



**WELCOME
TO
COMPETITIVE
TRAIL RIDING**

**THE SPORT TO DO.
THE PLACE TO BE!**

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THE BASIC RULES AND INDEX

Competitive trail riding (CTR) will open a new world of fun, adventure and teamwork with your horse.

The purpose of this booklet is to provide you with basic information and step-by-step information on what to do, how to do it and answer some questions. We have included checklists, helpful phone numbers and e-mail addresses and "How-To's" and NO-NO's.

Rule 1 – Have Fun! Yes, we are competing but this is not a do or die sport. The camaraderie of our fellow riders, the riding and learning with our horses and the experiences are why we do it. Ask any long-time competitive trail rider why they do it? The answer: it is a great excuse to see all my horse friends and ride, too!

Rule 2 – It's Only a Game! Don't get all caught up in rules or expect to do everything perfectly. Give yourself a break. Learn the basics and the rest will come along. *Everybody learns something new at every ride!*

Rule 3 – Be Safe! Take care of yourself and your horse at all times. No matter the competition, the weather or the terrain, do the right thing for you and your horse. Help is usually nearby. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

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The North American Trail Ride Conference (NATRC) is a governing and sanctioning organization. Additionally NATRC approves veterinarian and horsemanship judges through an application and apprentice program. NATRC promotes competitive trail riding and the training of pleasant, fit horses and on-going education for the horse person. **(May not be copied or reprinted without written permission of Cheri Jeffcoat)**

WHAT IS THE RIDE BOOK?

Most regions of NATRC provide the competitors with one source of information for all the rides held in that Region, the Annual Ride Book. In addition, a national list of rides may be found on the web at natrc.org. and Regional rides at www.natrc3.org. - we are Region 3. Each year, we hold between 10 and 12 rides. Each ride provides a data sheet with the pertinent information regarding that ride. It includes:

LOCATION AND DIRECTIONS: a brief description of the locale and directions on how to get to the campground. Usually, highway numbers, directions from north, south, east and west and number of miles from junctions to various landmarks and signs to follow.

CAMPING: Information as to whether this is primitive camping or if amenities such as electrical hookups and shower houses are available. Camping fees and where to pay, the availability of water for human and horse consumption, anything unusual as to campground rules, such as dogs are allowed or not and leash rules. NATRC is very well known for our care in leaving campgrounds in the same condition as when we arrive and in many cases for leaving it cleaner! We take pride in our reputation as “good campers”.

RULES: The ride is conducted according to NATRC rules and sanctions. Most rides require you have a negative Coggins and health certificate for your horse. It is best to have a Coggins test done in the spring since most states accept a Coggins test taken within the last 12 months. In Region 3, health certificates and Coggins are required at most rides.

FEES: The ride entry fee for adults and juniors are listed and any deductions for early entry or first time competitors. Additional fees are listed such as catered dinners if available etc. Most competitors hope for a catered dinner on Saturday night! The refund policy is stated and how and where to send your entry and check. Mail checks and entry to the Ride Secretary.

MEALS: The ride book will inform you if you are “on your own” for all meals or whether potluck or catered meal will be available.

Miscellaneous: May include judges’ names if available at time of printing; volunteer worker sign-up data, special awards, start times for horse check-ins, trail description and special historical information.

Event Management information

EVENT CHAIR: responsible for the over-all management of the ride.

RIDE SECRETARY: **Processes** all entries and fees. Completes rider registration, provides rider packets that have your ride vest and number, corresponding horse number, rider list, division/class list etc. The ride secretary handles the burden of all paperwork.

TRAIL MASTER: Has worked on the trail for months. Endeavors to keep trail safe, removes debris, re-routes, measures the mileage and marks the trail using colored ribbons, pie plate markers and biodegradable paint. The Trail Master determines speed, ride time, lunch locations, pulse and recovery stops, and alternate planning if weather affects the trail. The Trail Master must have contingency plans ready for all emergencies.

SAFETY RIDER CHAIR: Is responsible for the safety riders that follow the competitors. Safety riders should have well-conditioned horses capable of: ponying others, trained to ride double and used to pull. Novice safety horses must be at least 4 years old. Open safety horses must be at least 5 years old and well conditioned. It is helpful if the safety rider has some first aid experience. Nurses, EMT’s and paramedic experience is helpful. Safety riders are there to provide support in case of emergencies, to search for lost riders and to aid in any way possible without interfering with a competitor.

EMERGENCY PHONES: If your family needs to contact you most rides provide phone numbers for the park, local sheriffs, marinas, Park Rangers, Event Management cell phones, etc. If this information is not on the ride book page, contact management for this information.

