

DOWN THE FENCE COWHORSE

Here is a breakdown of the Victorian Reined Cowhorse Association (VRCHA), Down the Fence class is one of the most exciting events in the sport of Reined Cowhorse. It highlights the horse's ability to control, rate, turn, and maneuver a cow down the arena fence at speed, demonstrating the horse's instinct, training, and courage.

General Overview of VRCHA Down The Fence (Cowhorse) – Gude Only

- All riders must be current members of the VRCHA.
- Horses must be shown in legal VRCHA equipment, including approved bits and tack.
- Horses may be shown in either a snaffle bit, hackamore, two rein, or bridle, consistent with their age and division eligibility.
- All horses are required to complete the Dry Work (Reining) before performing the cow work, see VRCHA 'What is Dry Work' guideline.
- All patterns and cow work maneuvers should be performed with precision, authority, and control.



Required Maneuvers in Cow Work (Down The Fence)

The cow work phase, or "Down The Fence," consists of three key elements:

1. **Boxing – Holding the cow at one end of the arena to demonstrate control and rate.**
 2. **Rating Down the Fence – Driving the cow down the long side (fence) of the arena, showing control and the ability to rate the cow's speed.**
 3. **Turning on the Fence – Executing at least two fence turns, demonstrating the horse's ability to control and turn the cow with authority and precision.**
 4. **Circling the Cow – After completing the fence turns, the rider must circle the cow in both directions in the centre of the arena.**
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Judging Criteria

Horses are judged on control, timing, position, and correctness. Penalties are given for errors such as:

- **Losing position on the cow**
- **Failure to complete required maneuvers**
- **Excessive use of reins or spurs**
- **Dangerous or overly aggressive riding**

Judges are looking for a horse that works the cow with confidence, bravery, and style, while still maintaining responsiveness to the rider's cues.

Scoring System and Common Penalties

- The reined work and cow work are each scored out of 70, with an average score of 70 representing a correct performance.
 - Penalties can be deducted for mistakes (such as a missed lead change or a poor position on the cow).
 - Credits are awarded for degree of difficulty, correct form, and smoothness of performance.
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Additional Guidelines

- Horses must work on a loose rein where appropriate, showing trust and relaxation.
- The rider should demonstrate minimal visible cues. Obvious over-cueing (kicking, pulling, jerking) is penalised.
- Equipment must conform to VRCHA rules (legal bits, reins, etc.).
- Riders may be disqualified for abuse, excessive schooling, or unsafe behavior.

Welfare and Conduct

- Horse welfare is paramount. Any evidence of excessive force, abuse, or mistreatment will result in immediate disqualification and possible disciplinary action.
- Riders must, always conduct themselves in a sportsmanlike manner.