Rules for Participation

PURPOSE

Mountain Trail Competitions are designed to replicate the rugged outdoors with the purpose of showcasing talented mountain trail horses, riders/handlers and trainers within a competitive environment. The Mountain Trail course consists of several obstacles that would be found on a regular trail ride, with some obstacles that are a step above regular trail riding. These obstacles are designed to push the limits of not only the horse, but the rider/handler as well. The obstacles are continually testing the boundaries of the unknown and the relationship that drives the horse forward into the unknown territory.

A Mountain Trail Horse is any breed or type of horse from any discipline or background. It is open to all equines. The word "Horse" is used for reference, but also includes mules, donkeys, ponies, and miniature horses.

WHAT I S A COMPETITION MOUNTAIN TRAIL HORSE?

A competition Mountain Trail Horse is one that is being judged on its ability to handle natural and simulated terrain, which may be encountered in today's world in an environment such as that which would be found on a trail ride, hunting trip, working ranch, or any other similar use of our horses. One could expect to encounter normal natural terrain, such as steep inclines, and declines, rocks, logs, trees, water and more. One could also find man-made objects, such as bridges, tarps, tents, backpackers, bikers, and other such items in our world today. In addition to these, a competition Mountain Trail Horse may encounter "live" obstacles, such as other horses, mules, donkeys, llamas, cattle, sheep and more.

While being judged, the competition Mountain Trail Horse will be presented with specific tasks to be accomplished as part of the judging criteria. These tasks

are designed to showcase the horse and rider/handler's ability to perform maneuvers that may be encountered on a ride in today's world. These can include opening/closing gates, dragging a log or tree branch, carrying a tarp or backpack, putting on and taking off a slicker and many other such tasks.

The competition Mountain Trail Horse may also be asked to exhibit certain maneuvers to show it is willing to accept the rider/handler's guidance. These may include side-pass, haunch turns, forehand turns, gait changes, backing through obstacles and more.

A competition Mountain Trail Horse should travel through and between obstacles exhibiting confidence and purpose. The horse should have an inquisitive, intent look that shows awareness of its surroundings and enjoyment of the job it is performing. It should have its head low enough to maintain the ability to see its path, but not lose the awareness of the rest of its surroundings. Once over the obstacle, it should raise its head enough to be noting what is around it while not being distracted to the extent that it loses focus on what is under its feet and in its immediate surroundings. It should be able to accept guidance and instruction from its rider/handler, softly and willingly, with no signs of resistance or loss of focus on the task at hand. The rider/handler should be able to guide his/her horse with both hand and leg aids. The horse should be showing instant and willing response to the smallest signal from the rider/handler between and within obstacles and within any changes. The horse should show curiosity and a willingness to be guided, always having confidence in the placement of its feet. It should not only show the ability to take care of itself but should also have an ability and awareness of taking care of its rider/handler. The horse should maintain its headset and body frame in its natural way of movement, according to its breed and conformation, yet will lower its head, as necessary, to look where it is going and to be drawn into and over obstacles in a quiet and safe manner.

DEFINITION FOR EQUINE/HORSE

Horse: status is as of January 1, of that year

Horses: can always be RIDDEN up, but never RIDDEN down, in other classes (Beginner into Intermediate, intermediate, into open, but never open into beginner.)

Horse: can only be RIDDEN in a class once (never can a horse show against themselves)

Beginner: This includes new horses and/or new riders to Mountain Trail. The horse and rider combination cannot have won more than 3-firsts in any trail related events/classes, and/or cannot have competed in Mountain Trail events for more than 3-years. Professionals and their spouses are excluded from this category. See "Intermediate and Advanced" definitions for more details.

Intermediate: Most competitors will fall into this category. Rider or horse who has received more than 3-first, in trail related events/classes and/or have competed in Mountain Trail for 3+ years. **Exclusions:** Trainers, clinicians, judges (pros). Spouses of professionals can compete in the intermediate classes, if qualified.

Advanced: Rider/horse combination who have had many life and show experiences. They are looking for a challenge or to improve their relationships. This category will include these advanced riders and professionals (trainers, clinicians and judges etc…).

In order to be eligible for the year end awards, same Horse/Rider combination throughout the season.

