage. The horse is obviously not going to stop or turn around without assistance from the rider. The Cutter quits.*

RULING: *Assess a five (5) point penalty*

EXAMPLE 3: *The Cutter is working, and their horse quits a cow. The Cutter reins and re-starts their horse. The Cutter continues their work.*

RULING: *Assess a five (5) point penalty for the horse quitting the cow and a one (1) point penalty for reining the horse. Total penalty of six (6) points.*

EXAMPLE 4: *The Cutter's horse stops with a cow and looks away from the cow. The cow moves, and the horse*

*(A) momentarily remains still. The Cutter does not rein the horse; the horse turns around late but **regains its working advantage of** the cow.*

(B) remains still. The Cutter reins the horse back to the cow. In the judge's opinion, the Cutter reined the horse because the horse quit the cow.

RULING:

*(A) Assess a one (1) point penalty for losing the working advantage (being out of position) (Rule 11). **Run content would also be affected.***

(B) Assess a five (5) point penalty for the horse quitting the cow and a one (1) point penalty for reining the horse. Total penalty of six (6) points.

NOTE: *Even though a horse shows a momentary reluctance to turn or stop with a cow, a quit will not be called if the horse turns or stops on its own. If the horse must be reined or stopped by the rider, a five (5) point penalty must be charged.*

NOTE: *In judging a situation concerning simultaneous major penalties, only one penalty will be called with the larger penalty taking precedence over the smaller penalty. The exception to this rule is Rule 8.b., which concerns a Cutter using two hands on the reins.*

JUDGING RULE 15

*If a horse clears the herd with one (1) or more **cows** and fails to separate a single animal before **re-entering the body of the herd**, a five (5) point penalty will be charged. There is no penalty if time expires.*

EXAMPLE 1: *The Cutter drives a group of cattle away from the herd,*

(A) they commit to a cow in the group of cattle, their horse does not respond to the Cutter immediately, but they are able to stop the cow before it returns to the herd.

(B) they commit to a cow in the group of cattle, their horse does not respond to the Cutter and the cow returns to the herd with the group of cattle

*(C) The cattle all trot past **him/her and return** to the herd*

RULING:

(A) No penalty; however, the point value of the run may be reduced due to the lack of a quiet, clean cut.

(B) and (C) Assess a five (5) point penalty for failure to separate a cow

EXAMPLE 2: *The Cutter is working and at no fault of the Cutter, they pick up additional cattle. The Cutter quits their cow legally before separating it from the additional cattle.*

RULING: *No penalty.*

NOTE: *Rule 15 applies only while the Cutter is making a cut. Once a cow is separated from the herd, the Cutter has satisfied the requirements of Rule 15.*

EXAMPLE 3: *During the process of cutting, the Cutter has **some** cows in front of them. After clearly committing to one of these cows, the cow they committed to turns and runs past the turnback horses and the other cow(s) remain. The Cutter:*

(A) stops their horse and returns to the herd to make another cut.

(B) positions their horse and waits for the remaining cow(s) and begins to work.

(C) holds their horse and waits for their original cow to be returned to the working area and then begins to work this cow.

RULING:

(A), (B) and (C) No penalty

NOTE: *A Cutter may legally quit a cow under any circumstances so long as the cow is behind both turnback horses (provided the turnback horses are behind the timeline) or the cow has left the working area. At that point in time, the Cutter may begin to work any cow in front of them or return to the herd and select another cow. The timeline will be visibly marked.*

NOTE: *Allow the Cutter to handle his/her horse enough to clear the cow that they selected to cut. In the application of this rule, the term “clear” means far enough out from the body of the herd that the Cutter has a reasonable opportunity to begin working and that all other cattle are at least behind their horse’s buttocks.*

