

Never heard of Ranch Sorting before?

Whether you have never used your horse in a competitive cattle sorting event, or you are a professional ranch sorting champion, you are invited to join us and support a great cause! We will have classes specifically designed for the absolute beginner at the sport all the way up to a Pro-Open, unlimited rating class!

No matter which classes you choose to participate in, there will be a jackpot and prizes for you to win and even a trophy buckle that you might just take home! No matter win, lose or draw, you will be supporting a wonderful charity organization that helps Montana women and men deal with their battle against breast cancer!

Ranch sorting (aka Team Sorting or Cattle Sorting) is a sport that was born in the ranches and feed lots of the Great Northwest. Just like the cowboys on the ranch have to pick out, separate and move cattle from a herd into smaller groups, the sport of Ranch Sorting involves Cowboys, Cowgirls and Cowkids with their horses.

While the concept is the same, the spirit of the event differs from traditional ranch or feed-lot sorting. The real cowboys might use their skill and their horse to split a cow-calf pair for weaning, or cull out a sick heifer for doctoring. The competitors at a Ranch Sorting employ the same skills and horsemanship to split out cattle from a small herd of 11 cattle, based on the number plate visible on the back of the animal, and move them from one holding pen into another. The big difference is that the real cowboys don't have a stop-watch running in the background to measure their speed and efficiency!

The sport of Ranch Sorting consists of two adjoining 60 foot diameter pens that share a common "gate". The "gate" is really nothing more than a 12-16 foot opening between the two pens. At the beginning of the competition for each team (typically 2 mounted riders), the herd (usually 11 cattle) is resting quietly at the back-end of one pen, while the competitors stage themselves in the other pen. Each of the cattle bears a number plate which is highly visible on the animals back. Each cow having a different number from 0 to 9. In a herd of 11, that accounts for 10 cows. The 11th cow bears no number plate (or tag) and is commonly referred to as "the dirty".

When the event judge is ready for the team to begin their run, a flag is raised and the announcer will declare "the flag is up", which is the competitors queue that they can approach the cattle and start their sorting job. Once a competitor moves from their original pen into the cattle pen, the judge drops their flag, starts a timer and the announcer calls out a random number from 0 to 9. The game is on! The team's objective is to start with the cow bearing the number that the announcer provided and work sequentially through the remaining 9 numbers while skipping the "dirty". Each cow is to be sorted out of the herd and moved into the adjacent pen, in order. Simple as pie!

Where the fun really starts to roll and everyone in the arena (especially the competitors) start to get the adrenalin running, is when the cows have a different idea about the job than the competitors do! The rules are pretty simple. It is a timed event and there is a 60 second time limit for each team. The more cows you successfully sort, the better your chances of winning some money or even taking home the Buckle. At the end of the competition, the team with the most cows in the least amount of time wins.

It is truly a sport for the entire family! It is particularly fun for anyone who enjoys their horse and being around a bunch of fun-loving friendly folks. Skill and experience are NOT REQUIRED! Heck, everyone had to do it for the first time some time!

If you can fog up a mirror, and have a horse that's been standing around all winter without a job, this is THE perfect opportunity for you to get him/her out of the pasture and acquaint yourselves.

Please come join us for a day of fun with friends, horses, auctions and good food as we raise money for the Tough Enough to Wear Pink of Montana organization.