Should a class have less than 3-entrants, the Show Producer(s) is not obliged to run this class.

TACK AND ATTIRE

Tack and Attire should present a clean, well-groomed appearance for both horse and rider.

A competitor, should they prefer, may use tack/equipment that is specific to their horse's breed.

TACK – Permitted Items:

1. English, Western, Endurance, Australian, or breed-specific saddles are permitted (**no bareback pads).**

2. English, Western, or breed-specific bridles, bosal, hackamore (all), bit-less bridles (all) are acceptable (must be considered safe and acceptable by the Judges)s) and Show Producer(s).

3. Romel reins may be used with a shank bit (ONLY)

4. Any tack or attire (item) the Head Judge determines to be a risk/safety/unacceptable factor will be removed or replace in order to participate.

5. Optional – splint boots, bandages, leg protection, etc.

6. Two hands – are allowed with any snaffle bit (see exception below) unless an obstacle warrants use of one hand; i.e. while negotiating an obstacle where the use of a hand is needed such as a gate or drag, etc. Should a competitor use one hand only when negotiating an obstacle where there is no need, **this may result** in loss of points per obstacle as determined by the judge.

7. One handed riding is required by a participant with any shank bit with a solid mouth piece (and choice of rein, i.e. Romel, Mecate). **If a participant needs two hands to support the horse, he/she will be deducted a minimum of one (1) point, but the use of the two hands could result in a better overall score depending on the training level of the horse.**

TACK – NOT PERMITTED/ALLOWED:

1. Tie-downs
2. Martingales
3. Stud chains
4. Crops – whips
5. Bareback pads
6. Caveson

ATTIRE – PERMITTED ATTIRE

- Although proper "show attire" is not required, riders should strive to present themselves as clean, well put together and safe.
- As Mountain Trail Challenges, and/or Shows take place outdoors and weather conditions will be a factor, rain gear is permitted; however, it should be neat, clean and presentable. Come prepared for all possible weather conditions.

- **Western Participants** - suggested dress is a long-sleeved western style shirt and long pants without holes or tears. A cowboy hat or helmet and boots with a heel must be worn. Gloves, chaps and chinks are optional. Spurs are permitted – see below.

- **English Participants** - suggested dress is either casual or more formal English attire, such as: shirt/blouse or a polo shirt with a collar, tie/pin (optimal), proper riding vest or jacket (optional; boots (tall or paddock boots with half chaps/gators) with a defined heel are required. Headwear should be appropriate for English riding. Gloves and chaps are optional. Spurs are permitted – see below.

- **Please Note: HELMETS are recommended for all riders, but required for all youth participants.**

- **Western and English** – participants are welcome to "dress up" but scores will not reflect this.

- **SPURS** - are acceptable; however, any aggressive use of spurs will result in the loss of a point(s), at the Judge's discretion, disqualification.

ATTIRE – NOT PERMITTED/ALLOWED:

- Ball Caps
- Hoodies
- Tank tops
- Heels are **required** on **all footwear** for safety reasons

HEADGEAR

Protective headgear (i.e., helmet) is optional for adult competitors, but **MANDATORY,** for youth competitors (18-year and under)

OBSTACLES

The varying terrain of the mountains allows the Mountain Trail Course Designers to come up with new, different and creative obstacles every day at a competition

The horse/rider team will be asked to perform multiple tasks that range from traditional trail obstacles to maneuvering/negotiating over hills, ditches, ponds, rocks and half logs. In addition, a horse/rider team may be asked to back off an obstacle, side pass over obstacles, complete pivots and move at various gaits. A rider may be asked to dismount, mount, drag or move obstacles, send the horse through obstacles while dismounted, etc.

OBSTACLE DEFINITIONS

1. **Leading/in-hand:** Leading/in-hand can be done with either a bridle or a halter and lead. The horse should lead willingly, not crowding or lagging which will result in a lower score.

2. **Mounting/Dismounting:** The rider may be asked to mount or dismount from either side. The rider should, while mounting and/or dismounting, maintain control at all times. The horse should stand quietly and securely. A mounting block will be provided.

3. **Hoof check:** The horse should pick up a leg willingly and not move around.