DIVISIONS: WHAT DO I SIGN UP FOR?

Novice: Does not mean you do not know how to ride your horse or that you have never ridden trail. Novice Division provides the opportunity to learn about CTR and how your horse is going to perform including conditioning and obstacle skill level. The novice division is at a slower pace and rides no less than 30 miles and no more than 40 miles during a two-day ride. The average time on trail is 5 to 7 hours depending on terrain. **Minimum horse Age: 4 years old. Rider age: minimum 10 years. Maximum age - no limit. The 70's and 80's are not unusual. This is your opportunity to learn to "play the game".** Novice has three classes, Junior — Ages 10 thru 17, Lightweight — 189 lbs or less (with tack) Heavyweight — 190 Lbs or more (with tack).

Competitive Pleasure: For riders that are no longer eligible to compete in Novice or riders starting 4 year old horses. Same pace and mileage as Novice. Usually experienced competitors. No classes.

Open Division: Horse minimum age is 5 years old. The Open competitor does 50 to 60 miles in a two-day ride at a faster pace and more difficult obstacles. Additional conditioning is needed versus riding in Novice class. Open has three classes, Junior, Lightweight (with tack) and Heavyweight (with tack). **Very competitive division!**

ARRIVING AND CHECKING IN YOUR HORSE

You have arrived at the campground. Now what? Set up your camp and walk your horse after the trailer trip. If you have problems parking and backing your trailer, there is always help available. It is usually first come, first serve on parking spots. Relax! Find the Event Secretary and register and pick up your competitor packet that includes your number and event information. Check-in of the horses begins around 2 to 3 PM on Friday afternoons and continues until dark. What if you can't get there until Saturday morning? Contact management prior to the CTR for approval of a late check-in. The late Saturday check-in is done at "first light" in order not to delay the start for the other horses and riders. Stabling is usually at the trailer. See checklist at back of book.

WHAT IS CHECK-IN?

The veterinary judge and the horsemanship judge have the opportunity to meet you and your horse. *Tell the judges you are a first time competitor and new to the sport.* They will help you! The purpose for the check-in is to ensure the safety of your horse and that your horse is ready to go on trail.

does not count against What are they looking for? The check-in provides the Vet judge with a "base-line" on your horse. Be sure and tell them of any scrapes, sores, etc. This does not count against your horse but provides a record of how and in what condition the horse started the competition. The horse establishes a baseline on metabolics and soundness thus providing the vet with a value to compare with over the competition.

Every *veterinarian judge* develops his/her own method but has a careful procedure where each exam is a carbon copy so that every horse is judged in a like manner. The vet usually starts by checking the horses' mouth, looking at capillary refill, the eyes, hydration and overall condition of the horse. The vet will run their hands over the horse looking for saddle and/or girth soreness and muscle tone. The vet will check legs for fill, sores or other factors affecting performance.

The judge will ask you to trot/gait your horse (in-hand) out on a straight line. Then you stop and lunge the horse in circles in both directions. If your horse does not lunge, you may run with your horse. Lastly, you will trot/gait the horse back to the judge. You are done, for now!

The vet looks for the horse to be calm while being handled, mannerly and following the instructions of the rider.

Note: always stand on the same side of the horse the vet judge is working on. It is for the safety of the judge.

During the ride, the horse is judged on:

CONDITION – The horse’s stamina or physical condition, such as pulse, respiration, hydration, and gut sounds, muscle fatigue, attitude and willingness.

SOUNDNESS – Lameness, graded 1 through 5, heat, swelling. Muscles, soreness of loins, croup, long muscles of the back, etc.

WAY OF GOING – is the horse forging, interfering, the length of stride, coordination, stumbling, etc?

TRAIL ABILITY/MANNERS – IS THIS A SAFE HORSE? Is the horse pleasurable to ride? Does the horse perform the task the rider asks it to do? Does the horse stand still for mounting??

The **Horsemanship Judge** will observe the relationship of horse and rider. Horsemanship relates to how the rider presents the horse to the vet during the check-in and the rider’s trail equitation. Does the rider aid the horse over and through difficult terrain? How does the rider cue the horse? Is the rider allowing the horse to follow other horses too closely creating an unsafe situation? Is the rider over controlling? At check-in, does the rider maintain a safe distance from the horse when trotting out? Does the rider keep both hands on the line at all times? Is the horse clean? Feet clean? Does the horse have food and water available at all times?

Remember that you have lots of time to learn and practice all this stuff. It’s only a game! Relax, go meet new people, ask questions and don’t be afraid to ask for help.

