



SOUTH POINT ARENA / LAS VEGAS

## OFFICIAL RULES & REGULATIONS 2024



**JEFF COOK** | Mustang trainer extraordinaire, competitor and enthusiast. Extreme Mustang Makeover champion. Veteran program trainer.



PRESENTED BY MUSTANG CHAMPIONS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Wild Horse and Burro Program

**SOUTH POINT ARENA / LAS VEGAS**

JULY 11-13, 2024

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## **RULES & REGULATIONS**

MUSTANG CHALLENGE

**JULY 11-13, 2024**

**LAS VEGAS, NV**

### **EVENT OVERVIEW:**

The goal of The Mustang Challenge is to showcase the skill and adaptability of the American mustang and the talented exhibitors that work with them in the Western discipline. The event will provide the public an opportunity to witness a mustang that has been given a foundation for success on its journey from government holding to private ownership.

The Mustang Challenge, produced by Mustang Champions in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management Wild Horse and Burro Program (BLM), is open to exhibitors (ages 18 and older) and mustangs that have adopted or purchased between September 8th, 2023 and April 1st, 2024. All competing mustangs must be adopted or purchased from approved BLM Wild Horse & Burro facilities, approved satellite events, the Wild Horse & Burro Online Corral or any approved facility. Once adopted or purchased, it is recommended that all mustangs are registered online with Mustang Champions (<https://www.mustangchallenge2024.com/register>).

Owners/ adopters may exhibit their own mustangs or designate an exhibitor to enter and show their mustang(s) on their behalf. All exhibitors are allowed to enter and compete with up to two mustangs. All exhibitors must complete the Mustang Training Readiness Curriculum prior to competing in the Mustang Challenge. Entered mustang(s) must compete in at least one local or national level show prior to the Challenge competition July 11-13, 2024. There will NOT be a reassignment auction at the conclusion of the event.

### **Tentative Event Timeline:**

- Adopt or purchase a BLM mustang - September 8 - April 1, 2024
- Register adopted/purchased mustang(s) online (<https://www.mustangchallenge2024.com/register>)
- Complete online Entry Form no later than May 1, 2024
  - Complete online Mustang Training Readiness Curriculum prior to competing
  - Compete with entered mustang in a minimum of one local or national show prior to competing at Mustang Challenge
- Attend the Mustang Challenge event and compete in Las Vegas, NV - July 11-13, 2024

### **COMPETITION OVERVIEW:**

All classes are designed to demonstrate the mustang's willingness to perform various maneuvers and obstacles under saddle. The exhibitors will compete in three preliminary classes: Trail class, Reining pattern and Ranch riding. The top 10 highest scoring exhibitor and mustang pairs from the preliminary classes will get the chance to compete in the Mustang Challenge Championship Finals for a grand prize of \$50,000.

*Not adhering to the Regulations and Competition Rules listed in this document may result in disqualification from current and/or future Mustang Champions competitions and programs.*

## COMPETITION OUTLINE:

### 1. Animal Eligibility

- a. Mustang Challenge and Mustang Champions representatives have the unqualified right to determine eligibility and can, at any time, remove an exhibitor from the event or entry process for any reason.
- b. In order to become eligible to compete, the competing mustang must be 3 years old or older, and must have been adopted or purchased between the dates of September 8, 2024 and April 1, 2024 from an approved BLM off-range corral or satellite event. Eligibility Requirements for Registering and Entering a Mustang in the 2024 Mustang Challenge & Mustang Classic:
  - BLM mustangs 3 years of age and older as of January 2024, adopted or purchased at a BLM off-range corral or BLM satellite event within the eligibility window of;
    - Sept. 8th, 2023 - April 1st, 2024 (Mustang Challenge)
  - BLM mustangs adopted during the eligibility window and reassigned to a new adopter during the eligibility window.
  - BLM mustangs purchased during the eligibility window and sold or transferred to a new owner during the eligibility window.
  - BLM mustangs adopted or purchased through the BLM Internet Adoption program and picked up (paperwork finalized and taken possession of) within the eligibility window.
- c. If required, individuals must contact BLM to schedule an appointment to adopt or purchase. Event staff will not schedule appointments for interested adopters.

