

NCHA launches Challenger Shows

New format offers fun, affordability

The National Cutting Horse Association has launched the Challenger Series, a new format of Weekend Shows aimed at giving weekend cutters a fun and affordable entryway to the sport. Challenger Shows will complement the existing NCHA Championship Shows, with lower cost and more flexibility for show producers.

The time-tested features of the traditional Championship Shows will continue, with a few new features.

Beginning with the 2017 point year, an awards and recognition program will be introduced for the new Challenger Shows, but Affiliates and other show producers may begin offering Challenger Shows (with no added money) even during the remainder of the 2016 point year. Added-money Challenger Shows will be allowed starting December 28, with the new point year.

"The Challenger Series is a brand new format, building on the foundation of the Grassroots Program," said NCHA President Chuck Smith. "The Challenger Series will make it easier for show producers and affiliates to create shows tailored to their unique situations.

"It also gives new people and current members who are just cutting for fun a better experience, while being rewarded for their efforts."

Challenger Standings based on points

NCHA will establish Regional Top 15 Standings for the new Challenger shows. The Challenger Standings will be based strictly on points, rather than money earned. However, money won at Challenger Shows will count toward lifetime earnings, rider and horse eligibility and achieve-

ment awards.

Points awarded for any Challenger Show class will be based on the number of entries, with one point for every two entries, to a maximum of 10 points. No half-points will be awarded. If there is an odd number of entries, points will be rounded up.

So placings in a 20-horse class, would be awarded as follows: 1st = 10 pts., 2nd = 9 pts. and down to 1 pt. for 10th place. All entries that mark a score of at least 60 will receive at least one point, which will help encourage ongoing participation. So in this example, places 11-20 would each receive one point.

In the case of ties, each entry will receive the points awarded to the highest tied placing, with the normal points going to any contestants following the tie. This is similar to the way points are currently awarded in Youth classes at Championship Shows.

Buckles for money or points

NCHA Achievement Buckles will be awarded based on combined earnings of \$1,000 from Challenger and Championship Shows, or for 100 points earned at Challenger Shows. Dollars and points can not be mixed for awards.

Upgrade Medallions for Achievement buckles can be earned with additional points. For example, 250 points would earn a \$2,500 Medallion; 500 points would earn a \$5,000 Medallion, and so on.

Participation in the jackpot will be optional for the contestant. So a cutter can enter without participating in the jackpot, but still receive whatever points he or she

What about my NCHA Championship Shows?

NCHA Championship Shows are largely unchanged by the addition of the Challenger Series shows. They are still the cornerstone of NCHA's Weekend Show program. Here's a recap of Championship Show features:

- **Qualification for the Top 15 Standings** will remain the same as it has been in recent years.
- **The NCHA World Finals** format held during the NCHA Futurity will remain the same.
- **Area Standings** will still be maintained and published online and in the *Chatter*. NCHA will present a trophy to the Area champion in each approved class. Beginning with the current point year, NCHA will also publish pictures of the Area champions online after the end of the year, and in a designated issue of the *Chatter*. The most up-

to-date standings will be available throughout the year on the website.

- **Regional Top 15 Standings** will be tracked and published on the website beginning with the 2017 point year. The Regional standings will be based on money earned at all Championship shows in the Region. Awards will be given to the leading participants at the end of the year.
- **Standings based on \$200 or more added shows.** Since shows with \$199 or less in added money fall under the Challenger Series, NCHA World Standings and the Championship Regional Standings will be based on shows with \$200 or more in added money. Championship Area Standings will still be based on shows with \$200 to \$750 in added money.

earns in the class.

Points are recognized only for Challenger Regional Standings, Achievement Buckles and other awards. For the purpose of achievement awards, points carry over from year to year. Points do not count toward lifetime earnings, or eligibility.

Flexibility for show producers

The new Challenger Shows offer greater flexibility and cost savings for show producers. (See *What's new in the NCHA Challenger Shows?*).

A low show approval fee, flexibility in staffing shows and setting purses, and the option of a two-cow/two-minute format will all appeal to show producers. Challenger Shows can offer any combination of classes, and do not necessarily need to include an Open class, as traditional Championship Shows do. For example, a Challenger Show could consist of just a \$15,000 Amateur class with \$150 in added money, if that format met the needs of show producers and cutters.

The flexibility will enable breed shows and other established events to enhance their programs by offering an approved NCHA Challenger class or classes.

New incentives for cutters

The new Challenger Shows will offer cutters additional opportunities to participate, typically at a significantly lower cost

Cutters in Challenger Shows will earn points toward Achievement Buckles and year-end standings, with a new year-end awards program established. Even cutters in a slump will be able to earn participation points to make progress in the standings, and bring them closer to awards.

In its initial year, the Challenger Shows will offer new NCHA members, or former cutters whose membership has lapsed for more than one year, a free introductory membership to the National Cutting Horse Association.

What's new in the NCHA Challenger Shows?

Here's an overview of the new features of the NCHA Challenger Shows.

- **Available for Affiliates and other producers.** Any NCHA Affiliate or independent show producer may hold an NCHA Challenger Show. Breed shows and other existing events can enhance their programs by adding NCHA Challenger classes.
- **Parity of purses not required.** Any NCHA-approved class or combination of classes can be included in a Challenger Show. Any class may be jackpot only, or may offer from \$1 to \$199 in added money, without regard to added money in any other class.
- **Low approval fee.** The approval fee is just \$200 for an added-money Challenger Show, or \$100 for shows with no added money. The approval fee must be sent when results are submitted to NCHA.
- **A Regional Awards fee** of \$2 per entry will be collected and submitted to NCHA with show results to fund year-end awards for leading participants in Challenger Shows.
- **Entry fee may be lower than cattle charge**, to give show producers flexibility and to help make participation more affordable for cutters.
- **Judges, video personnel and secretaries do not need to be certified**, with the exception that certified judges must be used for classes with added money. Video must be recorded for all classes, and retained for 180 days.
- **Two cows/two minutes format** is optional. Instead of the traditional format of two and a half minutes, with two or three cows to be cut, Challenger Shows may offer a two-minute format, with two cows provided.
- **Membership dues may be paid after the show** without affecting money or points earned at the show.
- **No judges protest system** will be available for Challenger Shows.
- **Multiple judges** may be used at a show.
- **Judges' names do not need to be submitted** to NCHA before classes with no added money. However, for added-money classes, a certified judge must be named seven days before the show.
- **NCHA will record earnings**, but earnings in Challenger Shows will not count towards World Standings. Only Championship Shows with \$200 or more in added money will count towards World Standings beginning with the 2017 point year.
- **Weekend limited age events** may not begin until the Challenger classes are completed, unless two arenas are being used.
- **Regional Standings and Awards.** NCHA will maintain Regional standings for all approved Challenger Show classes, and publish them online. Cutters will earn points in whichever Region they are competing in, so an individual could be ranked in the standings of more than one Region. Year-end awards will be presented to the leading participants in each class in each Region.