THE RIDE BRIEFING - MAPS, TRAIL AND GENERAL INFORMATION

On Friday and Saturday nights, briefings are held to assist the competitors in planning their rides. What plan, you ask? I have never done this before! Don’t worry, everybody starts the same.... feeling lost, confused and trying to figure out what is going on.

What to take to briefing. Flashlight; something firm to write on, a pen/pencil and/or colored markers to note certain things on a map. Take a lawn chair...seating is often limited.

The briefing covers the introduction of the Event Manager, Trail Master, P&R Chairperson, the Rules Interpreter and anyone who will work the ride and can provide you with information. The Judges will speak and prepare you for anything special. The Trail Master will conduct a review of the trail. The maps are distributed. Novice and Competitive Pleasure will have the same map. Open division usually has a separate map.

The **Trail Master** will begin at the “camp”, showing you where the trail begins, what color of ribbons/markers your division will follow. Landmarks will be pointed out, availability of horse water and where it is safe to go into the water and where it is unsafe. **Listen carefully and mark anything UNSAFE.** If you don’t understand...Ask Questions. Remember.....you have never been on this trail.....no question is stupid if you don’t know the answer.

Finally, the ride time and total time are provided. What does that mean? Ride time is the actual time spent in the saddle. The total time is the ride time plus lunchtime and P&R stops. Additionally, you may have extra time due you during the ride if any delays occur such as extra time spent at judged obstacles. Which is the most important.....**TOTAL TIME**. You will be given a 30-minute “window” in which to arrive back in camp. Pay attention and write this down....the **TOTAL TIME** is what you plan your ride on. You must use all of your lunch time, usually 45 minutes and you must adhere to the P&R stop times, so the only time you can manage is the time spent in the saddle.

FOR EXAMPLE: A Novice/CP total time may be 5:30 hours to 6:00 hours. When you leave camp, *set your watch to 12:00*, THAT WAY YOU DON'T HAVE TO ADD, SUBTRACT AND TRY AND KEEP TRACK OF HOW LONG YOU HAVE RIDDEN. When your watch says 1:00 you know you have been out for 1 hour. The Trail master has informed you that the speed is 4 mph. That is a nice steady walking pace. Now, at 4 mph, you know that is one mile every 15 minutes. The first junction is 3 miles down the trail. When you pass the junction you should have been on the trail 45 minutes. The lunch stop is out 10 miles. When you arrive at lunch, you watch show 2 hours and 30 minutes. Wait 45 minutes for lunch – time out of lunch is now 3:15 minutes.

Thoroughly confused? On Friday night, find an experienced rider and they will help you mark your times on the map. And, we are providing you with a time and mileage chart to help. See page 15.

PRE-RIDE HINTS

1. Make sure your truck is in good condition, set up a schedule of systematic maintenance. Once ride season starts it is easy to overlook oil changes, transmission fluid changes and rotating the tires.
2. Check out your trailer thoroughly. Have your wheel bearings checked and lubricated. If your trailer has a wood floor, check for rot. Check out your lighting system, bulb? Need a new battery? How about the tires? With extensive travel, trailer tires wear out faster than your truck tires.
3. What can you leave packed in your trailer all the time? Many riders have a system so that when they get home they immediately clean and repair any items....then put them back into the trailer.
4. How about fresh batteries. Flashlight? Radios? Truck? Trailer?
5. How about your horse blankets. Need repairing? Cleaning? A **waterproof** sheet/blanket is strongly recommended.
6. Make lists. After the first year of competition things will become automatic and you will discover what you really need.
7. Duct tape? It can fix, hold together and rescue you from a variety of mishaps!

ON THE TRAIL

It's Saturday morning. The air is fresh, the sun is shining, and the horses are ready to go. You horse may be excited, right along with you. You may need extra patience to relax your horse! Relax, be calm and just plan to enjoy the day.

The Trail Master will have provided a start time, say 8 am. The Open Division will ride out first because they have more miles and a faster speed. The Novice and Competitive Pleasure classes then ride out. Normally, it is first come, first serve. A few events go out in numerical order. Instructions will have been given at the ride briefing. The horses are usually timed out at 15 or 30 second

intervals. If you are planning to ride with someone, you may time out, walk a short ways and then wait for your fellow rider.

Along the trail, you will encounter the judges. They may just watch and you should continue along the trail. Other times, you may be stopped and asked to perform a particular task. You may be asked to: back up, tie a ribbon to a tree, trot by the judge, walk your horse over some logs or other trail related tasks. What if you don't know if you and your horse can do it? Well, most riders will try it. If you are unable to complete an obstacle, so what? It just gives you something to work on at home. If at any time you feel an "obstacle" is unsafe for you or your horse...**Refuse!** Nothing terrible happens, you will lose a few points but this is all part of the learning experience. Almost every rider has refused an obstacle at some point or another. The judges may see you between 4 to 8 times during the day. So, if something doesn't go well, there is always next time.