JUDGING RULE 16

*Horses must be ridden with a bridle having a bit in the mouth or with a hackamore. All bridles on horses must have split reins. A bridle shall have no nose band or bosal, and hackamores shall be of rope or braided rawhide with no metal parts. Braided rawhide balls across the horse's nose are not permissible. A judge must be able to freely pass two fingers between the hackamore and muzzle completely around the horse's nose. Choke ropes, tie downs, wire around the horse's neck, nose, or brow band, quirt, bat, or mechanical device giving the rider undue control over a horse will not be permitted in the arena where an NCHA approved or sponsored event is being held. Wire of any kind and on any part of the curb device is not permissible. Leather curb straps or curb chains must be at least 3/8 of an inch in width and must be attached to the bit by nylon string, nylon straps, or leather straps. Decorative knots, rawhide balls or tassels are not permitted on curb devices. Breast collar may be used, no portion of which may pass over the horse's neck. Breast collars attached to the swell of the saddle on competing horses will be considered illegal. Chaps and spurs may be worn. A competing horse's tail cannot be tied in any manner which would restrict movement of the tail. A judge has the right to have a contestant report to them if they are suspicious of any infraction of this rule and Standing Rule 35.A.1 – Zero Tolerance Policy. Any time a contestant is guilty of an infraction of this rule or any part therein, they shall be disqualified. **Any time a non-competing rider is guilty of an infraction of this rule or any part therein, they must be reported to the Executive Director (see section h below).***

*a. Any person horseback in the arena (both in and outside the working area) after the start of an NCHA approved event or NCHA sponsored event must wear western attire. **Western attire is defined as: western hat, western boots with heels, western pants,** long sleeved shirts with sleeves rolled down, collars, and buttons or snaps completely down the shirt front. The hat requirement may be waived, both in and outside of the working area of the arena, at outdoor shows in extreme weather conditions with the consent of both show management and the judge(s). Tank tops, T-shirts, and all types of sweatshirts are not permissible. Sweaters may be worn over an appropriate shirt. Under the advance approval of show management, safety helmets are permissible in place of a western hat. Enforcement of this rule is the responsibility of Show Management and NCHA Directors.*

b. Cell phone use will not be allowed by herd settler at any time, or the four helpers when the judges are in the stands. Judges are not allowed to use their cell phone while in the judges' stand.

*c. Rule 16 shall become effective one (1) hour prior to the published starting time and shall remain in effect until one hour after each day's performance is concluded at all NCHA approved **shows/events**. An announcement will be made each day when the rule goes into effect, but not hearing the announcement will not be a valid excuse for violating the rule. Alleged violations will be sent to the Grievance Committee for review.*

d. Rule 16 may be set aside by show management for an official practice session provided that the practice session ends at least one hour prior to the start of any performance.

e. Contestants are limited to a maximum of four (4) helpers on horseback at a time.

f. Any member seeking approval to use an electronic hearing device during an NCHA approved contest must meet or exceed the minimum criteria for hearing impairment, based on the results of an audiogram administered by a licensed physician.

1. A letter requesting the use of an electronic hearing device must be submitted to NCHA, along with the member's audiogram results.

2. The transmitter of the device must be one of the contestant's four (4) helpers.

3. The user of an electronic hearing device can be required to be tested by an NCHA

if a complaint or protest arises in connection with the user's degree of hearing impairment.

g. Violations of Rule 16 a, b, c, d, e, and f, shall result in:

1. First offense—\$200 fine.
2. Second offense—\$500 fine.
3. Third and subsequent offenses within 12 months - 90-day suspension.

h. *Those responsible for reporting violations of this rule to the Executive Director include, but are not limited to, show management, NCHA Directors, officers, and the judges.*

EXAMPLE 1: During a work, the judge suspects that the hackamore is too tight.

RULING: At the completion of the work, the judge shall examine the hackamore. If the judge can pass two fingers completely around the horse's nose under the hackamore, no penalty. If the hackamore is, in fact, illegal, the Cutter **will** be disqualified.

EXAMPLE 2: During a work, the judge suspects that a training device is being used.

RULING: At the completion of the work, the judge shall examine the Cutter's **equipment**. If any equipment is found to be illegal, the Cutter **will** be disqualified.

NOTE: In the event a contestant is disqualified for illegal equipment, it is the responsibility of the judge to report the incident to the judging department.

NOTE: In the event a rider's equipment breaks during a horse's performance, the horse will be permitted to complete its allotted time and shall be scored in accordance with the other NCHA Rules for Judging Cutting Horses. *Any Judge has the sole right to terminate a run. A judge must terminate the run when human safety or animal welfare is at risk. (Reruns shall not be granted for equipment failure.)*

EXAMPLE 3: During a work, the judge suspects the contestant isn't wearing western attire.