### 2. Event Registration & Entry

- a. All mustangs should be registered online with Mustang Champions after adoption or purchase (<https://www.mustangchallenge2024.com/register>). There is no fee or commitment required at time of registration. There is no limit to the number of mustangs that can be registered.
- b. Interested exhibitors are required to complete an online event entry form on or before May 1st, 2024.
  - i. The adopter or owner of the mustang(s) may choose to designate another individual to exhibit their mustang(s) at the Mustang Challenge.
  - ii. The exhibitor MUST be the one to complete and submit the entry form.
  - iii. The exhibitor must complete the entry form, pay the entry fees, and exhibit the mustang(s). Any earned prize money will be issued to the exhibitor on file.

- iv. To reiterate, in the case that the exhibitor is different from the adopter/ owner, the exhibitor will be responsible for submitting the entry form, paying entry fees, caring for the mustang(s) on site at the competition, showing the mustang, and will also receive any earned prize money.
  - v. Each exhibitor can enter up to TWO mustangs. An entry fee will be required per mustang.
  - vi. There will be no exhibitor or mustang swaps - the mustangs that are entered under an exhibitor will ONLY be shown by that exhibitor.
- b. A **nonrefundable** entry fee of \$150 per mustang will be due at time of entry. This will include:
- i. Entry into three preliminary classes
  - ii. 1 stall & 4 bags of shavings
  - iii. Access to 1 shared tack stall
  - iv. Additional stalls can be purchased at time of entry for \$150.
- a. A copy of the official adoption or purchase form, signed by an authorized BLM representative and dated September 8 - April 1, must be submitted with the entry form.
- b. Exhibitors will be asked to submit a digital headshot photo and short bio to be used for promotional purposes. Photos and bios should be submitted at time of entry.

### **3. Pre-Competition Requirements**

- a. All exhibitors must complete the online Mustang Training Readiness Curriculum prior to competing in the Mustang Challenge.
- b. All exhibitors must show proof of pre-Challenge show competition experience prior to the Challenge competition July 11-13, 2024. A qualifying show is defined as any organized competition consisting of more than three horses Online submission form to be provided.
  - Name, location, and date of event.
  - Class photos, class results, ribbons, awards, or a show entry form may also be submitted.

### **4. Promotion and Sponsorships**

- a. Competitors may promote personal businesses or sponsorship on freestyle props, apparel, brochures and other promotional materials; however, logos should be no larger than 12 by 24 inches. Exhibitors may also use their designated stall area for promotional purposes.
- b. Mustang Champions will create event specific merchandise to be sold to the public. Competitors should not reproduce event logos in any way on apparel, banners or other posted materials.

## **5. Mustang Care and Training**

- a. In preparation for competition, mustang training should be humane and compassionate. “Least resistance” training techniques are encouraged. Contact event staff should you have any training or care concerns.

### **b. Humane Treatment Statement**

Competition mustangs shall, at all times, be treated humanely and with dignity, respect and compassion. Any competitor using abusive or excessive training techniques or actions deemed inhumane towards a mustang in his/her care may be removed from the event. Any mustang entered in the event arriving with questionable training or care related injuries may be removed from the event. This policy is in addition to our event rules.

### **c. Conduct Statement**

Conduct shall be orderly, responsible, sportsmanlike and humane in the treatment of mustangs and others, such as to promote the implementation of the event and fair competition. Any alleged unsportsmanlike or irresponsible conduct or any form of misconduct; illegal, indecent or profane, or any form of inhumane treatment of mustangs or others, are prohibited and shall be grounds for disciplinary action against offending individuals. Event management may expel offenders from the competition or show grounds in order to maintain the decorum of the show. This includes conduct in person and online.