Pulse and Respiration. At least twice during the day you will be stopped and a pulse and respiration check will be performed on your horse. See pages 7, 8 & 9 for details. This stop is for the welfare and safety of your horse.

The Two-Mile Marker is very important. On Saturday and Sunday you will come to the marker that shows only 2 miles back to camp. At this point, if you are ahead of time, you may stop here to ensure that you do not get back to camp too early. Let your horse relax and graze. If you are running behind time, this gives the remaining mileage and you can adjust your pace to get back to camp on time. Once you cross the 2-mile marker, *you must maintain forward motion.* Don't stop, back up or ride in circles. Most riders plan this as the time to cool out their horse for when they arrive in camp. You may stop in the event of an emergency or if crossing water...if your horse stops on it's own to drink...that's OK. But, YOU should not stop the horse. Rarely, you will be asked to stop by event management due to an emergency. Otherwise, maintain forward motion. Of note, one new competitor dropped a bag with her camera, cell phone and other very important and expensive items in it. She followed the rule and did not stop. However, if this happens to you, stop and pick it up! Thanks to the kindness of some pleasure riders her equipment was found and returned to her. What luck! We do try and use common sense when enforcing rules.

Trail Do's & Don'ts

1. Set your watch to 12 when leaving camp. It will simplify keeping track of how long you have been on trail.
2. Passing other horses. Yes, it is OK. Just be courteous. Ask to pass if the trail is narrow and allow the rider time to find a safe place to pull off the trail. If it is open area, call out that you are passing on the right or left. Allow plenty of room between horses. Once you have passed be sure to keep your pace so that you don't create a day of leap-frogging which is considered discourteous. As you gain experience, you will discover "The hole". The hole is where the faster horses are in front of you and the slower paced behind you. Finding "The hole" during the ride makes it more pleasurable for you and others.
3. Don't bunch! What is bunching & crowding? That is when several horses are too close, nose to tail. It is un-safe. Allow at least 2 or more horse lengths between horses. Also, when bunched up the judges can not see you because you are almost on top of each other. If you get bunched, stop and allow the others in front to go ahead and then rejoin them. What if your horse just can't stand being back a couple of horse lengths? This tells you that it is a training issue and is something to work on

at home with the help of some horse friends. Plus, your horse is feeling insecure and your trust relationship with your horse will build over time.

4. Don't crowd at water stops or judging obstacles. It is unsafe. If at an obstacle, the judges are watching!
5. Don't do an obstacle that is unsafe for you and/or your horse. You ALWAYS have the right to REFUSE.
6. Do use terrain, logs, and ditches to mount your horse. Use of terrain is smart and helps your horse.
7. Don't be afraid of making a fool of yourself. Every rider has. There are many famous stories told at evening chats. Someday, the incident may be your story to tell around the campfire.

NOW GO OUT AND HAVE FUN! ENJOY THE TRAILS!

The Pulse and Respiration Stop (P&R)

What is so important about the famous and nefarious P&R? Why does everyone want to know when and where the P&R is going to be? Why do riders want to know where water is in relation to the P&R stop? How long does a P&R take? A P&R takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes from the arrival of your horse to departure. You will be timed in, given a card and then the horses are allowed 10 minutes of recovery time.

Upon arrival, you will be guided to a place in line. You are to stay there. Dismount your horse and loosen the girth. In many regions, an in-coming P&R is taken - this does not count but simply tells you where your horse is. Now, establish a ritual that will help your horse relax, cool off and allow the pulse and respiration to drop. You may cool your horse by applying water to the neck, between legs and anywhere on the horse that has veins near the surface. Your horse may learn to drink from a water bottle. Or you may offer treats during the next few minutes. But, during the last 2 to 5 minutes, teach your horse to truly relax, drop the head and be quiet. This will help them. Some riders fan their horses, sing to them, rub ears, poll and neck. It is not unusual to see some horses napping!

The pulse & respiration stop is an integral part of the judging of the condition of your horse. In addition, this is the opportunity to get off your horse, check on your horse and identify if your horse is doing well. If your horse has a problem or a potential problem with fatigue, heat and humidity, lameness or any other problem it may show at this time.