RULING: At the completion of the work, the judge shall examine the Cutter's attire. If the rider's attire is not western attire the Cutter will be disqualified.

JUDGING RULE 17

*When a contestant is thrown from a horse, **dismounts from a horse**, or the horse falls to the ground, the run shall be terminated, and no score (0) will be given.*

***NOTE:** Any judge has the sole right to terminate a run. A judge must terminate the run when human safety or animal welfare is at risk.*

EXAMPLE 1: *While in the process of **cutting or working a cow**,*

(A) the Cutter falls from their horse

*(B) the Cutter **dismounts from their horse***

(C) the Cutter's horse falls to the ground

*(D) **the horse starts to lie down with its legs underneath itself, but the horse is not on its side with all four feet extended in the same direction.***

RULING:

(A), (B), and (C) The judge shall stop the run and score the run zero (0).

*(D) **No penalty but run content may be reduced in herd work depending upon the effort it takes to get the horse back to its feet.***

***NOTE:** A horse is considered to have fallen to the ground when the horse is on its side and all four feet are extended in the same direction.*

JUDGING RULE 18

*Any rider who allows their horse to quit working, leaves the working area before their allotted time is up or refuses to work **will be scored zero (0)**.*

EXAMPLE 1: *The Cutter loses a cow and decides to retire from the herd and rides out, or stops working, (does not attempt to cut or reenter the herd) before the end of his/her time.*

RULING: *The run shall be scored zero (0).*

JUDGING RULE 19

A contestant will be awarded a complete rework if, in the judge or judges' opinion, 2 1/2 minutes time was not allotted for the work or if excessive disturbances had been created by factors other than those caused by the contestant. *This rule does not apply to cattle scattering due to wildness or normal arena activities. This rule also does not apply to disturbances caused by the contestants help under normal working conditions.*

Definition of Disturbance: A disturbance is any departure from normal, including commotion or disorder.

Note: Any judge has the sole right to terminate a run and grant or deny a rerun. A judge must terminate the run when human safety or animal welfare is at risk. Any run in which a contestant's help becomes separated from their horse will be automatically reviewed by the Director of Judges for authenticity. If the Director of Judges deems that a situation has occurred that was not an authentic separation of a rider from their horse, he will turn this over to the Grievance committee for possible fines and suspension.

No rework shall be granted if the contestant involved has incurred a three (3) or five (5) point (major) penalty prior to a disturbance. *If the judge(s) did not terminate the run, and the cutter has completed their 2 1/2 minutes work, if in their opinion a situation has occurred of sufficient seriousness to warrant a rerun, they may immediately make a request for the same to the designated judge or judges who shall report this fact to show management before the next horse is called to work. Show management shall make such facts as are available known to the judge(s) and if the majority agree that due cause did exist a rerun may be granted provided the original work was free of a three (3) or a five (5) point (major) infraction prior to the disturbance. If a rework is granted, the rework may occur immediately or as the last work in that set of cattle at the contestant's option.*

Note: As it pertains to a rerun option, a work will be considered free of a major penalty if a three (3) or a five (5) point (major) penalty has been called for review by the judge but not actually called.

EXAMPLE 1: In a contest using two or more judges, a judge terminates a run for the purpose of granting a rerun. The other judge(s) do not agree that the run should have been stopped.

RULING:

(A) If two (2) judges are being used, a rerun will be granted.

(B) If three or more judges are used and a majority of the judges *have* assessed a three (3) or a five (5) point (major) penalty before the time was stopped, no rerun will be granted.

EXAMPLE 2: While the Cutter is working, a judge falls out of the judging stand, the judging stand collapses, or the stand over-turns. At the time of the disturbance,

(A) the run was free of a three (3) point or a five (5) point (major) infraction.

(B) the judge had called a three (3) point or a five (5) point (major) infraction *prior to* the disturbance.

RULING:

(A) the judge shall *terminate* the run and grant a rerun.

(B) the judge shall *terminate* the run, *and the Cutter shall receive a score of zero (0).*

JUDGING RULE 20

A judge marks from sixty (60) to eighty (80) points. One-half (1/2) points are permissible.

