



TRAIL TRIAL RULES As of March 28, 2010

Trail trials are an obstacle course competition that tests the trail skills of the horse and rider. Courses are several miles in length and reflect the diversity of trails whether they are located on a ranch, public park, wilderness, beach, desert or urban setting. Obstacles are natural to their region and are ones encountered while on a trail ride. Trail obstacles are not composed of artificial arena-style tests. A judge at each obstacle evaluates the way both horse and rider negotiates these obstacles by keeping common sense and safety in mind. Trail trials is not a race and can be ridden at your own pace, with any breed of horse or any style of riding.

1.0 General Rules

- 1.1 The term 'horse' also applies to ponies and mules; term 'team' refers to the horse and rider team.
- 1.2 Wherever the male gender is used, it also applies to the female gender.
- 1.3 All Trail trials are performed on clearly marked trails.
- 1.4 At each obstacle management shall, wherever possible and feasible, provide for a suitable and safe means of bypassing the obstacle while providing a smooth transition to the next obstacle.
- 1.5 All obstacles should be those that might naturally occur on a trail ride. Obstacles should reflect the riding conditions typical of the local environment with the goal being to maintain the character of a trail ride.
- 1.6 Indiscriminate overuse of inappropriate placed man-made materials designed only to increase the challenge (spook or startle) will not be allowed.
- 1.7 Horse may be of any breed, discipline, or age. It is the rider's responsibility to ascertain if his horse is capable of competing. It is recommended that the horse be at least three years or older in age. Management does have the right to question handler/rider about the age of his horse.
- 1.8 No special consideration will be given to a handicapped horse. (Blind, Deaf, etc.)
- 1.9 Any type of cruelty to animals such as excessive use of spurs, crops, etc will be penalized. Event management reserves the right to dismiss any horse deemed as unsound from the competition.
- 1.10 Ownership of a horse is not required.
- 1.11 Events are open to non-AHA member's non-LVAHA members
- 1.12 Each rider is responsible for his own safety and the safety of his mount. Earned points and resulting awards are to be considered secondary to safety.
- 1.13 Each participant must maintain control of its mount through the ride.
- 1.14 Riding double, ponying an animal with or without a rider, or a loose foal on the side is not allowed. No dogs, or other animals allowed on the trail ride.
- 1.15 Ponying a horse as part of an obstacle shall not be allowed.
- 1.16 Any person under the age of eighteen [18] years must have written consent of a parent or guardian in order to participate in Trail Trials. Children twelve [12] years old and under must be accompanied by an adult.

- 1.17 The participant is judged only while negotiating obstacles. The obstacle judge shall indicate when the participant is to begin being judged.
- 1.18 Trail Trials is a mounted event. A horse may only be ridden once through the course each day.
- 1.19 Trail Trials is an event negotiated on a single course for all competitors.

2.0 Equipment and Attire

2.1 Equipment

- 2.1.1 Bareback riding, including bareback pads, are not allowed.
- 2.1.2 Riders must use a saddle and either a bridle or bosal with mecate, side-pull, hackamore, or "natural" hackamore with properly tied mecate.
- 2.1.3 Riders are responsible for determining the appropriateness, fit, and proper use of their tack.
- 2.1.4 Riders must carry a halter with lead rope, or halter bridle, unless using a bosal with mecate to fulfill this requirement.
- 2.1.5 Riders competing must care a hoof pick on the ride.
- 2.1.6 Adult riders may carry a knife capable of cutting a lead rope or tack. Junior riders 17 and under shall not be asked to carry or use a knife.

2.2 Clothing

- 2.2.1 Only clothing suitable for riding is acceptable.
- 2.2.2 Appropriate and safe riding footwear is required.
- 2.2.3 No flip flops or sandals will be allowed.
- 2.2.4 Helmets are required for all riders under the age of [17] seventeen. Helmets are recommended for all riders.

3.0 Protests

- 3.1 All protests must be filed in writing to the LVAHA within forty-eight [48] hours after the conclusion of the event.
- 3.2 A deposit fee of \$50 must accompany the protest.
- 3.3 The event management will immediately notify the Trails Trial Chairman of the protest.
- 3.4 The Trails Trial Chairman may form a committee to hear the protest.
- 3.5 The committee will meet in person to conduct a hearing on the protest.
- 3.6 If the protest is upheld, the deposit will be refunded. If the protest is overruled, the deposit will be forfeited to the event management.
- 3.7 The decision of the protest will be final and may not be appealed.

4.0 Obstacle Skills

This section provides riders with some general guidelines for executing obstacles.