Pulse is a reliable and easy parameter to measure. In a normal well-conditioned horse, the working pulse rate quickly returns to a diminished rate following a brief rest. If the horse becomes fatigued, recovery of the pulse rate is slower. Your goal at the end of 10 minutes is for a pulse of 12 beats or less taken for 15 seconds. During cool rides, conditioned horses will recover quickly. But during rides with heat and humidity or very challenging terrain the horses may not recover as quickly.

The respiration goal is 9 breaths or less for 15 seconds. Respiration is important but not as critical as pulse. In a fatigued horse the pulse may remain elevated which likely reflects the horse's body

temperature or its metabolic states. Sometimes a standing horse's pulse or respiration will increase because air is not moving over the body and cooling the horse. Respiratory counts often reflect what the rider's effort to cool and care for the horse is and what the horses' metabolic balance is rather than a true reflection of conditioning. A horse can be conditioned to heat and humidity and will display lower respiratory rates. Respiration is affected by conditioning but an experienced rider can significantly and rightly influence the values.

When your P&R is complete....DO NOT leave if the horse next to you is waiting to have a P&R taken. Why? The departure of your horse can affect the remaining horses by elevating its pulse and respiration because that horse wants to go too. So, ask the rider if it is OK to leave. If they ask you to stay, stand quietly until the horse is done, then walk away quietly and mount away from others waiting to have their P&R taken.

Do be courteous to other riders in line. Have your horse stand quietly, no excessive moving around or kicking etc.

Do talk quietly. Remember you don't want someone yelling or moving around and cause your horse to get excited and elevate the pulse and respiration.

Pulse and Respiration Scoring

- Rates are taken for a 15-second time period

Pulse		Respiration	
Rate	Minus Points	Rate	Minus Points
12 or less	0 points	9 or less	0 points
13	1	10-13	1
14	2	13-17	2
15	3	18-21	3
16	4	21-25	4
17	5		
18	6		
19	7		
20	8		
21	9		
22	10		
23	11		
24	12		
25	13		
26	14		
27	15		
28	16		

The P&R "Hold"

At Briefing, the vet judge will announce a rate for pulse and respiration that will cause a horse to be held at a P&R.

For Example: A hold of 18 & 18. That means if either the pulse or respiration is at 18 or more the horse must be held 10 minutes for additional recovery time. After 10 minutes, the horse usually recovers below the hold markers. If the horse has not recovered, they will be held an additional 10 minutes. Often, if the horse does not recover the competitor elects to "pull" the horse from competition. If the horse has not recovered after two holds the P&R Chair has the authority to "pull" to ensure the safety and welfare of the horse. Certain rules require the P&R chair to "pull" any horse which would be endangered if it continued on the trail

10 minute hold...minus an additional
5 points

REMEMBER: The P&R Stop is for
the benefit of your horse!!

And, you can stretch your legs!

If a horse is not recovering there is usually a very good reason. It may be too fatigued, suffering from heat/humidity or another problem. It is for the safety of your horse.

CAUTION: If you are held 10 minutes you MUST ADD THE TIME TO YOUR TOTAL TIME. YOU MUST USE IT. Why Hold and then go like heck?? The additional time allows you to pace your horse properly.

SUNDAY---FINISHING THE RIDE AND AWARDS

Sunday! Only one more day to go. The trail is often the reverse of the Saturday trail and due to check out and awards, the trail is frequently shortened. You will have attended a trail briefing on Saturday night. The judges discuss in general terms, what they saw on Saturday. And, if the judges choose, you may have an early morning obstacle before going out on the trail.

Sunday! Just go out and finish the ride! Enjoy it! It will be similar to Saturday, you will see the Judges and with a shortened trail, no lunch and 2 P&R's. Your goal is to finish the ride.

Sunday Check Out. Usually within an hour of returning to camp, the judges will begin checkout of your horse. It will be the same as your initial check-in. Occasionally with bad weather, i.e. mud etc. the judges may delete any major grooming requirement. You may hear, "knock the big chunks off and bring the horse up." You are still in competition until the judges check out your horse! All rules apply.

After checkout, most riders relax, break camp, load up and get everything done before awards unless you plan to stay overnight. If for some reason you can not stay for awards, you need to tell ride management and the judges. The judges must check all horses out, then all the cards must be reviewed, points calculated, placing for all 7 riding categories, breed awards and special awards. So it is time consuming and may take several hours. The judges do try to finish in a timely manner, but, it does take time. So, use your time to break camp, rest, clean up, visit with friends and rehash your experiences on the trail.