EXAMPLE: *The first horse in a contest works. The judge cannot decide whether to mark the run a 73 or 74. The judge decides to mark the run 73 1/2.*

RULING: *Legal. The judge may mark any run they choose using one-half (1/2) points: however, the reason for the one-half (1/2) point is to allow the judge to differentiate between runs. It is, therefore, not desirable to begin one's scorecard with a one-half (1/2) point marking.*

NOTE: *Judges are encouraged to use a full spread of scores in judging a contest. It is important for a judge to recognize the level of competition being judged. It is equally important for a judge to assess a high enough point value to those good runs that occur early in the contest. By using a full spread of scores, the remaining horses in the contest are more likely to place in the positions earned by their performance.*

Short Clock: A contestant will be awarded a complete rework if the run was free of a major penalty at the sound of the buzzer or time was called.

EXAMPLE 1: The buzzer sounds ending a run. In the judge(s) opinion, the Cutter worked for less than 2 1/2 minutes.

(A) At the time the buzzer sounded, the run was free of a three (3) point or a five (5) point (major) infraction **by the judge or majority of judges.**

(B) Before the buzzer sounded, the judge **or the majority of judges** had called a three (3) point or a five (5) point (major) infraction.

RULING:

(A) the judge(s) shall grant a rerun.

(B) no rerun shall be granted, and the Cutter shall receive a score of zero (0).

Long Clock or No Clock: A rework will be automatically granted whether a major penalty has occurred **or not.** The contestant must take a rework. **If the run begins but the clock has not started, a rework will automatically be granted.**

EXAMPLE 1: While the Cutter is working, it becomes apparent to the Judge(s) that they have worked longer than 2 1/2 minutes.

(A) The run was free of a three (3) point or a five (5) point (major) infraction when the judge(s) realized that the Cutter had worked for longer than 2 1/2 minutes.

(B) The judge(s) had called a three (3) point or a five (5) point (major) penalty **after** the Cutter had worked for longer than 2 1/2 minutes.

RULING:

(A) and (B) the judge(s) shall grant a rerun.

NOTE: It would be difficult to determine in some instances whether the major infraction occurred before or after the actual 2 1/2 minutes had expired; therefore, in this instance only, the Cutter shall receive a rerun.

IMPORTANT NOTE TO SECRETARIES AND TIMERS:

Any judge has the sole right to terminate a work prior to the 2 1/2-minute buzzer. The Secretary or timer shall notify the judge(s) immediately if the clock has not been started or malfunctions.

JUDGING RULE 21

When the judge is in doubt about a penalty, the benefit always goes to the contestant.

EXAMPLES 1. *The Cutter is working and quits a cow.*

(A) The judge is not certain whether the quit was illegal.

(B) The judge is certain that the quit was illegal.

RULING:

(A) No penalty, benefit of doubt goes to the cutter

(B) Assess a three (3) point penalty for an illegal quit (Rule 13).

NOTE: *A judge is duty-bound to call all penalties. If a penalty occurs, call it. If the judge must ask themselves, "Was that a penalty?" the benefit goes to the Cutter. Judges should look for credit earning opportunities. A judge can determine the difference in cutting runs by following these guidelines.*

RUN CONTENT:

Guideline for Evaluating a Work:

Runs are scored from (60-80) based on an analysis of what occurs during the work. Run Content is a numerical value, minus penalties which equals the score. The judge will start judging each horse when the Cutter's time begins, and each run will be started from a median score of (70). The run will conclude at the first sound of the buzzer. The Cutter's run content will be based upon compliance with credit earning opportunities and 1-point penalties. Run content may be decreased without occurrence of a penalty and 1-point penalties can be overcome if more credit is earned. One (1)-point penalties will be deducted on a cow-by-cow basis. Occurrence of major penalties will only be deducted at the conclusion of the run. Judge the 1st cow and give a value consistent with run content minus 1-point penalties (this is the value of your 1st cow score). Judge the 2nd cow and give a value consistent with run content minus 1-point penalties (this is the value of your 2nd cow score). If only 2 cows are worked the judge will average the 2 cow scores to determine final value of the run. If the cutter cuts a 3rd cow the judge will use common sense and run content to decide how much to increase or decrease the value of the run. After each cow the judge should be able to ascribe a numerical value based on the above standard.

