

Learn about horses with the 4-H horseless horse project



I'm sure you all know a youngster who is just enamored with horses but doesn't own a horse or even have the opportunity to own one. 4-H has recognized this dilemma faced by many parents and offers a project to allow kids the chance to learn all about horses, without having to own, lease or borrow a horse.

The horseless horse project is designed for 4-H members interested in learning about horses. There are four project units within the project, all of which focus on life skill learning and can easily be transferred to the horse project, should a member decide to purchase a horse in the future.

Unit 1, Making Horse Sense, starts out with basic information about horses for the individuals who are just starting to learn about the horse. In this unit, members will learn basic coat colors, breeds and anatomy. They will learn the different gaits of the horse and explore horse behaviors. Lastly, they will be introduced to grooming and safety concerns.

Progressing on to Unit 2, Hooves, Health and Horsemanship, members will gradually learn more in-depth information about the horse. Specifically, they will gain knowledge of the anatomy of the horse's hoof and the confirmation and movement of a horse. Members will study horse health, nutrition, unsoundness and blemishes.

In this unit, members will become familiar with Western and English tack, bits and training aids and devices. At the end of the unit, they will explore the realities of horse ownership.

Unit 3, Breaking Ground, dives deeper into owning and caring for a horse. Members will understand horse teeth and feeding requirements. General horse health problems will be discussed. They will be introduced to horse judging (making horse selections based on confirmation).

Unit 3 begins to explain the process for horse training and what successful first steps in horse training are. Members will learn what tack to use when training and will become familiar with basic riding aids. As members progress through Unit 3, they will also be encouraged to help lead others in the horseless horse project.

The final unit in the horseless horse project, Brushing Up on Horses, contains the most advanced information for project members. After completing this unit, members will understand parasites, the digestive tract and how to balance feed rations. They will be introduced to horse reproduction.

Additionally, members will learn about advanced movements and showmanship. They will understand basic equine, pasture and housing management skills. Lastly, members will explore ethics related to the horse industry.

Each unit requires the member to complete their horseless horse unit manual lessons and also complete the corresponding record book. Members will then pick a topic they learned about in their manual and investigate it further. They will present their findings on a four-foot-by-three-foot display board.

Immediately before the Phillips County Fair begins, members will participate in interview judging, where they will spend 10 minutes with a judge explaining their project.

The horseless horse project is an excellent option for 4-H members to experience and learn about horses without actually having to own a horse. For more information about this project or any of 4-H's projects, please contact the Phillips County Extension office at 970-854-3616. Extension programs are available to all without discrimination.

Extension Corner

Written by Kindra Plumb