## **COMPETITION RULES:**

1. Competitors must fulfill all requirements related to hauling, stable facilities, care and training.
2. Upon successful entry, exhibitors will be required to submit online Progress Reports due May 1, 2024 and June 1, 2024. Additional reports may be requested by event management.
3. Upon entry to the show grounds, all exhibitors must provide a current 30-day health certificate and negative coggins.
4. Upon entry to the show grounds, competing mustangs will be examined to determine the health and condition of the horse. Should a mustang be deemed in poor condition, or unfit to show, by a veterinarian or knowledgeable individual the mustang may be excused or uninvited to participate in the competition.
5. An arena will be available for warm up and scheduled practice times.
6. Competition schedule to be announced.
7. There will be NO reassignment auction during or at the conclusion of the competition.

8. All exhibitors are to wear appropriate western attire, and mustangs are to be shown in a western saddle and appropriate bridle, snaffle bit or bosal.
  - a. ILLEGAL equipment that will result in automatic disqualification from the class in which equipment was used includes: snaffle bits with mouthpieces smaller than 5/16" and/or consisting of non-smooth material (such as twisted materials), bosals made of anything but rawhide, leather or rope with a flexible core (no metal of any kind). Use of any bit or equipment determined severe by the judges will not be allowed and will result in disqualification from the class in which it was used. Reference the [AQHA Rulebook](#) for more details on illegal equipment.
  - b. Tie downs, martingales, mechanical hackamores, are not allowed. The judge or steward may prohibit the use of any bit or equipment they consider inhumane or would tend to give a horse/ rider an unfair advantage. Mustangs may be shown with one or two hands in a snaffle bit or bosal. No shanked bits allowed.
  - c. Training aides (whips, sticks, treats, the tail end of lead rope, etc.) will not be restricted, although exhibitors should realize that horses shown with the use of training aides will be judged accordingly. Any excessive use of a training aid (including striking the horse) will result in an automatic 10-point deduction from each judge in that class.
9. Excessive spurring or jerking on the reins or lead line during the competition will result in an automatic 10-point deduction from each judge off the overall class score.
10. No person shall alter, change, or attempt to hide the natural markings and/or rubbed or raw skin of a horse by surgery, dye, powder or in any other manner. Competitors may clip/trim horses, or leave mane, tail, ears, muzzle and fetlocks natural. Alternations of tail function (tail blocking, dead tails, etc.) is prohibited at any and all points during the competition and will result in a 10 point deduction.
11. **Drugs:** No person shall administer drugs internally or externally to a mustang, either before or during the performance. Any medication, drug, mechanical device or artificial appliance, which is of such character as could affect or enhance the mustang's performance or appearance at the event is prohibited. If a mustang is receiving medication for therapeutic purposes, the competitor must submit a letter from their veterinarian to the Mustang Champions staff as to the reason for the medication and the prescribed amount. The event management reserves the right to drug test any mustang in the competition. Positive tests will result in removal from the event and removal of prize money. In regard to herbal/natural supplements, competitors are cautioned against the use of medicinal preparations, tonics, pastes and products of any kind, the ingredients and quantitative analysis of which are not specifically known, as many of them may contain a forbidden substance.

## 12. Preliminary Classes:

### a. Reining Pattern

#### Class Summary:

This pattern is intended to judge the horse on movements, mastery of a prescribed maneuver and attitude as it is guided through a series of maneuvers. The horse is required to perform a number of stops, spins, rollbacks, lead changes and circles at a lope. The mustang should be willing to be guided with little or no resistance.

#### Class Scoring:

- i. Exhibitor and mustang pairs will be asked to execute a series of maneuvers.
- ii. Horses will be scored on the basis of 0 to 100, with 70 denoting an average performance. Each maneuver will receive a score that should be added or subtracted from 70 and is subject to a penalty that should be subtracted. Each maneuver will be scored on the following basis, ranging from plus 1.5 to minus 1.5. -1.5 extremely poor, -1 very poor, -0.5 poor, 0 correct, +0.5 good, + 1 very good, + 1.5 excellent. Maneuver scores are to be determined and assessed independently of penalty points. Natural ranch horse appearance will also be evaluated ranging from plus 1.5 to minus 1.5.

#### Class Details:

Reference [AQHA Rule #562](#) for additional information on this class, scoring, penalties, and more.

