



National Cowboy Poetry Rodeo Official Rules

“Excellence through Competition!”

The Mission:

Encourage ‘fair’ poets to become ‘good’ and ‘good’ poets to become ‘better’.

The Challenge:

To apply fairness and consistency in judging the skills and choosing the better performers in a cowboy poetry competition designed rodeo.

The Stage:

The Cowboy Poetry Rodeo is an event, fashioned after a stock rodeo, designed to pit the skills of one cowboy poet against those of another in such a manner as to develop the talents of both, with an over-riding goal of advancing the genre of cowboy poetry to a degree benefiting both performer and audience.

National Cowboy Poetry Competition Rules & Guidelines

It is the contestant’s responsibility to read and be familiar with the rules of this event.

The following information is included:

- A. DEFINITIONS.
- B. WHAT IS COWBOY POETRY
- C. CRITERIA
- D. GENERAL RULES
- E. JUDGING
- F. SCORING
- G. COMPETITION RULES & PRIZES
- H. HINTS AND JUDGING GUIDELINES FOR RIDERS
- I. JUDGING GUIDELINES FOR JUDGES

A. DEFINITIONS:

1. **Professional:** Any entertainer earning more than one half of their annual income from performing cowboy poetry. (Honor system)
2. **Rising Stars:** Those Riders who have not won a Silver Buckle.
3. **Silver Buckle:** Those Riders who have won a Silver Buckle.
4. **Poem:** Any composition designed to convey a vivid and imaginative sense of experience.
5. **Ballad:** A narrative poem, often of folk origin. Sometimes sang.
6. **Prose:** Ordinary speech or writing as distinguished from verse.
7. **Story:** The narration of an event or series of events, either true or fictitious.
8. **Pastoral:** Pertaining to, or involvement in, animal husbandry, the country, country life or country characters in various settings. This can include different situations by a variety of characters, such as; Cowboys, Indians, Shepherds, Loggers, Miners, Farmers, Ranchers, Rangers and other similar trades and occupations. Outdoor pursuits such as hunting and fishing can be included. These works can feature “country characters in urban settings”, as well as “urban characters in country settings”.
9. **Quality:** How well the material is written, regardless of author!
10. **Theme:** The substance of the material. A unifying idea that is a recurrent element in literary or artistic work.
11. **Presentation:** The manner in which the material is presented.
12. **Divisions:** Rising Stars and Silver Buckle
13. **Categories:** Poet and Reciter
14. **Fields:** Serious and Humorous
15. **Poet:** Those who use their own material
16. **Reciter:** Those who use the work of others
17. **Event:** One category in one field.
18. **Administration:** This would include; recruiting, determining prize money, assigning judges, judging and other managerial tasks. Assisting with “Supportive” assignments in preparation for the rodeo is not deemed an “administrative” function
19. **Water test:** The Rider, fully clothed, must walk the length of the nearest swimming pool, on the water’s surface without getting wet! If the contestant should happen to sink--- the Judge who assigned the perfect score will be required to join the swimmer.
20. **Histrionics:** A deliberate display of emotion for effect.

B. WHAT IS COWBOY POETRY?

The final decision of “does the work fit within the NCPR criteria” must be determined individually by each of the five judges. Should a rider have some doubt about his work, they may consult with the judge foreman or producer prior to the competition.

1. Any poem, prose, ballad, story, or song with a basic *pastoral* theme.
2. This work can come from anyone who feel that they, either through experience or research, can realistically address the subject. Working as a cowboy or rancher or having actual experience on the subject written about is not a requirement.
3. There are no restrictions on any one “time period,” stories may be written about the past, present, or future.
4. There is no restriction on geography. Every area of the world has its rural life and is fair game.