4. **Gate:** The rider/handler may be asked to open a gate(s) from any direction, pulling or pushing. The rider/handler should have control of the gate at all times. The horse should follow direction from the rider/handler to stay close to the gate and minimize movement.

5. **Stop and Pause:** The rider/handler may be asked to stop and pause at any time in the pattern. The horse should stop quietly and stand without any anxious movement until the rider/handler is ready to move forward.

6. **Uphill/Downhill:** The rider/handler should maintain center of balance at all times, to help the horse manipulate the obstacle.

7. **Water Crossing/Ponds:** the horse should enter water obstacles by acknowledging and cautiously, continuing in a forward motion.

8. **Dragging/Pulling:** The rider/handler may hold the rope or dally, but must never allow the rope to entangle the horse and/or rider/handler. The horse should be quiet and not react to the rope or object being pulled and/or dragged.

9. **Bridges:** The horse should approach the obstacle squarely and move over the bridge by acknowledging bridge in a forward motion with cadence. Entering, crossing and exiting the bridge shall be on a straight path.

10. **Step Over:** The horse should move over without hitting the obstacle. Smaller horses or ponies will not be penalized for hopping taller step overs.

11. **Backing:** Backing shall be completed in a straight motion without weaving side to side. Backward motion shall continue at a consistent pace. The horse **will be penalized** for hitting the obstacle while backing.

12. **Side Passing:** The rider/handler may be asked to side pass the horse. The horse shall side pass keeping its body perpendicular to the obstacle

without moving forward and/or back. The horse **will be penalize** for hitting the obstacle while side passing.

13. **Ground Tie:** To dismount and tie the horse to the ground. Can use a get-down rope, drop a rein (buckled reins must be untied) or a halter and lead. Hobbles are not allowed.

MANNER DEFINITIONS

Forward Motion: Throughout each pattern, a horse and rider/handler should continue in a forward motion unless the pattern asks for a stop and pause. The horse's pace should stay consistent and not change unless the rider/handler asks for a different gait or movement.

Balance: To smoothly negotiate an obstacle horse and rider/handler must be balance, both individually and as a team. The rider/handler shall maintain proper horsemanship at all times.

Horsemanship: The rider/handler's ability to perform and execute the presented challenges of the course with their horse. The rider/handler shall present poise and confidence while maintaining balance and fundamental body position, helping the horse to be properly aligned. Horse and rider/handler should perform each obstacle with subtle cues. The rider/handler shall refrain from instilling fear, jerking, on the bit and excessive use of reins or spurs. **If such acts are performed, a rider/handler may be asked to exit the course which will result in elimination from that class.**

Control: The rider/handler must maintain control of the horse at all times, whether mounted or leading.

Rider Awareness: Rider Awareness: A rider/handler should be paying attention to the direction of the pattern, setting up the horse to approach each obstacle correctly and squarely. The rider/handler should evaluate each obstacle and proceed carefully with awareness.

Overall Awareness: The horse should respond to the rider/handler without any hesitation or resistance. The horse should have an alert, obedient and willing disposition. Gaits should be consistent and comfortable.

Pattern; It is important that a horse and rider/handler stay on course. Going off course/pattern

JUDGING – GENERAL

The Judges are expected to have knowledge of all breeds and are instructed to judge each horse accordingly. Each judge is required to be consistent in their scoring, for all horses, without playing favoritism to any specific breed.

The classes will be judged on the horse's ability to maneuver/negotiate over various obstacles, with attention to manners, response to the rider and the quality of movement. In addition, the rider/handler will be judged on HORSEMANSHIP, while performing each obstacle.

A horse will receive credit for showing attentiveness to the negotiating of the obstacle and/or path, or if the path is not specified, the horse's ability to negotiate and pick their own path through the course. A horse will be rewarded with higher maneuver scores, for performing gaits correctly with an alert attitude. While on the line of travel between obstacles, the horse shall be balanced, carrying his head and neck in a relaxed NATURAL position. The horse should

approach each obstacle by acknowledging a consistent forward motion. The horse should ACHNOWLEDGE each obstacle while keeping a forward motion and remain calm and confident with a willing attitude.