### b. Trail Class

This class is designed to show a horse's ability and willingness to perform several tasks that might be asked of it during the course of a normal trail ride. Exhibitors will be asked to lead and ride their horse through a course of obstacles and maneuvers, including but not limited to walk/trot/lope over poles, walking over a bridge, sidepass, serpentine, etc. Scoring is based on the horse's willingness, ease and grace in negotiating the course.

#### Class Scoring:

- iii. Exhibitor and mustang pairs will be asked to navigate a series of obstacles.
- iv. Horses will be scored on the basis of 0 to 100, with 70 denoting an average performance. Each maneuver will receive a score that should be added or subtracted from 70 and is subject to a penalty that should be subtracted. Each maneuver will be scored on the



following basis, ranging from plus 1.5 to minus 1.5. -1.5 extremely poor, -1 very poor, -0.5 poor, 0 correct, +0.5 good, + 1 very good, + 1.5 excellent. Maneuver scores are to be determined and assessed independently of penalty points. Natural ranch horse appearance will also be evaluated ranging from plus 1.5 to minus 1.5.

Class Details:

Reference [AQHA Rule #420](#) for additional information on this class, scoring, penalties, and more.

**c. Ranch Riding**

This class measures a mustang's ability to be a pleasure to ride while being used to perform one ranch task to another. The horse and rider are asked to perform a pattern that includes but is not limited to changes of gait, extension of gait, crossing logs, lead changes, etc. All maneuvers should be performed as if the horse were being used on a ranch, and the horse should demonstrate a high level of training, relaxation and quality of movement in all gaits.

Class Scoring:

- v. Exhibitor and mustang pairs will be asked to navigate a series of obstacles and maneuvers.
- vi. Horses will be scored on the basis of 0 to 100, with 70 denoting an average performance. Each maneuver will receive a score that should be added or subtracted from 70 and is subject to a penalty that should be subtracted. Each maneuver will be scored on the following basis, ranging from plus 1.5 to minus 1.5. -1.5 extremely poor, -1 very poor, -0.5 poor, 0 correct, +0.5 good, + 1 very good, + 1.5 excellent. Maneuver scores are to be determined and assessed independently of penalty points. Natural ranch horse appearance will also be evaluated ranging from plus 1.5 to minus 1.5.

Class Details:

Reference [AQHA Rule #416](#) for additional information on this class, scoring, penalties, and more.

### **13. Mustang Challenge Championship Finals:100 total points per judge**

**Finals (Compulsory Maneuvers & Freestyle Performance):** The top 10 performing mustang and exhibitor pairs from the preliminary classes will be invited to compete in the championship finals, a freestyle performance to determine the Mustang Challenge Champion. Final scoring will be based on a timed compulsory maneuver and a freestyle performance. The finals event is designed to encourage riders to exhibit the athletic abilities of their mustang to the crowd in an exciting and appealing way. The exhibitor will have three and a half minutes to showcase their mustang through a creative display of choreographed maneuvers that entertain the crowd and demonstrate their horsemanship. The exhibitor should incorporate props, costumes, and music to demonstrate their skills and the talents of their mustang.

#### **FINALS DESCRIPTION & SCORING:**

- a. Exhibitors will enter the finals with a “clean slate”. No previous scores will be counted or considered toward their final placing in the Championship Finals.
- b. For the freestyle performance, competitors will have three minutes to stage or set the arena.
- c. Competitors must provide their own props and assistance for arena set up and tear down - it is the competitor’s responsibility to make sure all props are cleared from the arena immediately following the conclusion of the freestyle performance, including hay, confetti, etc.
- d. All props must be freestanding. Nothing may be driven into the ground (i.e. rebar, stakes, etc.) and doing so will result in a disqualification.
- e. Wearing guns (real or toy) in any arena or during the competition, as well as shooting guns and/ or blanks is not allowed during the competition or anywhere on the grounds and will result in an automatic disqualification.
- f. Competitors will have 3.5 minutes to complete their freestyle performance - music and time will start simultaneously when the competitor and/ or horse enters the arena, or whichever comes first.
- g. Live “voice-overs” and/or commentary from the competitor and/or competitor representative are not allowed during the performance and will result in disqualification.
- h. Music is a required component of the freestyle performance - if the competitor does not turn in music during the finalists’ meeting at the event, management may select for him/her. Music must be submitted as one single track (Mustang Champions staff will not transition from one track to

another during the performance) either on a USB or as an mp3 file. All music is subject to review and approval by Mustang Champions staff.

