

AQHA TRAIL TRIALS

I. Emphasis: “FUN”

II. Objective: To better develop the Rider-Horse ‘Partnership’.

Trail Trials (T.T.) tests the Rider-Horse relationship. Recreational Riders and trail horses experience vast and diverse stimuli in the normal course of a day’s trail ride. T.T. uses these stimuli and gives the ‘partnership’ the opportunity to gauge its abilities. The stimuli consist of natural obstacles as well as fun obstacles. The goal is for the ‘partnership’ to exhibit fundamental skills and harmony.

III. Terms

- ‘Horse’ = refers to all equines.
Coggins & applicable State Health Certificates required.
- ‘Rider-Horse Partnership’ = the same rider and horse negotiating the entire course. Competitors do not have to own the horse.

IV. Classes

- OPEN-All Breed Class. Includes all breeds of horses, mules, ponies and grade horses
- REGISTERED QH Class. Proof of Registration required at sign in
- YOUTH Class. Ages six (6) through eighteen (18). Helmets preferred.

V. Scoring

Zero (0) - Ten (10)
Zero (0) = no score Ten (10) = perfect score

Each obstacle will receive an obstacle score.

Riders are encouraged to attempt an obstacle, as no attempt = Zero (0)

No Plus (+) or Minus (-) appended to the score

The classes are judged on how the horse and rider ‘partnership’ works together. This working unit should negotiate obstacles with calmness and patience, moving safely through each obstacle. Horses should be aware, attentive and not spook, shy or spin as well as not be unaware and clip or tick obstacles or stumble. The ‘partnership’ should demonstrate the capability of picking its way through the course when obstacles warrant it, and should willingly respond to the rider’s cues on more difficult obstacles.

Course pattern should be posted at least 1 hour before event.

Emphasis is on manners, response to the rider and quality of movement. Horses should be relaxed and not display resistance.

- Credit will be given to ‘partnerships’ negotiating the obstacles with style and some degree of speed, providing correctness is not sacrificed.

- Penalty examples from slight to severe:

Tick of a log or obstacle

Hit or step on; failure to meet correct stride when walk is required; skipping over or failing to step into required space

Knocking down or severely disturbing an obstacle; stepping outside or falling or jumping off or out of an obstacle; dropping slicker or rope gate.

1st Refusal, refusing, balking or evading obstacle by shying or backing more than two (2) strides

2nd Refusal: Blatant disobedience, kicking, bucking, striking. Not finishing an obstacle

- 0 - no score: Third (3rd) Refusal; Fall to the ground by horse or rider;
Not attempting obstacle

Tie Breakers: The Senior Judge will designate one obstacle as the 'tie breaker obstacle'. The Participants will not know which obstacle is designated. If Timing Obstacles, use common sense. This is a Trail Ride Event. Do not sacrifice the correctness or the solidarity of the Partnership for speed. However, the Partnership should also work in a timely manner.

VI. Judges

Qualifications: Knowledgeable horseman or horsewoman. Does not have to be credentialed or an approved Judge.

Number of Judges: Ranges from one (1) to one (1) judge per obstacle. The number depends on the course and availability of judges. Depending on the course, usually one (1) to three (3) judges are needed. Most courses tend to dictate the need for more than one (1) judge, due to time constraints and topography. The designation of **Senior Judge** will apply to the appropriate judge, if there is more than one (1) judge. A Riders Meeting must be held before the start of each Trail Trial to introduce the Judge(s), give an explanation of the course and how the obstacles will be judged.

VII. Obstacles

There are generally fourteen (14) to sixteen (16) obstacles. Depending on the course, there may be occasions where there is one (1) obstacle that incorporates several obstacles that flow together. A few examples of obstacles are: water crossing, uphill, downhill, an outhouse, logs of various sizes, bridges, gates, drags, moving obstacles, backing between or through various 'things', ground tying, loading.

Some obstacles are designed to see if the 'partnership' is able to trust each other. For example, roping a steer head is designed, not to see how good a roper the rider is, but how much patience the 'partners' give each other. Some obstacles are games. Some obstacles may call for a timer.

Obstacles should be clearly numbered and taken in order.

VIII. Course

Obstacles must be marked. Trail Trials is a trail ride event. The objectives need to be concerned about the fun and challenges designed for the **competitors**, not the needs of the spectators. Competitors will grow the sport more than trying to get spectators to grow the sport. Spectators will find their favorite obstacles to watch.

Ride Manager / Host to decide if the course will be open for practice before the Trail Trials starts.

IX. Trail Trials Ride Manager

The Trail Trials Host will submit to the Ride Managers the Course and Obstacles for approval. The Ride Manager(s) will evaluate courses and obstacles for safety, and make sure the parameters of the obstacles and how it is expected to be traversed can be documented. (We are working on a set of rules and standards on obstacles and the set-up of these obstacles. *Perry Brookshire heading initiative*) The head Trail Trials Course Ride Manager will hold the Judges Score Sheets.

Trail Trials Course Ride Managers are permitted to compete.

X. Tack

Riders must wear footwear with a heel, such as boots. Tennis shoes are not allowed. Suitable shirts and clothing for riding is required. They should be clean and free of tears. Horses must be saddled, no bareback or bareback pads. No riding double.

XI. Unsoundness

No unsound horses allowed. Ride Management or Senior Judge will determine.

XII. Handicapped Riders

Allowances for Riders with permanent physical handicaps are permissible. Example: A rider with cancer cannot pull herself up to mount, and therefore can be allowed to use a mounting block.

Riders with temporary handicaps must advise the Senior Judge.

Example: A rider has his left arm in a cast. The Senior Judge will allow him to open the gate with his right hand.

XIII. Registration Time and Location

Sign up time is at the discretion of the T.T. manager. Suggested starting times are 8:30am-9am for registration and 10-10:30am to end.

First rider out at 11am. Note: allow more time if using only one (1) judge.

Events are held on private lands, farms and ranches, parks and public lands.

XIV. Entertainment & Meals

After Trail Trials the tradition is to eat a hearty supper or enjoy a short trail ride, if time.

At dusk, get around the campfire, relax and enjoy tall tales, music, maybe a cowboy poet and friends.

XV. Suggested Fees for Trail Trials

\$30/class or \$50/both classes. Fee includes supper.

\$30 Trail Rider only

\$10-15 Supper only

\$15 KyQHA Membership

Members eligible for year end awards

XVI. Prizes

First 5 places in each class.

XVII. Year End Awards criteria

A. Same Horse & Rider

B. The placing order of Partnerships is determined by the accumulation of scores tallied from all judges' score sheets from all T.T. events.

C. Attend one AQHA Ride hosted by any AQHA Affiliate that borders Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio. Must receive official documentation from Host Affiliate Ride Advisor.

D. Attend three (3) Trail Trials. If Rider/Horse attend four (4), or more if offered during a particular year, the lowest score will be dropped and the top three highest scores will be tabulated. Ride events will be printed on the Spring Trail Trials Brochure.

Ray Hunt: My belief in life is that we can all get along together... You'll meet a lot of acquaintances, but as far as having friends-they are very rare and very precious. Every horse you ride can be your friend because you ask this of him. Get along. People problems are not allowed. And best you get along.

Tom Dorrence: Realize how much potential there is in the Partnership. It's Unity. The willing communication between horse and human, to really get the feel, timing and balance.

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