- 4.1 Leading: Horse to follow willing, not crowding or lagging. Excess rope shall be held in the non-leading hand.
 - 4.1.1. A horse must be lead with a halter and lead rope, not the reins, with the following exceptions:

- 4.1.1[a] Horses wearing a halter-bridle do not have to be lead with separate halter. The reins must be unclipped from the bit rings and correctly fastened to the leading-ring of the halter-bridle.
- 4.1.1[b] Horses are allowed to wear either a bosal [Spanish hackamore] or snaffle bridle with a mecate as a leading-hitch, in lieu of a halter and lead rope.
- 4.1.1[c] Horses wearing a Western bridle with bosal and mecate [under bridle] may be lead by the mecate.
- 4.1.2 Reins should be secured to the horn of Western saddles, or knotted and/or appropriately secured, if no horn is available.
- 4.1.3 Stirrups without fenders on saddles such as English, Endurance, Australian, etc., shall be secured by running the stirrups up the leathers, or secured by crossing over the saddle.
- 4.1.4 A rider ground handling his horse through challenging terrain, over logs, through tight spaces shall secure a safe position prior to asking his horse to negotiate the obstacle.
- 4.2 Mounting: The rider must check cinch. The stirrup does not have to be laid over the saddle seat. Horse will stand quietly and not move off when mounted. Style of mounting is not considered, only a smooth mount that does not unbalance the horse. A rider must have the reins in hand while mounting.
- 4.3 Dismounting: Horse will stand quietly and not move off. Style of dismount not considered, only a smooth dismount that does not unbalance the horse. A rider must have the reins in hand while dismounting.
- 4.4 Hoof Check: Horse will stand quietly. The criterion for this obstacle is a safe leg pick-up, not the method of cueing the horse to pick-up the leg. If a rider is holding the horse rather than tying him, letting go of the lead rope will be penalized.
- 4.5 Water Crossing: The horse should walk quietly through the water. Horse will not be penalized for stopping to drink. Horse will not be penalized for acknowledging the obstacle before entering it.
- 4.6 Uphill: Before beginning ascent check cinch and breast collar, if used. A rider is to be positioned appropriately, maintaining the center of balance. No penalty for holding the mane or neck to secure the forward position. Horse to negotiate a slope in a safe manner. At riders' discretion, horse may stop to blow, as needed. If the rider is asked to stop on an uphill and there is sufficient room, the rider shall rest their horse so that all four hooves are on ground that is level as possible. The location of the stop shall be clearly marked and given in the directions for the uphill. At no time should a rider position his mounts' haunches toward a drop off. For purposes of cinch check, Obstacle Judge shall use the word "uphill" in the directions each rider receives. There shall be no intentional cantering in uphill obstacles.
- 4.7 Downhill: Before beginning descent check cinch and crupper if used. The rider to be positioned appropriately maintaining the center of balance. Riders may use a hand on the saddle to support themselves, but must not do so in such a way as to unbalance the horse. Horse to negotiate the slope in a safe manner. At riders' discretion, horse may stop to blow, as needed. If the rider is asked to stop on a downhill and there is sufficient room, the rider shall rest their horse so that all four hooves are on ground that is as level as possible. The location of the stop shall be clearly marked and given in the directions for the downhill. At no time should the rider position his mounts' haunches toward a drop off. For purpose of cinch check, Obstacle Judge shall use the words "downhill" in the directions each rider receives. There shall be no intentional cantering in downhill obstacles.
- 4.8 Step over: This is a forward motion obstacle. Horse to look at an obstacle and proceed over carefully, avoiding striking the obstacle. Size of animal relative to an obstacle will be considered in scoring. Small horses and ponies not to be penalized for hopping very tall step over, if they otherwise negotiate the obstacle calmly and with deliberation. For consecutive, in stride step over, ride management will endeavor to select obstacles that are no higher than 12 inches.