EXAMPLE 1: *Based on run content and 1-point penalties, the judge has a value of 74 on the 1st cow and a value of 70 on the 2nd cow. The value of the run at the conclusion of the second cow will be a 72. If the cutter cuts a third cow the judge will use common sense and run content to decide how much to increase or decrease the value of the run.*

EXAMPLE 2: *The Cutter has a run that in the judge's opinion has an original point value of 73. Just prior to the buzzer sounding, the Cutter lost a cow.*

RULING: *Subtract a five (5) point penalty from the original point value. $73 - 5 = 68$*

Degree of Difficulty:

*Degree of difficulty is determined by the amount of effort exerted by the cow in its attempt to return to the herd. A cow that turns quickly and moves rapidly is more difficult to hold in a working position than a cow that turns and moves slowly. A judge must give credit when a Cutter is able to **maintain a working advantage** on a tough cow.*

***NOTE:** The judge should consider if the cutter has maintained its working advantage on a difficult cow or if the cutter has not maintained its working advantage therefore creating their own difficulty.*

Eye Appeal:

Runs that are attractive because of the style of the horse and the correctness of the overall performance shall receive credit.

Amount of Courage:

A judge should give credit for a Cutter who demonstrates courage by:

- (A) Staying on a tough cow **and not quitting at the first opportunity.***
- (B) **Releasing their horse early on the cut (the opposite of holding on too long)***
- (C) **Above average working time***
- (D) **Use common sense to apply this rule***

***NOTE:** Coming off the fence to set up a cow in the center of the arena before quitting, staying on a tough cow and working longer than average are high risk situations. If a rule infraction occurs in these situations, a judge must call it; therefore, the Cutter who shows this type of courage and commits no rule infractions, shall receive credit.*

Time Worked:

*Consider the amount of time that the Cutter spends working a cow during the 2 1/2-minute run. A Cutter shall be rewarded credit for his/her working time. Stalling in the herd or reluctance to cut a cow to allow time to run off the clock shall have a negative influence on **working time and courage**.*

NOTE:

(A) 45 seconds of working time is required and considered average

(B) 50 to 60 seconds of working time is above average and should be rewarded

(C) 60 second and above is exceptional, a minimum of one (1) point should be added to the total value of the run

EXAMPLE 1: *The Cutter works two cows and is attempting to cut their third cow when the buzzer sounds.*

RULING: *The Cutter may work any number of cattle that they choose.*

NOTE: *No penalty exists for “dying in the herd.” The judge shall, however, always consider the amount of time spent working when marking a run.*

Horse Charging – *While working, the cutter’s horse consistently applies pressure on the cow being worked, either through their turnarounds or while traveling across the arena; thereby forcing the cow being worked further away from the herd until they no longer have a working advantage. A horse charging certainly detracts from the overall performance of a cutting horse and cannot have a positive influence on the point value of the run.*

Force off a Cow – *Any time a contestant must quit a cow because their horse is in an incorrect working position. Being forced off a cow detracts from the overall performance of a cutting horse and cannot have a positive influence on the point value of the run.*

Herd Help -- A herd holder's duty is to assist the Cutter in containing the herd and group of cattle the Cutter is trying to cut from. This gives the Cutter ample opportunity to demonstrate to the judge their ability to work the herd, drive a cow, and set a cow up in the middle of the pen. These conditions allow a judge to reward credit to the Cutter under Rules 1, 2 and 4. After assisting the Cutter in making a cut, the herd holder should move to a position toward the arena wall that will enable them to contain the herd but not distract from the run. Any excessive action by the herd holder will be dealt with as a reduction in run content. Although there is no specific major penalty for this action, it does hinder the Cutter's horse from showing their full potential. Therefore, judges will begin reducing run content when excessive help from herd holders affect the run, such as saving a major penalty from occurring, cutting the pen down, and in fresh cattle, driving the herd out for the Cutter to cut from. Herd holders should keep in mind they are jeopardizing the Cutter's score when they give too much assistance to the Cutter.