Training between obstacles or sections will affect your score negatively, at judge's discretion.

JUDGING ATTIRE

The judges are to dress professionally. This can be for any equestrian discipline.

REFUSALS

A refusal is defined as:

- Any action taken by the horse to avoid performing an obstacle, part of a combination of obstacles or portion of a trail course.
- These actions may include, but are not limited to the following: refusing, evading or completely passing an obstacle with all four feet; complete loss of the required gait (i..e., stopping) and any blatant action (bucking, kicking out, etc.) by the horse that demonstrates an unwillingness to approach, and/or negotiate an obstacle.

- **NOTE:** after 3-refusals at an obstacle or 45-seconds of refusing at an obstacle, the competitor must move on to the next obstacle and the competitor will be given a score of zero for that obstacle. **It will be considered poor sportsmanship to be asked to move on, and/or to dismount in a Ridden Class.**

- **NOTE:** If you present an obstacle to a horse and they show interest and forward momentum, you will receive "1" point. If the horse refuses or backward movement, you will receive "0" points.

OFF COURSE

A horse and rider/handler team will be considered off course if:

- They miss an obstacle directed by the course map
- They don't follow the correct line of travel, in the drawn pattern
- Off Course will result in a score of zero for that obstacle

ELIMINATIONS

Elimination means the exclusion from any further participation in the class in which the elimination occurs.

The elimination of a horse/rider combination shall occur under the following circumstances:

1. Use of illegal equipment
2. Unauthorized assistance (i.e., call out directions, etc.).
3. Dangerous/unruly behavior of the horse (rearing, striking, kicking, etc.).
4. Lameness – Ground Judge's decision is final with no appeal.
5. Any abuse of the horse – Judge's decision is final with no appeal.

NOTE: The Ground Judge consists of the Show Producer(s) and judge(s).

DISQUALIFICATIONS

Disqualification means the action of removing a competitor and/or entry from any further participation for the duration of a competition.

The disqualification of a horse/ride combination shall occur under the following circumstances:

> **The judge(s) has the authority to dismiss any entry from the competition if he/she deems that entry is not under sufficient control.**

POSTING AND CHECKING OF SCORES

Scores will be posted by the Score Keeper and/or the Show Producer when completed.

Once the scores have been posted, initialed and time of posting noted by the scorer on the sheet, competitors have **30-minutes** within where they can bring their concerns to the Show Producer who will then discuss it with the scorer. After the 30-minut interval, the scores will stand as posted.

HUMAN WELFARE

We believe in respect for one another, the following is considered unacceptable (but not limited to the follow):

a) An individual does not leave the “arena/area” without delay after elimination.
b) an individual does not follow the directives of the Show Producer(s).

c) an individual intentionally touches an obstacle with the effect of changing it.
d) An individual repeats an offense after a verbal warning to stop

HORSE WELFARE

Cruelty, Abuse or Inhumane Treatment of Horses:

1. The abuse or inhumane treatment of a horse by an individual competitor or other person at a sanctioned competition shall not be tolerated under any circumstances.
2. The standard by which conduct, or treatment will be measures is that which, a person informed and experienced in generally accepted equine training and competition procedures, would determine to be cruel, abusive or inhumane. Any treatment or practice that causes undue stress, and/or pain, is deemed abusive.

3. Cruelty can be defined as causing pain or unnecessary discomfort to a horse. As examples, an act of cruelty can be, but is not limited to any of the following.

    a) Nosebands used in such a way, that they interfere with the horse's breathing, or be tight enough to cause pain or discomfort, pinching tack.
    b) Excessively whipping or beating a horse
    c) Excessively or persistently using spurs or jabbing a horse in the mouth with the bit
    d) Hyper-sensitizing any part of a horse
    e) Neglect by leaving a horse without adequate food, drink and exercise
    f) failing to safely and securely tie or contain a horse while at the event location

ELIMINATION & DISQUALIFICATION of HORSE and/or COMPETITOR

The Show Producer(s), may eliminate a competitor who has made an improper entry of a horse and/or rider.

Persistent acts of discourtesy or disobedience, as reasonably determined by the Show Producer(s) may also result in elimination or disqualification from the competition.