- i. Cattle may be available (TBD, based on supply at the time).
- j. Other animals (dogs, additional horses, etc.) will NOT be allowed in the arena during the finals performance for any reason and will result in disqualification.
- k. Other people (including children) will NOT be allowed in the arena during the finals performance for any reason other than to drive a vehicle to be used during the performance. If someone other than the competitors driving a vehicle in the performance **none of the occupants** of the vehicle will be allowed to exit the vehicle while in the arena and the windows must be rolled up at all times (the vehicle, if driven by someone other than the competitor, must be closed-cab). Other people are NOT allowed to act as props, ride or come in contact with the horse at any point during the performance and will result in disqualification. Other people may hand props to the competitor from outside the arena.
- l. Mustangs are not allowed to trot or lope onto or into any moving or covered vehicles/ trailers/ props of any kind and will result in disqualification.
- m. Mustangs are not allowed to trot or lope through any moving vehicles/ trailers/ props of any kind and will result in disqualification.
- n. A competitor may not stand or kneel on a horse that is standing, sitting, or laying on any object and doing so will result in a disqualification. Examples include tarps, bridges, platforms, chairs, etc. It is advised that competitors contact Mustang Champions staff with questions prior to their performance. It is the competitor's responsibility to clarify any information.
- o. Competitors must wear appropriate footwear during the freestyle performance - bare feet are not allowed and will result in disqualification.
- p. Judges and/ or Mustang Champions staff may stop any performance deemed unsafe, dangerous or otherwise inappropriate.
- q. Ties will be broken by the compulsory score. If a tie exists between compulsory scores, the score from a predetermined compulsory maneuver will break the tie. The tiebreaker compulsory maneuver will be determined prior to the start of the event. In case of further ties, a tiebreaker judge may be used.
- r. ***All items/ props are subject to final review and approval by Mustang Champions staff.***
- s. Finalists will be scored on the following:
  - i. **Compulsory Maneuvers: 40 points per judge**

Competitors will come into the finals with a possible 40 points, per judge, accumulated during the previous compulsory maneuvers class. As stated above, 2-point penalties exist for competitors being off pattern and/or dismounting or coming off their horse during this class.

ii. **Freestyle Performance: 60 total points per judge**

The freestyle portion of the final's competition encourages competitors to choose music, costumes and props which permit them to show the athletic abilities of their horse in a crowd appealing way. During the freestyle performance, contestants will be scored based on the following:

- **Overall Horsemanship (30 points)**

- Communication/ partnership between horse and rider and the horse's overall willingness to perform and execute maneuvers correctly in a controlled, relaxed and confident manner
- Incorporation of maneuvers and their degree of difficulty.  
These maneuvers would include but are not limited to side pass, two tracking either direction, pulling or dragging, serpentines, rollbacks, lead changes, circles with variance in size and speed, stops, etc.

- **Entertainment Value (30 points)**

- Components of Choreography - the composition and arrangement of the exhibition in relation to the music and its rhythm.
- Creativity - the use of theme, maneuvers, costumes, and/or props to enhance the performance and overall originality.

14. Approximately \$125,000 in cash and additional prizes will be awarded during the Mustang Challenge:

**Mustang Challenge Championship Finals:**

**\$50,000 - Champion**

**2nd - \$20,000**

**3rd - \$12,000**

**4th - \$8,000**

**5th - \$5,000**

**6th - \$2,000**

**7th - \$2,000**

**8th - \$2,000**

**9th - \$2,000**

**10 - \$ 2,000**

**Mustang Challenge Preliminary Classes:**

**1st - \$3k**

**2nd - \$2k**

**3rd - \$1k**

17. All horses must be removed from the premises by 10AM Sunday, July 14, 2024

*For more information on the Mustang Classic, please contact Mustang Champions Event Director, Stormy Mullins at (940) 445-9773 / (737) 358-9200.*