EXAMPLE 1. The Cutter enters the herd, one or both herd holders get behind the cattle so that it is obvious to the judge that the herd holders are doing as much or more to drive the cattle out *than* the cutter is

(A) in rerun cattle

(B) in fresh cattle

RULING:

(A) No reduction of run content. *Credit will be given to the Cutter who does not need assistance.*

(B) Run content will be reduced.

EXAMPLE 2. After the cut is made the herd holder

(A) is sitting in the corner. As the Cutter and cow approach the corner, the herd holder remains in position *and has no influence on the cow*

(B) does not move their horse to a position on the arena wall but stops in a position several feet off the wall. The herd holder is not moving but it is obvious to the judge that the cow being worked is being influenced by the presence of the herd holder's horse.

(C) comes out of the corner in an obvious attempt to stop or turn the cow.

RULING:

(A) No reduction in run content.

(B) and (C) Run content of the run will be reduced *based on the judge's opinion of what occurred.*

EXAMPLE 3. As the Cutter leaves the arena wall with a cow, the herd holder on the opposite side believes the Cutter's path may cause the herd to split. They ride their horse out into the arena to a position that will prevent this from happening.

RULING: No reduction in run content. The herd holder has the right to position themselves so that the herd will not scatter.

EXAMPLE 4. The Cutter has worked a cow and needs to get off. The cow is obviously not going to turn away without some assistance. The Cutter

(A) has maintained a **working advantage** as the cow approaches the side.

The herd holder moves their horse up to turn the cow away.

(B) has not maintained a **working advantage** as the cow approaches the side. The herd holder moves their horse up to turn the cow away

RULING:

(A) No reduction in run content.

(B) **Run content will be reduced.**

EXAMPLE 5. After a miss, it is obvious to the judge that the Cutter is about to lose or back fence a cow. The herd holder moves their horse to prevent this from happening.

RULING: Assess a one (1) point penalty for the miss (Rule 11) and run content should be **affected greatly if this action saved a major penalty.**

Penalties:

(a) 1 point—(miss) losing working advantage (11)

(b) 1 point—reined or visibly cued (8)

(c) 1 point—noise directed to cattle (5a)

(d) 1 point—toe, foot, or stirrup on the shoulder (8d)

(e) 1 point—hold on too long on a cut(8a)

(f) 1 point—working out of position

(g) 1 point—hand too far forward

(a) 3 points—hot quit (13)

(b) 3 points—cattle picked up or scattered (5b)

(c) 3 points—second hand on reins (8b)

(d) 3 points—cue in shoulder (8c)

(e) 3 points—pawing or biting cattle (12)

(f) 3 points—failure to make a deep cut (1)

(g) 3 points—back fence (6)

(a) 5 points—horse quitting a cow (14)

(b) 5 points—losing a cow (9)

(c) 5 points—changing cattle after a specific commitment (10)

(d) 5 points—failure to separate a single animal after leaving the herd (15)

(t) 5 points—turn tail (7)

0—if **a contestant is thrown from a horse or the** horse falls to ground (17)

Disqualification (score 0)—illegal equipment, or leaves working area before time expires.

Guidelines for Adjusted Monitor System “AMS”

*The Adjusted Monitor System (AMS) is a system that has been designed to make judging equally fair for each contestant. The AMS is required to be used with **the five-judge system** and may be used in a **three-judge system**. In the five-judge system, the high and low scores will be discarded.*

NOTE: *Under this system, only the total combined scores, after throwing out the high and low, will be displayed to the public by a scoreboard, not visible to the judges. Scores should not be announced.*

- 1. The monitor(s) will have full use of video equipment, including video replay, slow motion, and wide angle or overhead film to determine each infraction in question.*
- 2. Scores of 195 and below, in a go round, will not be reviewed.*
- 3. In the finals, only scores of 181 and higher will be reviewed or adjusted*
- 4. **Scores are official one hour after scores have been verified for the last set of a go-round or class. In a final, scores are official one hour after scores have been verified for the last set of that final or before the first awards for that final are given, whichever comes first.***
- 5. Show management has the responsibility for official placing at the show.*