- 4.9 Bridge: The horse should walk across quietly. No penalty for acknowledging the obstacle before starting to cross. Horse should step on and off the bridge quietly.
- 4.10 Gate: Competitors may be required to negotiate a gate either mounted or dismounted. The horse and rider combination will move through the obstacle quietly, deliberately and under the riders' direction.
- 4.11 Drag or Pull: Check cinch required before taking the rope or drag obstacle in hand. The rider may hold rope or dally. NO tying hard and fast. The rider should demonstrate awareness by looking at both the drag obstacle and the direction they are going. The drag is a forward motion obstacle; the pull is a backward motion obstacle. The horse or rider should never become entangled in the rope. The horse is to stand quietly during preparation then pull or drag an obstacle quietly and in control. Wrapping the rope around the riders' working hand is to be severely penalized. Excess rope should be held in the rein hand, never in the working hand.
- 4.12 Standing tied: Some obstacles may require riders to tie their horse. Horses will be tied with the halter and lead rope or correctly configured halter-bridle, or other approved means, using a knot that is safe and appropriate for the situation and horse. The knot must be secure and the horse must be tied in a location that is safe for the horse, the rider, any bystanders, other tied horses and their handlers. Horses will stand quietly while tied.
- 4.13 Stationary Obstacles: These are things such as slickers, balloons, maps, trash, hanging dummies, etc. A rider is to maintain control of the horse as he acknowledges the obstacles.
- 4.14 Moving Obstacles: These are such things as backpackers, bicycles, baby strollers, vehicles, and carts. A rider is to maintain control of the horse as he acknowledges the obstacles. Safety of all parties, including those persons providing the obstacle, is the primary concern.
- 4.15 Jumping: Jumping on, into, off of, through, or over any obstacle, unless required to do so is a major fault.
- 4.16 Whoa: At a walk, an animal should stop on command with little aid from the rider. Effort will increase slightly for the jog, and again for the lope. The horse should stand quietly after the stop.
- 4.17 Skills: The following abilities will help riders negotiate obstacles successfully. This list is meant only to provide a reference for riders. Riders and horses may be asked to perform the following skills in the negotiation of trail obstacles:
- 4.17.1 Whoa- responds to halt cues without argument.
 - 4.17.2 Be able to ask the horse to stand quietly.
 - 4.17.3 Execute all gaits calmly and as directed. All gaits natural to a breed are acceptable.
 - 4.17.4 Be able to move the horse laterally [side to side].
 - 4.17.5 Make turns on the forehand and/or hindquarters.
 - 4.17.6 Be able to back the horse in a straight line and/or around corners. When backing, the rider should demonstrate awareness by looking in the direction they are traveling before or during the backing. Riders should not be instructed to back either their horse's front or back feet over a raised object.
 - 4.17.7 Emergency Dismount: Be able to dismount quickly and safely without the use of stirrups while maintaining control of horse.

5.0 Obstacle Judging- Score Sheet Standards

- 5.1 Cinch Check: Is a pass or fail of 2 or 0 points. The rider may test the cinch for excess slack by tugging on it. This may be done either from the ground or in the saddle. If done from the ground, rider will be judged on dismount and mount. When done mounted the rider must position himself so to be visible to the judge. Cinch checks are required before mounting, going up or down hills, or pulling and/or

dragging which are all considered stresses on the saddle. Only one cinch check per obstacle shall be required.

5.2 Awareness: This is a very broad and important category.

5.2.1 Rider Awareness: The rider should be paying attention to the direction with the horse positioned at a safe distance from the judge. The rider should evaluate the obstacle for potential cautions before proceeding, and during the obstacle. If the rider is asked to answer a question (i.e., where are we on this map?), perform a specific skill (i.e., move an object in a specified manner), or lead their horse, and the rider does not perform the skill correctly, the judge may use this category to assess points.

5.2.2 Horse Awareness: It may be considered a "fault" if the horse is overly reactionary by spooking, shying, or spinning; or if the horse is unaware and is just "going through the motions." If a horse clips or stumbles because of lack of awareness, the judge may use this category to assess points (also see Section 5.5, Balance).

5.3 Horse's Response to Cues: When the rider applies aid or cues to the horse, the horse is to react appropriately. The rider should not have to resort to very strong aids to obtain a response from the horse, nor should cues create a reaction whereby the horse overacts (i.e., side passing, backing to far, rearing, or bucking, etc.) The horse should approach an obstacle as cued (i.e., straight on, or lateral side passing) as indicated in directions for the obstacle. The horse should not avoid a direct approach. The horse should stand quietly while mounted (slight shifting of weight is okay). If the horse is tied, the horse should stand quietly and not pull back.

5.4 Rider's Control: The rider must maintain control of the horse at all times. This will be maintained by having the rider control the horse with the reins or lead rope, whether mounted or unmounted. Rider should also control the horse by knowing HOW to ask their horse to execute the obstacle, as well as keeping their horse under control if the horse shies or spooks. If unmounted, the rider is to lead as set forth in Section 4.1, Leading.

5.5 Balance: This applies to both horse and rider. The rider should be well balanced in the saddle. For uphill, the rider should lean slightly forward with legs balanced under rider and not hitting horse's flanks, and deep in the saddle but not hitting the back of the cantle. For downhill, the rider should lean slightly back, with the hindquarters under the horse, and the horse should not lean on the forehand. The rider is not to lean excessively forward, back or sideways. While negotiating step-overs, the horse is to be balanced and pick up feet and avoid clipping and stumbling. Slight brush okay.