Ride Awards. Each division and class is placed 1st through 6th place for Horse and Horsemanship. For example, there are Novice Lightweight, Heavyweight and Junior. Each class has 1st through 6th. In addition, the Novice Sweepstakes Awards goes to the high point horse of all three Classes combined. Needless to say, the Sweepstakes award is coveted. The Horsemanship awards are separate. It is possible that your horse earns 1st place and you may earn 6th in horsemanship. You may continue to ride Novice until you and/or your horse receives 5 first places. Or, you may choose to move to CP or Open at any time. In addition, there may be breed awards, first time competitor awards and fun awards such as "coming the most miles" or "Lost Trail" which are all-in-fun awards.

Regional and National Awards. Each year there is a national convention and each region has a convention. The conventions feature speakers covering subjects such as conditioning, nutrition, poisonous plants, electrical problems, shoeing, tack, judges panels, anything relating to horses, humans and long distance riding. On Saturday night, the annual awards are presented. It is always fun to see your CTR friends receiving awards and crossing your fingers to see what you may have won!

Helpful Hints-----Trail Tack

Only one piece of tack is required. A saddle! However, there are several items that are absolutely necessary for the care and safety of you and your horse. The horsemanship judge, at a tack check may ask if you have the following:

1. Always—have handy a hoof pick, halter & lead rope, a knife, a sponge (preferably natural as it holds more water), water bottles (available from distance tack shops or syrup/soap bottles with handles to tie onto your saddle work well).
2. For the rider, rain gear and a canteen and/or pommel bag. Note: these items should be tied securely as flopping, off-balance items can affect your horse. For the most part, saddlebags do not work well. They tend to flop and catch on trees.
3. Type of tack. Many riders have chosen to use tack that is made of materials that are easily washable, holds up well under strenuous conditions and do not rub or chafe the horse. The leather saddle is still the most popular, style as to choice of western, English or hybrid is the riders' decision. Halter/bridle combinations of various materials are very popular. Stirrups with wider platforms and some type of concussion reducing foam are widely used. The wider stirrup helps prevent the riders' feet from going to sleep, allows a shifting of weight to a wider surface and helps reduce strain to knees and ankles.

It is strongly recommended that any type of halter NOT be used as the primary head gear for the horse new to the sport. Newly competing horses may become excited or frightened by new things on the trail. The ability to control your horse is for your safety, the safety of your horse and the safety of your fellow competitors.

STABLING YOUR HORSE AT THE TRAILER

NATRC rules require all horses to be stabled in “like conditions”. Therefore, the rules state all horses will be stationary tied, usually at the trailer. A provision allows for stationary tethering under certain conditions or using hitching posts if the facility requires it. In many campgrounds, there is limited room so knowing all us will be trailer tied in close conditions means that we train our horse to accept the trailer as “home”. If you have never camped with a horse, you may not have trailer tied and believe all the “old myths” about it being “unsafe”, bad for the horse and on and on. However, NATRC rules have called for tying to the trailer for almost 40 years, so obviously it is a question of training.

Preparing Your Horse for Trailer Tying.

1. Never been tied before? Start by tying to the trailer on a fairly short rope. Enough to allow freedom of head movement. Stay with your horse. Feed a few treats. Help him relax.
2. Doing okay? Lengthen your tie to about 18 inches. Tie a hay bag up and let the horse relax.
3. Over a week or two, slowly lengthen the rope until the end when hanging straight down from the trailer is 2 to 6 inches above the ground.
4. Leave your horse tied up and walk away. Go do chores. Practice!
5. Still worried? Camp out with your horse, truck and trailer in a confined area. Sleep out and soon your horse will learn.....The trailer is HOME!
6. Do carefully check your trailer for sharp edges, things that stick out that your horse could catch a halter on or any other safety factors.

Note: I used to tie my horse to the same side of the trailer all the time. One campground, I had to move her to the other side of the trailer due to some terrain problems. To make a long story short, she was a little fidgety and kept looking around behind the trailer. It soon dawned on me that she

didn't feel "at home". Needless to say, in order to train her, I began alternating the side of the trailer she was tied to. Soon, both sides of the trailer were home.

What about food and water? You may feed off the ground or use a hay bag/net. When using a hay net, be sure to tie up so that as the hay is eaten that it does not sag down to where your horse could become entangled in it. Ask an experienced competitor to show you an easy way to do this. Water buckets must be securely fastened. We suggest that you get a standard bucket hook for your trailer, this prevents spilled water, feet in the bucket and other hazards certain jokester horses can do with buckets.

Inspect the safety aspects of your trailer. What do you look for?