Monitor Guidelines

- 1. First and foremost, the monitor is not the judge, but is there in the capacity to monitor and make rulings on major penalty discrepancies, based on reviewing film and using the “NCHA Judging Casebook of Rules and Regulations for Judging Cutting Horse Contests.”*
- 2. Monitor(s) may talk to contestants and owners about a particular run or penalty provided the Director of Judges **approves it** and a designated liaison is present.*
- 3. In finals only, in a case where a R is either placed on the scoreboard or announced by error (when all 5 judges have called the same penalty), the monitor will contact contestant to make them aware of the error.*
- 4. Monitor(s) **have** the authority to educate a judge after **the judge has made** their decision on a **penalty** and signed their penalty slip.*
- 5. If a monitor finds a penalty to be ruled inconclusive due to video evidence; the run will not be reviewed by a judge or judges. If there is inconclusive film evidence, the call must stand as is. No adjustments will be made.*
- 6. If there are no discrepancies on the judges’ cards, the run will not be reviewed, except for the evaluation **and education** of **the judge(s)**.*
- 7. The monitor(s) will not review one-point penalties; however, they may review any run with a judge **for education** where there **are** clear misapplications of obvious one-point penalties.*

Procedure of the monitor:

1. The monitor(s) will deal only with three (3) and five (5) point penalty discrepancies in the judge's cards. In the event the judges are split on a particular penalty, then the **run** is reviewed on **video**, and is then ruled on by applying the "Rules for Judging Cutting Horse Shows" found in the NCHA Rule Book.
2. If the monitor(s) are in full agreement that the rule in question was violated or not violated, then the judge(s) in error will be asked to the monitor room **and shown the penalty in question**. All reviews with judges will be audio recorded.
3. The judge can change their score or leave their score as originally marked. In no way is the judge intimidated or encouraged into changing their score. The judge can see the situation as many times as they wish, and if they request any clarification of the rule in question, then it is given to them from the Rule Book and casebook examples.
4. If the judge wishes to change their score, an affidavit is signed by the judge signifying the penalty, and the score is adjusted by the amount of that penalty.

EXAMPLE:

Go Round _____ Group of Cattle _____
I wish to change from a _____ to a _____
Horse's Name: _____
three-point penalty five-point penalty
Signature _____
Date _____

NOTE: If a major penalty has been called in error, thereby making clear and obvious one-point penalties not previously charged, then the adjusted score shall reflect the one-point penalty.

5. The monitor(s) will fill out an AMS Penalty Analysis Sheet to document changes made to an adjusted score.
6. The monitor(s) will fill out a **NO Action Sheet** to document when no changes have been made.

Guidelines for (Self-Adjusted Monitor System) SAMS

1. All NCHA Championship Shows must use SAMS. It is imperative that the system be announced prior to the start of the show.
2. There will be no adjustment to the following:
 - (a) No change in run content or one (1) point penalties.
 - (b) No review of any run not reported to the announcer **as a review** at the time the judge calls in their score.
3. The following criteria will be followed when either a three (3) or a five (5) point penalty **has been called for a review**.

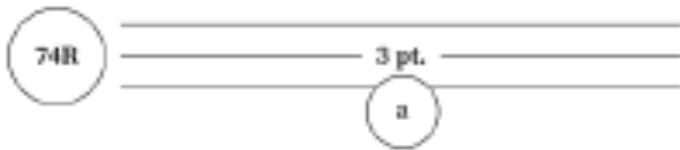
EXAMPLE: At the completion of the run the judges value of the run is a 74 with a review on a (3) point penalty (rule 13).

(a) The judge must document the penalty in the appropriate penalty box and circle it. Then write their score as 74R and circle it.

(b) The judge will report the score as follows to the announcer: "74R"

(c) The announcer must announce "74R" for the review to be valid, and this announcement must be made when the run is complete and before the next run takes place. It is the judge's responsibility to be sure the call indicating the "R" is announced.

The score on their card would appear as this:



(d) After the review, if the judge's opinion is the penalty is not valid, he/she would leave the original mark for the horse and initial both the score and the reviewed penalty. They do not erase the original mark or alter it in any way.

(e) After the review, if the judge's opinion is the penalty is valid, he/she would write the new score next to the original score and initial the new score and the reviewed penalty. They do not erase the original mark or alter it in any way.