What Cowboy Poetry is not:

5. Patriotic, sentimental, and religious writings that are non-pastoral.

C. CRITERIA: (QUALITY + THEME + PRESENTATION = TOTAL SCORE)

1. **Quality Criteria:** Example: On a 1 to 20 point scale, a “good” performance should be given a score of 10, a “fair” performance something below 10, and an “excellent” performance somewhere above 10.
--Scoring weight: **Poet field:** 1 to 10 points, **Reciter field:** 1 to 5 points.
2. **Theme Criteria:** Does the material presented tell its story in a clearly painted mind picture? Does the poem have rhyme and meter, if intended?
--Scoring weight: **Poet and Reciter fields:** 1 to 5 points
3. **Presentation Criteria:** Is the material interesting, mature and in good taste for a general audience?
--Scoring weight: **Poet field:** 1 to 5 points, **Reciter field:** 1 to 10 points
4. **Presentation Criteria:** Theatrics: body language, facial expression, voice projection, accent, diction. How well they are used and how well they fit the theme of the poem.

D. GENERAL RULES

1. This competition is open to all Cowboy Poets except professionals. Reminder, please read definition of professionals.
2. No one involved with the administration of the NCPR, nor their families, may enter the competition.
3. Contestants will be referred to as “Riders”.
4. The cash purses amount to 75% of the entry fees paid into each event, plus any added money advertised. Entry fees and added money will be proportionately shared between the two events according to the number of entries in each event.

5. Twenty-five percent of all entry fees are designated as Arena fees and are used for production and operating expenses.
6. Events will be filled on a first-come-first-served basis.
7. A random drawing will determine the sequence in which each rider performs. In the first go-round, each rider will present a program not to exceed five (5) minutes. The highest scoring 50% of the riders move on to the finals.
8. In the finals go-round, each rider will present a program not to exceed six (6) minutes.
9. Winners will be determined by totaling the scores from the first go-round and the finals.
10. The ride sequence will reverse for the finals go-round. Entries to all events are closed after the ride sequence drawing.
11. Different material must be used in each event entered.
12. All tied scores, other than for first place will split the appropriate purse. First place ties will be settled by a "Rhyme-off", or a "flip of the coin" as determined by the judge foreman (available time is a factor)
13. To offset "start-up jitters" by both contestants and judges, the riders drawing positions number one in the first scheduled event of the first go-round may elect to take a re-ride. The decision to ask for the re-ride must be made immediately after receiving the initial score. Re-rides will take place after all other riders in that event have completed their programs. The material used must be the same as in the initial presentation. The second score is final and will be the score of record.
14. No props, other than hand-held objects. No background music.
15. Any points deducted for using more than allotted time will be announced as they occur. There is No penalty for using less than allotted time.
16. A countdown clock will be in full view of the rider with a visual warning given by the timekeeper 30 seconds before time expires. Time starts with the first word spoken into the microphone.
17. Riders compete only against other riders in the same event.
18. Riders may expand the traditional styles of Cowboy Poetry to such as; storytelling, ballads, odes, a Capella songs, prose and free verse so long as the theme remains consistent with the guidelines in this document.
19. As we are judging "*Quality*," "*Theme*" and "*Presentation*", notes may be used but judging emphasis will be placed on how well you stay connected to the audience.
20. The author must be given credit for any material used that is not your own.
21. Vulgarity, grossness, ethnic insults or other material inappropriate for good wholesome family entertainment will not be tolerated. If in doubt, discuss it with the judge foreman or the arena boss prior to your presentation. (graphically detailed stories such as "treating prolapsed bovines" etcetera, are discouraged)
22. Entry fees will not be refunded later than 30 days before the competition.
23. The producer reserves the right to refuse entry to anyone.

E. JUDGING

1. Judging is by a panel of five selected in consideration of their experience and background in Western and Cowboy poetry, as well as other similar literary experience and accomplishments in related fields.
2. Scoring procedures assure complete impartiality.
3. To afford riders a better appreciation of their strengths and weaknesses, scorecards will show individual scores for quality, theme, and presentation. These cards may be reviewed by the rider and discussed with the judges during the lunch break or after completion of each day's events.
4. If the work presented does not fit the criteria outlined in the rules it will receive a score of "0".

F. SCORING

1. Scoring System:

For each ride, judges will assign a score of 1 to 20 points, in $\frac{1}{2}$ point increments. The highest and lowest marks of the five scores are discarded, leaving the sum of the mid three as the rider's official score for that event.

Example: A rider receiving initial scores of $12\frac{1}{2}$, 14, $15\frac{1}{2}$, 15, and 17 would end up with a total of $44\frac{1}{2}$ points; (both $12\frac{1}{2}$ [low] and 17 [high] are discarded). 60 points would be a perfect score. Scores are assigned immediately after each presentation with a tally kept in full view on stage.