1. Any levers, door openers that stick out in such a way the horse could catch a halter on it. You may cover with old socks and foam rubber, securing with duct tape. Tennis balls and wood wedges are also used.
2. Hinges. Some trailers have small pieces of metal that stick up a fraction. Duct tape over it. Remove when leaving the event.
3. Fenders. Many older trailers have very sharp edges on the fenders. There are a number of ways to solve: 1) at an auto parts store, you can buy lengths of fender edging that run the length of the edge, just tightens with pliers. Other riders place large pieces of foam in front of the tire and up under the fender. We have also seen some elaborate plywood liners made. We would suggest you walk around a campground and get ideas from other riders.
4. Check that there is not some place of the trailer where a horse could paw and get a foot trapped. Fill with foam or wood.

It's up to you to help your horse learn about its new home! Talk to long time competitive trail riders. Most of them have seen all types of situations and will be glad to share ideas.

HELPFUL HINTS

1. The Famous Ziploc Baggie Tricks
 - a. Place your Coggins, health and breed papers in a baggie in your truck/trailer. It will keep your paper dry and in one location.
 - b. Place your ride map in a baggie to keep dry. Tie/clip to your saddle for quick access.
 - c. Measure your grain feeding into baggies. Each feeding is ready to go! Caution: do not leave in baggies for many days in heat/humidity...could mildew.
 - d. Place packing list in baggie.
 - e. Put snacks for on the trail in a baggie. Keeps from getting carry bags dirty!
 - f. In a pinch, tear one open to keep a saddle dry in the rain.
2. The Even More Famous Duct Tape Phenomenon – always carry at least one roll.
 - a. Quick repairs to hold tack together in an emergency.
 - b. Attach ride number to the trailer.
 - c. Known to hold clothing together in a pinch.
 - d. Wrap sharp trailer edges to protect your horse.
 - e. Duct tape packing list to trailer.
 - f. Can be used in a first aid kit to hold pads or bandages on.
3. Invaluable Trail Hints
 - A. Lost? What to do? **Stop. Immediately.** Go back to the last ribbon/marker you saw. Look around. Do you see hoof prints? Do you see flattened grass? Still can't find it? Wait for another rider to come along, maybe they know the trail or just happen to spot the ribbon right in front of our noses. Or, wait for the safety riders, they are familiar with the trail.

- There are usually markers within 100 feet but could have been knocked down. **Just Wait**.....help is near. Don't keep going down a trail if you are unsure...return to the last Ribbon!
- B. **Stop! At every junction.** Check your map, make sure you are turning the correct direction. Check your timing. Let your horse nibble grass.
 - C. Water stops. Your horse may not drink early in the ride. Or right at the time you stop. Allow a little time for your horse to relax and see if it wants to drink. They soon learn to take advantage of all water stops. Be considerate of other horses; move away from the entry point if it is safe to do so. DO NOT enter a water area that has been marked or briefed as UNSAFE. Do refill your horse water container if you have emptied it at a P&R.
 - D. Enjoy your riding friends but don't start talking so much you loose track of where you are! There are many famous stories of riders that forgot where they had been, what they were doing and soon found themselves lost. We won't share some of the well-known rider's names that are famous for "lost episodes" but once you start competing, you may hear the stories!
 - E. Practice P&R's when you are out riding. At some point, stop and get off your horse, loosen the girth. We suggest you use a stethoscope, take your horses' pulse and count respirations. Wait 10 minutes and take again. This practice serves two purposes. First, your horse becomes used to stopping and waiting. Secondly, you gain knowledge about your horses' status and become aware of improvement or problems.
 - F. Carry snacks for you and your horse. It makes for a nice break and keeps the energy level up.
 - G. Many riders carry 4 water bottles, 2 on the front of the saddle and 2 on the back. They have plenty of water to cool the horse at the P&R. And, more importantly, keep them-selves hydrated. If you are dehydrated you can not help your horse.
 - H. If there are clouds in the sky, consider carrying rain gear. At least an emergency poncho. If you have rain gear, carry a poncho anyway. You may need it to cover a saddle while at P&R's or loan it to some poor person who doesn't have anything. They make a great windbreaker.

4. Make Presentations at Vet Checks Easier.

- a. If possible, bathe your horse before leaving home. That way you have minimum touch up work to do before check-in. If the weather is bad/cold/wet, don't worry. No one else will have bathed their horse either. Brush your horse and do the best you can.
- b. Clean your horse's feet just before getting in line. Some riders carry a hoof pick for a last minute clean up.
- c. Carry a rag. Use for last minute wipe-down or clean a snotty nose, etc.
- d. Practice your presentation at home. Recruit friends to be the vet judge. Have them open the horse's mouth, run their hand over him, pick up feet, etc. Practice trotting straight out, then lunge or run the horse in a circle both directions. The straight back to the judge with a controlled stop.
- e. Safety. Always keep 2 hands on the rope. Do not hold horse by the halter. It is your job to keep the judges safe.

