

4-H and Pony Club: You Can Do Both!

By Julie Herman, USPC Marketing and Communications Chair

The parents of today are busy. The available time they have to take their children to activities seems to be shrinking, and even choosing the right activity that fits into their already over-scheduled lives can be daunting. Choices for the parents of horse-loving children used to be clear-cut: Your child wants western riding? Choose 4-H. English riding? Pony Club. Recent changes in the Pony Club are bringing these two programs closer together because USPC now offers a wider range of horse sports for young riders.

Both produce young adults who are capable of setting goals and achieving them. So how are they different?



At a Glance:	4-H:	USPC:
Membership Age	8-18 years	Opportunities for <u>all</u> ages.
Mission Statement	4-H empowers youth to reach their full potential, working and learning in partnership with caring adults.	The United States Pony Clubs, Inc., develops character, leadership, confidence and a sense of community in youth through a program that teaches the care of horses and ponies, riding and mounted sports.
Horsemanship Programs	Offered on a county by county basis. Offered in all 50 states.	Offered on a Club or Center basis. Available in all 50 states and the Virgin Islands.
Administration	Funding provided by government budget funneled through the Land Grant Universities in each state. Local programs administered by local County Agents and club volunteer leaders.	Funding provided by membership dues and donations to the Annual Fund. Local fundraising efforts help support member opportunities. Local programs administered by volunteers at the Club, Center and Regional level.
Program	Each member chooses one or more topics and completes a “project” on this topic during the year with support from the local club. It is possible to complete a Horsemanship project without access to a real horse.	Each member works toward Certification levels based on the Standards of Proficiency. Certifications are available in both Horse Management (knowledge and horse handling on the ground) and riding (flat/dressage and over fences). All riding certifications include demonstrating the horse management knowledge for that level. Access to a horse is necessary to complete Certifications but owning a horse is not mandatory.

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Program Continuity	Each county structures their programs slightly differently. The member chooses a project each year. This can include horsemanship or be any number of a wide range of topics. The Club leader chooses how to support the member in their project. Not all clubs offer all topics overseen by the national 4-H. One of the strengths of this model is the wide-range of choices available to the member.	USPC issues the Standards of Proficiency to be used as the basis for each Club and Center instruction programs. This includes both unmounted topics and mounted lessons that stress safety while teaching the basic balanced position. Each certification builds on the last so that members grow as both riders and knowledgeable horsemen/women.
Competitions	<p>Each state offers competitions. The format of the competitions varies from state to state. Individuals compete within their interest area.</p> <p>Quiz Bowl and Hippology (or Judging Contest) are knowledge based competitions where members compete based on their knowledge and quickness of thinking.</p> <p>Skills demonstrated at these competitions are the ability to showcase knowledge gained while working on that year's project, the ability to present oneself well to strangers and to articulate your knowledge.</p>	<p>Competition is team-based so members gain skills as team members and leaders. Rallies are competitions where a team is evaluated on their practical application of the sets of skills from the Standards of Proficiency.</p> <p>Quiz is a knowledge based competition where teams compete based on their overall equestrian knowledge.</p> <p>Skills demonstrated at rallies include the ability to coordinate multiple tasks in a timely manner, ability to work as a team and lead a team, ability to present oneself well to strangers and to articulate your knowledge.</p>
Teaching Materials	Online resources through state land-grant university programs. Resources vary from state to state.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junior Pony Club workbook • Badge Program • USPC Manual of Horsemanship—Basics for Beginners (D level) • USPC Manual of Horsemanship—Intermediate (C level) • USPC Manual of Horsemanship—Advanced Horsemanship (C-3 – A levels) • Standards of Proficiency • Proficiency Flow Charts • Lesson Plans available on website
Safety	Teaches safe handling of horses on the ground. Helmets are required as a state-by-state mandated rule.	Teaches safe handling of the horse on the ground. First organization to require safety helmets for equestrians. Safety included as an unmounted topic in the Standards of Proficiency and tested at Certifications.



At a Glance:	4-H:	USPC:
Supported Styles of Riding	<p>May include Western riding disciplines from the stock tradition and Hunter and Quiz Bowl. Varies widely from county to county and state to state.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Western Riding• Western Contest• Saddleseat• Easy Gaited• Hunters/Dressage• Drill Team• Miniatures• Special Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dressage• Driving• Endurance• Eventing• Foxhunting• Hunter Seat Equitation/Show Jumping• Mounted Games• Polocrosse• Polo• Quiz• Tetrathlon• Vaulting• Western (Western Dressage, Reining)
Cost to Join	<p>No national dues. Local dues vary from county to county and state to state. Average dues are under \$50.</p>	<p>National Dues \$130 renewal, \$140 new; Regional and Local dues vary but often include mounted instruction/lessons for the year.</p>