2. Score Talley Procedure:

To help prevent the occurrence of arithmetic errors and shorten the transition period between riders, the scores cards for the rider just finishing a program will be double checked for accuracy by a tally boss and an assistant, as follows:

- a) As a poet completes the ride, the judges assign a score, add the numbers, pass the score card to the judge foreman, who in turn, hands the cards to the tally boss.
- b) While the next rider is presenting their program, the tally boss will check each card for accuracy, make any corrections, initial as correct then pass them to the assistant who will double check the addition and initial each card as being correct, and staples the cards together.
- c) As the current rider finishes their program, the assistant tally boss will post the previous riders score and deposit the tally cards in the collection box.
- d) The same procedure is repeated for each rider.
- e) A rider may inspect their tally cards at the noon break and after the days competition has ended, then take possession when the competition is complete.
- f) The Tally Boss and Assistant will be volunteers, proficient in math, with the dedicated task of assuring tally card accuracy.
- g) The tally cards will be large enough for the judges to make comprehensive remarks concerning the rides strengths and weakness'.

G. COMPETITION RULES and PRIZES:

1. Divisions of Competition:

- b) **Rising Stars** (poets not having previously won a 1st place silver buckle) and
- c) **Silver Buckle:** Those poets who have previously won a 1st place silver buckle who can no longer enter the Rising Stars Division, or any of the qualified rising stars contestants.

2. Categories of Competition:

Each of the Rising Stars and Silver Buckle Divisions will have two categories of competition for each division:

- a) Poet, and
- b) Reciter

Each of those categories includes two fields:

- a) Serious, and
- b) Humorous

One field in one category constitutes one event. A rider may enter any or all events in any divisions they are eligible for.

3. Prize Money and Awards for Rising Star Divisions:

- 1. Rising Star Division Entry Fees are \$85.00 per entry.
- 2. The following payout guidelines will be followed in each event depending upon the number of entries in that event:

Places	1-15 Entries	16-30 Entries	31-60 Entries	60-90 Entries	91+ Entries
1st	60%	50%	40%	30%	28%
2nd	40%	30%	30%	25%	22%
3rd		20%	20%	20%	18%
4th			10%	15%	14%
5th				10%	10%

- 3. The 1st place winner in each event of the Rising Stars Divisions will receive a Silver Buckle.
- 4. A rider may win more than one event and more than one silver buckle in any one year.
- 5. The riders receiving the highest average total score from the first go and the finals will be invited to perform on the headliner show.

4. Prize Money and Awards for Silver Buckle Divisions:

After winning a silver buckle, any poets competing in following years may only compete in the Silver Buckle divisions. However, anyone from the Rising Star division may enter the Silver Buckle competition.

- a. Silver Buckle Division Entry Fees are \$85.00 per entry.

- b. The following payout guidelines will be followed in each event depending upon the number of entries in that event:

Places	1-15 Entries	16-30 Entries	31-60 Entries	60-90 Entries	91+ Entries
1st	60%	50%	40%	30%	28%
2nd	40%	30%	30%	25%	22%
3rd		20%	20%	20%	18%
4th			10%	15%	14%
5th				10%	10%

- c. The 1st place winner in each event will receive a trophy.
 d. A rider may win more than one event and more than one prize in any one year.
 e. The riders receiving the highest average total score from the first go and the finals will be invited to perform on the headliner show.

5. Overall High Money Winner of Event:

- a. The rodeo's high overall money winner will be awarded a "High all around" trophy and be invited to perform on the headliner show.

6. Shootout Prize Money:

- a. Shootout Entry Fee is \$125.00.
 b. The following payout guidelines will be followed in each event depending upon the number of entries in that event:

Places	1-15 Entries	16-30 Entries	31-60 Entries
1st	60%	50%	40%
2nd	40%	30%	30%
3rd		20%	20%
4th			10%
5th			

- c. Note: "Shoot-out" winnings will not count toward the "High all around" money award.
 d. 25% of entry fees are applied toward rodeo production costs.
 e. First place will receive a Shootout Trophy and be invited to perform in the Headliner show.