(f) All reviews should be made during a cattle change. A judge must resolve all reviews in a particular class before moving on to the next class. However, if the next class occurs without a cattle change (i.e., consecutive classes held in the same herd example: Junior Youth followed by Senior Youth), the judge must wait until the next cattle change to conduct any/all reviews.

(g) The announcer will make the following statement:

Horse #19, Docs Tommy, has a score of 74 (if no adjustment) or 71 if adjusted."

Attention Show Management: **For** the judge to use the Self-Adjusted Monitor System you must provide an isolated location for the judge to review the runs in question. The room is to include a good-sized TV **and AV equipment to play the video**. Under no condition is a judge to review any runs in the arena or in the presence of contestants or other judges.

Rules of Thumb:

1. Do not dwell on the call. After three reruns of the same penalty the judge should have a working knowledge and basis in fact for a decision.
2. Rule 21 is in the Rule Book to determine in favor of the cutter if a penalty situation does not have an absolute conclusion. However, it is important that Rule 21 is used as an aid, not a crutch.
3. If there is inconclusive film evidence, the call must stand as is. No adjustments will be made.

Multiple Judged System

1. Two or three judges—one uses the “R”, and the other(s) did not:
The judge(s) marking the “R” will review the situation first. If the judge(s) do not change their score, the other judge(s) will not be required to look at the run. If the judge(s) change the score, then the other judge(s) will be required to review the situation. If the decision of the judge that called the “R” results in the difference of a major penalty between the judges; the other judge (s) will be required to review the situation. This should be done totally separate with no communication between the judges during the reviews.
2. Two or three judges—no “R” is called:
The judge with the highest rating and most credits has the responsibility to communicate with the show secretary to review each judge’s score card to determine if there are any major penalties (3 or 5 points) to be reviewed.

Guidelines for Weekend Monitors for US, Canadian and European Judges

1. Judges may communicate with their Field Monitors during a show for purposes of Rule Book clarification only. No videos shall be shown to the Weekend Field Monitor during the show.
2. All Judges are required to leave the show with a copy of the judge sheets, a copy of the video of all classes judged and a copy of the Weekend Monitor’s Report from the Videographer.
3. Judges are required to communicate with the respective Field Monitor prior to mailing the Video Media (DVD, USB, SD Card) and judges’ sheets.
4. A Judge is required to mail a copy of the judge sheets and video to the assigned field Monitor no later than the Wednesday after the conclusion of **a non-monitored** event.
5. Judges are required to be available for communication with the respective Field Monitor for a minimum of fourteen days from end of a show. Failure to comply with the requirements of the Weekend Field Monitor Program will result in:
1st offense - letter of reprimand
2nd offense - \$100 fine
3rd offense - \$300 fine
4th offense - removal from the NCHA Judges List

However, all disciplinary actions listed in this rule are guidelines only and may be increased or decreased by the Director of Judges, in his/her sole discretion, based on the severity of the incident in question.

Judge Challenge System

The Challenge System is to be used at all LAE monitored events. The Challenge system gives a contestant the opportunity to challenge a judging decision. When all five judges call the same major penalty, the contestant can request a review on their run. Only the contestant can challenge their own run.

*The challenge cost is \$1,000 and must be submitted **with a completed Challenge form and payment to the show management no later than one hour after scores have been verified for the last set of a go-round or class.** In the event the challenge is for a score from a final, the challenge must be submitted to show management **no later than one hour after scores have been verified for the last set of that final or before the first awards for that final are given, whichever comes first.** If the challenge is upheld, then the contestant will be refunded their \$1,000. If it is not, and the judges leave their original ruling, then the NCHA will retain the \$1,000. If the contestant's score is changed by the judges and is high enough to advance to the next round it will advance and work in its pre-drawn position **or be hand drawn in.** The extra horse will be added into that round, but the bubble score required to advance to the next round will never be changed. **The challenged penalty is reviewed on film. If the monitor(s) are in full agreement that the rule in question was not violated, then all five judges will review the penalty separately. Each judge has the opportunity to change their score or leave their score as originally marked. If the contestant's score is changed by the judges in a final, placings will be adjusted accordingly. Once the scores are adjusted and verified, show management has the responsibility for official placing at the show.***

The Challenge Form is available on the NCHA website, nchacutting.com in the Judges Section and on the Forms page.