5.6 On Course: the rider is to follow directions as given and stay on course. Excessive response, avoidance or rider's misunderstanding of the direction will be penalized. The participant must remain within the boundaries of the obstacle as marked. Avoiding or going outside the marked boundaries constitutes being off course.

5.7 Bypass or Disqualify: It is the participant's responsibility to bypass any obstacle they deem as beyond their team's skill level. Safety and common sense should always be kept in the participant's mind. The team has three opportunities to attempt an obstacle; demerits will be assessed for each attempt. After the horse refuses three times the rider is disqualified for this obstacle, and receives full penalty points, except for the cinch check point.

5.8 Coaching: It is the participant's responsibility to negotiate the obstacle on their own so a true test of their skill can be assessed. Once a participant has presented him/herself to the obstacle judge there shall be no further contact by another person.

5.8.1 Coaching is defined as any verbal, gesture or implied assistance to a rider on course and executing the obstacle.

- 5.8.2 Participants being coached shall be marked with the full penalty points if coaching occurs, regardless of when the coaching occurs during the obstacle negotiation.

6.0 Scoring

- 6.1 Participants will be scored on negotiating the obstacle by utilizing an official score card as provided by the Event Management/Trail Trial Committee. The individual areas of evaluation are outlined in Section 5.0, Obstacle Judging.
- 6.1a. Award Categories: There will be five categories for awards – a Horse and Rider team can enter in only one (1) of these categories. The category must be elected at the time of entry and will be documented on the team's Score Card before the start of the event. (However, a rider can ride with a different horse as a different 'team' in a later entry time.)
1. Riders Ages 17 & Under;
 2. Riders Ages 18 – 49;
 3. Riders Ages 50 & Over;
 4. Green Horse (Horse age 6 & under; Rider of any age); or
 5. Riders "Pro" (or Professional). (Defined as any individual who accepts remuneration for training of horses and/or riders of any discipline or breed, and or who is paid for conditioning of horses.)
- 6.2 Scoring values will be assessed per each section of judging per obstacle as follows:
- 3= Perfect, no discernible mistakes.
 - 2= Above average, very minor mistakes.
 - 1= Adequate job, obvious mistakes.
 - 0= Made effort, skills need development/improvement.
- 6.2.1 A rider will score additional points when a "cinch check" is required as follows:
- 2= Rider checked cinch.
 - 0= Rider did not check cinch.
- 6.3 Bypass: Bypass of an obstacle will be assessed a score of -12.
- 6.4 Disqualify, DQ Obstacle: Disqualification points will be assessed a value of -12 points. Any obstacle judge may disqualify a participant from their obstacle for safety reasons. The obstacle must be negotiated as stated in the judge's directions.
- 6.5 Refusal or quitting during an obstacle attempt: Refusal points will be assessed a value of -4, -8, or -12 points (maximum penalty being -12 points and dismissal from the obstacle), for first, second, and third refusals. Riders shall retain cinch check points (depending on obstacle requirements).
- 6.6 No Score: Should a rider miss an obstacle because of getting lost, injury to horse or rider, or quitting the Trail Trial, a score of NS will be entered on the obstacle score sheet, and a total score for the rider shall be NS. No Credit for the ride will be given when the ride is not completed. There will be no Refunds of entry fees.
- 6.7 Disqualified Team: A horse and rider team will be disqualified if it is determined by the event management or judges that they are using excessive, unruly behavior, the use of foul language, wild or obnoxious riding, or use of overly abusive equipment. Riders should use good sportsmanship and common courtesy to other riders, judges, event staff, and volunteers.
- 6.8 Tie Breakers: In the event of an overall winning tie in a category, a special tie breaker obstacle will be done. Two judges will judge all ties in the same obstacle and the average of the two judges scores will be the result for determination of the category winner.

Other Rules (specific to this event location):

- Treat all event participants, judges, event staff, volunteers, and park staff courteously.
- All participants, visitors, staff, and volunteers must abide by City of Las Vegas Park Rules.
- Please pick up after your horses in the trailer and warm-up areas. Please discard of waste in the disposal containers, or take it home with you. Please discard of all trash in proper disposal containers.
- No Dogs will be allowed out on the trail. All dogs at the park area prior to and after the ride **MUST** be kept on a leash.
- Horses and vehicles must stay off of the turf/grass areas.
- Camping or trailer camping in the park area the night before or after the event is not allowed.
- Alcohol will not be sold during this event. If you bring alcohol it must be in plastic or cans. **NO GLASS BOTTLES** please!
- Event management reserves the right to refuse entry of any participant and/or to disqualify any horse/rider team for any reason, at its discretion.
- All event riders will be asked to sign release forms before entry forms and fees will be accepted, including those that are just 'auditing' or observing the course. Early entries will get preferred ride out times first.