

Get Ready to Ride for Some Ranch Sorting

Similar to team penning, discover this latest cattle event.

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The newest competitive event sanctioned by the American Quarter Horse Association is ranch sorting. Similar to the popular sport of team penning, ranch sorting involves a pair of riders, some cattle with numbers on their hides, a designated holding area and a ticking clock. However, fans of ranch sorting claim that there's a bit more finesse and tactical maneuvering involved than in team penning. Who knows what the cattle think.

Ranch sorting is, indeed, based on precision. A team of two riders enters the arena to face 12 head of cattle. Ten of the cattle are wearing numbers zero through nine, and two of the cattle are unmarked. The two riders hear a number randomly called and have exactly 60 seconds to numerically sort the cattle into a nearby round pen, starting with the number called. For example, if the riders hear three, they first will push the cow with the number three on its back to a round pen followed by the No. 4 cow, then the No. 5 cow, and so on until all are penned without disturbing the unmarked cattle. If a cow is sorted out of order, or if one comes back across the foul line from the other pen, it is judged a 'no time.' Teamwork is key with two riders working in harmony to cut out the correctly numbered cattle and drive them to the other pen while keeping the wrong numbered cattle back.

Sound like fun? If you're an AQHA member, you can search www.aqha.com for more information on how you might qualify to compete at the annual AQHA World Show in ranch sorting. Otherwise, look for ranch sorting events in your area that might be hosted by local riding or ranching associations.