***Don't loose track of...HAVING FUN!
It's Only a Game!***

Basics of Conditioning

What is conditioning? It is a step-by-step process. It is not something that can be rushed or that you accomplish overnight.

What is the goal of a conditioning program? It is to safely help your horse achieve its highest athletic potential. The goal is to increase the efficiency of the heart and lungs. To help your horse build strength and stamina. To help your horse build bone density, tendons, ligaments and muscle strength. It is the intelligent application of stress to help your horse build a body that operates efficiently over a long distance.

Where do I start if I want to prepare for Novice competition? The key words are *Long Slow Distance (LSD) Training*. LSD trains to improve your horses' aerobic capacity. Aerobic capacity means that your horses' working heart rate is 120 to 150 beats per minute (bpm).

To start, you spend several weeks at a walk. A horse will walk 4 to 5 mph. You should walk out briskly. Begin your program with several hours of walking, 3 to 4 times per week. If your schedule does not allow for several times per week, do what you have time for, it is better than doing nothing.

Step 2 is to increase either the speed or the duration (miles). **DO NOT INCREASE SPEED AND DISTANCE AT THE SAME TIME.** Slowly increase your miles. Go from 5 to 8 miles, then 10 or 12 miles. After you have reached a specific goal in miles, then increase you speed slowly.

Step 3 is to walk & trot. You may walk a mile, then trot a ½ mile. Build the foundation slowly and with care. Remember your goal is to safely build the stamina and endurance of your horse.

Step 4. Look for different terrain to work in such as up and down hills. Walking downhill to prevent injury to the legs. Join friends for a ride at a local park or a person's farm or ranch. Variety is the spice of life. Let's face it, if you ride the same route over and over it is going to get very boring for you and your horse.

How many miles and how fast should I condition for a Novice competition?

The first year, your goal should try to do about 30 miles per week. Maybe you have worked up to 15 miles. That is twice per week. Once your horse is accustomed to the distance you can always increase the intensity by trotting more or adding a slow canter. It is very important to not over condition the horse. The reason for days off is to allow the horse to rest and repair itself from the mild stresses of the beginning program.

The average speed for a novice ride is 4 mph. The rides will have a variety of terrain. Terrain may include a long, slow uphill, which will slow you down, and other terrain to allow for faster travel. So, if you are conditioning at a speed of 4 to 6 mph, you should be able to handle a novice ride easily.

As you begin to compete in CTR, the rides become part of your conditioning program. Remember the key is Long Slow Distance. During your first year, your goal is to build the foundation for the future athletic career of your horse. Walk, walk, and walk. Then, walk, trot, and walk.

After the basics, what do I do?

After your first year of competition, you will have a better understanding of the conditioning needs of your horse. You will have experienced a variety of terrain and weather conditions for the area you ride in. It will be easier and simpler to plan your future conditioning.

Conditioning is a study in itself. There are many good books available to learn about aerobic, anaerobic, interval training, strength training, and energy demands (muscle types, lactic acids, etc.). One of the best is "Go the Distance" by Nancy Loving, DVM. It is primarily for endurance horses but the basics are there for the competitive trail horse.

Finally, don't forget arena work. Dressage, driving, games playing helps to prepare your horse. Variety is the spice of life and helps keep you and your horse mentally and physically fit!

TIME AND MILEAGE

A Word of Advice: Don't get all wrapped up and stressed out about timing down to the 10ths of a mile or down to the minute. If you are within 5 minutes of when you figured you should arrive at a junction or way point then you are okay.

We recommend aiming for mid-time. What is mid-time? It is right in the middle of what your minimum and maximum time is.

For Example: If your total time is 5:30 to 6 hours, then your mid-time for arriving back to camp is about 5:45.

You DO NOT want to be early or late as there is a penalty of one point for minute. If you are more than 30 minutes early it is an automatic disqualification.

It is very important to learn "pacing" it is integral part of learning to be a great competitive trail rider!

When you arrive at the "2-mile marker", look at your watch. How long is it until "minimum" time? How fast does your horse walk? If your horse walks at 4 mph and there is 2 miles to the finish, then you know it will take 30 minutes to reach camp. A word of caution. Many horses know when they are close to camp and will tend to walk faster. Be careful that you do not leave the 2-mile marker too early. Are you running late? Then you know you need to do some trotting to arrive within the 30-minute timing window.

See next page for Time and Mileage Chart.