7. Shootout Specific Rules:

- a. Riders will recite one serious and one humorous poem.
 b. All material used must be from the rider's own pen.
 c. Total time allotted will be (6) minutes for each poem. Points for using more than allotted time will be deducted in accordance with rodeo general rules.
 d. Poems will be judged and scored separately. Total of the both scores is the final tally.
 e. You do not have to be entered in the rodeo to compete in the shoot-out event.

- f. Rodeo judging, scoring and any other appropriate rules will apply.
- g. Any appropriate poems may be used regardless of prior use in any NCPR competition.
- h. Money won in this event does not apply toward any rodeo titles.
- i. Although the Shoot-out uses some NCPR rules, the competition is not otherwise connected with the rodeo.

H. HINTS AND JUDGING GUIDELINES FOR RIDERS

- 1. Study the Rules carefully. If you have questions, bring them up before the competition starts. I certainly hate to see a good rider thrown just because the cinch wasn't tight.
- 2. Scoring will be realistic and as consistent as possible. Any rider receiving a perfect score, could, at the Arena Boss's discretion, be subjected to *"The Water Test,"* as previously described.
- 3. Although it is not necessary for the rider to be overly animated or dramatic performance appropriate to the material will be considered. Each performer has a unique style that can be just as effective as the next. Judges will keep "quality, theme, and presentation" firmly in mind, not allowing audience reaction, or other unrelated traits, to influence scores.
- 4. It is to the riders advantage to give a shorter "quality" presentation rather than something with "less quality" merely to use up more of their allotted time.

I. JUDGING GUIDELINES FOR JUDGES:

- 1. Study the current rules and regulations carefully, if you have questions, bring them up before the competition begins. We must be professional.
- 2. Scoring must be realistic and as consistent as possible. On a scale of 1 to 20, a good presentation would be scored 10, an excellent one, something above and a sub-par presentation something below. Anything outside of those parameters must merit the numbers. (A rider receiving a score of 20 could, at the arena boss's discretion be subjected to the "Water Test!")
- 3. Although it is not necessary for the rider to be overly animated or dramatic, histrionics that match the poem should be considered.
- 4. Don't fall into the "Funny trap" for humor is not a pre-requisite to a high score. Keep the content and presentation firmly in mind.
- 5. As there may be some "humor" in a "serious" poem and some "serious" bits in a "humorous" poem, judges should discount these "boundary excursions" unless they are prevalent throughout.
- 6. No penalties will be assessed for using less time than allotted. Some excellent material can be presented in a short time span!
- 7. Have fun and enjoy the show. Don't be aloof, use eye contact, body language and facial expression to give the riders feedback as they perform.
- 8. Do not allow audience reaction influence your scoring!!

9. This poetry competition will be viewed by men, women and children from many different walks of life. The riders have been cautioned beforehand, that their presentation must be kept in good taste for general audiences. If it is not, mark down accordingly.
10. Our goal is ***“Excellence through Competition!”*** so please make every effort to write appropriate comments on the score cards. This is our way of helping to achieve that goal. In the past rodeo rules have been quite restrictive as relates to the theme and subjects allowed. In essence, opening up the “What is Cowboy Poetry” definition will give many additional poets the opportunity to become involved and garner the rewards and benefits offered from participating in the NCPR. Still, care should be used in not allowing the rider to not go too far out of bounds in either direction. The “Not cowboy poetry” call rests strictly on the opinion of the judges.
11. Our definition of ***“What is Cowboy Poetry”*** has been widened to allow riders a wider range of subjects to present. However, to retain the unique qualities of our competition, material presented must still fall within the NCPR guidelines.

Awards Summary:

Silver buckle to each of the first-place Rising Stars event winners.

Trophy to each of the first-place Silver Buckle event winners.

Trophy for High over all money winners (Rodeo)

Trophy for Best of the Best (Shoot-out)

Other awards may be given at the producer’s discretion.

Audiences at the Headliner shows enjoy poetry that makes them laugh, or at least smile. Therefore, it would be beneficial to the genre if, whenever possible, the winning poets, who are scheduled on the Saturday night headliner show, would use their very best “Humorous” material regardless of which winning event they represent. Presentations must be kept under 5 minutes!

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