

USPC Research Project Fair

Have you ever wondered why horses behave a certain way? Are you curious about how different approaches to horse care might affect your horse's health or performance? Do you have questions about how or why certain horse management practices are preferred over others? Are you interested in developing a strategy to learn more about a specific question you have about your horse? If you answered "YES!" to any of these questions, then the Pony Club Research Project Fair is for YOU!

Held during the USPC Convention, the Research Project Fair provides Pony Club members of all ages and certification levels the opportunity to expand their equine knowledge.

The USPC Research Project Fair features four categories:

- **Individual Experimental Project:** Hypothesis-driven project conducted by an individual Pony Club member. Project must incorporate experimental methods to test hypothesis and determine conclusions.
- **Group Experimental Project:** Hypothesis-driven project conducted by a group of Pony Club members. Project must incorporate experimental methods to test hypothesis and determine conclusions. Groups may range from pairs to an entire Pony Club.
- **Individual Literature Review:** Non-experimental project in which an individual Pony Club member conducts an in-depth analysis and synthesis of existing literature on a specific equine-related topic.
- **Group Literature Review:** Non-experimental Project in which a group of Pony Club members (from pairs to an entire Pony Club) conducts an in-depth analysis and synthesis of existing literature on a specific equine-related topic.

Experimental projects and literature reviews can be about any topic related to horses and/or Pony Club. Previous research projects have explored a broad range of topics, including the effects of different wound care strategies on healing time, comparison of the shock absorbing qualities of different arena footing materials, effectiveness of different leather care products, and experiments to determine which fly spray works best at repelling flies. This is a great opportunity to learn more about your horse, expand your knowledge on a certain topic in preparation for future certifications, and share what your findings with other Pony Club members!

2025 Timeline

January 2, 2025	Applications Due
January 18, 2025	Virtual Research Project Fair (will not begin before 10:00 am Eastern Time)
January 24, 2025	In-Person Research Project Fair (will not begin before 12:00 pm Eastern Time)

Application Information

Applications are to be submitted through the link provided on the Pony Club website. Applications include member and project information. For more information, email events@ponyclub.org.

Enter early! Applications may be restricted due to time limitations (in-person and virtual).

Applications Include:

- Member's Region and Club/Center
- Member's Certifications
- Project Title
- Project Abstract
- Supervision Requirements
- Veterinarian Signature (if applicable).

What is an Abstract?

An abstract is a brief summary of the research project or the literature review and typically outlines four elements of the completed work:

- The research focus (i.e. statement of the problem/research goal or the topic of interest)
- The research methods used (or resources used for literature review)
- The results/findings of the research
- The conclusions made

Submitted abstracts will be compiled into an Abstract Booklet that will be distributed to Project Fair participants, Convention attendees, USPC leaders, and sponsors. Please be sure to proofread your abstract for spelling and grammar before submitting!

Displays

Visual displays are not to exceed 3' x 5' or the size of traditional tri-fold science fair project boards. Members may bring their own tri-fold board or request to be provided one for travel convenience by the local hosts to assemble on-site at Convention. Participants may bring and use their own laptops/tablets for their oral presentation.

Participants will receive instructions regarding project setup prior to Convention.

Presentations

In-person participants attending the USPC Convention will present their project to a judges' panel. Each entrant will prepare a short (10 minutes or less) presentation to review their project, results, and conclusions. Participants may bring and use their own laptops/tablets for their oral presentation.

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Virtual participants can present their project using a slide presentation (e.g., PowerPoint, Google Slides, Adobe, etc.) or shared files (e.g., images, data tables, etc.).

All presentations should review the purpose of the research, methodology, results, conclusions, and what was learned. Presentations should not exceed 10 minutes.

Project Evaluation and Prizes

Projects will be evaluated by a panel of experts composed of veterinarians/veterinarian technicians, scientific researchers, teachers, and Pony Club graduates.

Separate awards will be provided to participants in the virtual and in-person fairs. Divisions will be determined by participant age, with prizes awarded for first through fifth in each division. Special prizes will be awarded for Overall High Score Individual Experimental Project, Individual Literature Review, and Group Project.

Individual Experimental Projects or Literature Reviews will be judged according to the following age categories (age as of January 1, 2025):

- 8 years and younger
- 9 – 10 years
- 11 – 13 years
- 14 – 17 years
- 18 – 25 years
- 25 and older

**Age categories may be adjusted based on participation numbers.*

All in-person projects will be awarded during the Awards Luncheon at Convention and will be prominently displayed for everyone's education and enjoyment.

Judging Rubrics

Experimental Project

Presentations are scored on Project, Research Methodology, Results and Analysis, and Presentation. All statements are judged on a scale of 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree).

Project (15 points possible)

- Project had a clear research question.
- Project included a clearly stated hypothesis.
- Member(s) utilized a variety of resources to develop the research methodology.

Research Methodology (20 points possible)

- Methodology used a clear description of materials used.
- Methodology included clear experimental and control variables.
- The materials used were appropriate for the research question.
- Methodology described in such a manner that it could be repeated by another Pony Club member (either written or as part of the oral presentation).

Results and Analysis (15 points possible)

- Project included a clear summary of collected data points.
- Project included analysis of results (expected and unexpected).
- Project included a clear statement of conclusions.

Presentation (15 points possible)

- Information was presented in a clear and organized manner.
- Presentation was visually appealing.
- References were properly attributed.

Literature Review

Presentations are scored on Project Content and Presentation. All statements are judged on a scale of 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree).

Project Content (20 points possible)

- Project had a clearly stated research topic.
- Information was organized in a logical sequence/structure.
- Project incorporated a variety of information sources.
- Project offered a clear conclusion/next steps based on research.

Presentation (15 points possible)

- Presenter provided a clear summary of their research topic and reference material.
- Presentation was visually appealing.
- References were properly attributed.

Tips for a Great Project

- Carefully plan all steps of your project.
- Keep a journal of all of your research, thoughts, preparation, ideas, and readings.
- Include pictures, charts, and graphs in your presentation, and keep it neat and organized.

Your project should represent your thought processes, efforts, and understanding of the material, not those of an expert, friend, or family member. That does not mean you should not ask for help and advice, especially when using live animals as part of your research!

The Scientific Method

Purpose

What do you want to learn? What do you want to explore? Choose something that interests you.

Research

Find out as much about your topic as you can. How can you find the answer to your question?

Hypothesis

Predict the answer to your question. Your hypothesis is what you think the answer to your question will be. It must be clear and brief so that you can test or verify it.

Procedure

Design a test/project to confirm or disprove your prediction. Tell what you will do to test or research your prediction or hypothesis.

Analysis

Record what happened during the experiment or research.

Conclusion

What did you learn? What might be the next steps?

Applications for the 2025 Research Project Fair are due January 2, 2025.

Any questions may be directed to events@ponyclub.org.