

far forward, they will be penalized one point for each occurrence."

There has been a growing trend towards riders moving their hands farther and farther up a horse's neck. Judging Rule 8 also addresses hand placement in relation to the horse's neck:

EXAMPLE 2: While making his cut, the Cutter moves his hand up and down, side to side while selecting a cow to work. He then places his hand:

(A) near his horse's neck and leaves it there while working;

(B) above the saddle horn and leaves it there while working;

(C) near his horse's neck in the beginning of the run, and then raises it above the saddle horn while working.

(D) up the horse's neck (too far forward).

RULING: In (A) and (B) no penalty. In (C) if the hand movement results in reining, a one (1) point penalty shall be assessed for each occurrence. In (D) a one (1) point penalty for each occurrence.

Example 2d specifically addresses hand placement too far forward up a horse's neck, and states a one-point penalty per occurrence.

"The rule hasn't changed, the judges have just been informed to be more consistent in charging a contestant for laying their hand down too far forward, or for laying it down in the correct position but then shoving it too far forward while they are working," explained McCord. "It's always been a one-point penalty."

While "too far forward" may seem like an ambiguous statement, it is necessary to encompass all body types and cutting styles—both horse and human.

Understanding what "too far forward" means is quite simple when you compare it to an earlier section of the rule regarding slack bridle reins. In both cases, the judge makes a judgment call based on his observation of the reins or the hand placement.

"It's like tight bridle reins. You have to have slack in your bridle reins. It's mandatory. Any time you don't quite have enough slack in those bridle reins, it draws the judges attention to it and distracts from your run," continued McCord. "It's the same way about laying your hand down. If you lay it down just a little bit too far forward, that judge is going to be sitting there paying a lot of attention to your

hand, and more than likely you're going to end up with a lower score because you've distracted him."

It is also noteworthy to mention that the one-point penalty for having your hand too far forward on your horse's neck will be scored the same as a reining penalty—you can earn more than one on each cow. Just as you take a one-point deduction each time you rein your horse, you will take a one-point deduction each time your hand moves too far forward up your horse's neck.

"It could be one point per cow, or you could be charged multiple times," cautioned McCord.

"It's like we teach at all of the clinics—you don't want your bridle reins distracting that judge. Put enough slack in those bridle reins that he does not have to worry about it, and you're going to score higher. You do not want your hand far forward to where it distracts the judge. Get it back there in front of that saddle and keep it as still as possible. If he can see daylight and it's too far forward, then he has the right to charge you. People who show have to realize that those two things are big, red targets for judges."

In short, just remember, open hand or closed hand doesn't matter to the judge. But too far forward will hurt your score. Keep your hand back, keep it still, and keep cutting! ★

Illegal

