

PHILOSOPHY

Competitive trail riding (CTR) was founded on the principal that any competitive horse should have an equal chance when competing with any other competitive horse, regardless of age, sex or breed. In competitive trail riding, the scoring of the judges determines the horse that has deteriorated the least from the event initial exam to the event final exam.

It may well occur, and often does, that one horse who is inherently stronger and more athletic than another, may appear superior to the other horse at the end of the event even though it has actually deteriorated more from its original condition than the other horse. Other judging methods would have chosen this better athlete as the better placing horse of the two, but competitive trail riding rewards the horse with the least deterioration. It is also possible, of course, for the stronger more athletic horse to have been least affected by the event.

In this way, ACTRA strives to give each horse an equal chance against all the others in the event. It encourages a broader cross section of people to get involved in this sport. If the judging system is properly used, the placing of horses will be unknown to riders and fellow competitors until the final award ceremony.

ACTRA does not allow the use of pit crews on CTRs.

JUDGES

ACTRA prefers the use of veterinarians for judges on CTRs but since this is not always possible, the use of experienced laypersons is quite acceptable. On multi-day CTRs, one judge must be a veterinarian.

Any judge may eliminate a horse from competition at any time if, in their opinion, to continue would endanger the health and safety of the animal. The reason for disqualification should be clearly explained to the rider and noted on their score sheet. In the case of illness or injury to a rider, a substitute rider can be

used to finish the ride so that the horse will be credited with the miles. The horse may not qualify for any ride placing in such case.

RIDE TIME

Ride time is established by management and cannot be altered by judges. CTRs are to be ridden at 6 MPH, a mandatory 20 minutes for the halfway check. These times cannot be shortened, but if more or longer holds are planned, elapsed time may be increased. Under unusual circumstances management may extend time if it is in the best interest of horse, rider, or driver safety, and fair competition. 20 minute hold time will include 10 minutes incorporated into the ride time and 10 minutes will be added to the ride time. (04/07/13)

No adjustments should be made in any event times after the event has started and the first horse is on the course.

Contestants may complete the trail up to 5 mins (04/14) either side of the established ride time, without penalty. Time penalties are deducted for finishing over or under time are: 1 point per min on 1 day rides, 1 point per 2 mins on 2 day rides and 1 point per 3 mins on 3 day rides, to a maximum of 30 points. Even horses with maximum time faults are still eligible for mileage provided that they pass the final exam, but are not eligible for placing. Elimination 30 minutes before and 30 minutes after established ride time. (04/14)

RIDE MILEAGE

Management hosting their first CTR can have a minimum distance of 20 miles, after that a minimum of 25 miles is accepted. On multi-day CTRs, at least one day must be 25 miles or more. The maximum length of a single day CTR is 40 miles. Mileage markers made from Styrofoam or plastic plates should be placed on the trail as "miles to go", such as 20, 15, 10 as well as each of the last 5 miles to go. If the ride is a different length than a multiple of 5, riders appreciate making the mileage adjustment at the start of the ride to get it out of the way. For example, if the ride is 27 miles, at the point 2

miles out from the start, post a plate with “25 miles to go”, to get the odd mileage out of the way.

is mounted, with exceptions in the interest of safety or problems with shoeing.

PRE-RIDE EXAM

The purpose of the pre-ride exam is to establish the condition of the horse before the ride, in order to have a basis for comparison with the post-ride exam. At the initial exam, horses with problems that may prevent them from safely competing can be identified. Rectal temperatures may be taken if illness is suspected; febrile (i.e. showing signs of fever) horses may be excused from competition. Competitors should declare blemishes or unsoundness to the judge at the pre-ride exam. These declarations should be verified and recorded along with the judge’s findings. The pre-ride exam also provides an opportunity for riders, management and judges to become acquainted.

Conditions for the pre-ride should be identical for all horses. The post-ride conditions should duplicate the pre-ride as nearly as is reasonable. Each exam could take approximately 5 minutes, so plan to start early as exams at large rides could take 2 to 4 hours. No horse shall begin the course until all horses have been examined.

PRE-RIDE BRIEFING

Ride management prepares the briefing. Judges should be prepared to discuss pulse and respiration limits and answer questions posed by riders. See also, pre-ride briefing on page 4 in the General Overview chapter.

RIDE START

After the pre-ride briefing, the timer will start horses onto the trail at 30 to 60 second intervals. Horses should leave at a trot under the judge’s observation, unless otherwise instructed. From this point on forward progress on the trail may be maintained only if the rider

TRAIL CHECKS

Along the course of the ride, judges should observe all horses as often as possible to ensure that no horse is unduly stressed. Written comments based on on-trail observations are useful in monitoring progressive problems and are of educational value to the riders. These check points are usually a “fly by” look by the judges, but it is the judge’s prerogative to stop any horse at any time for further examination. Depending on findings, the horse in question may be permitted to continue, held for a period of time, or eliminated. One judge may pull a horse from the ride; a consensus is not necessary. Exam and any enforced rest time comes out of the original allotted time, no extra time will be given.

HOLDS

About halfway through the ride, most likely at the lunch stop, all horses undergo a mandatory 20 min (04/07/13) hold. The area should be large enough to accommodate quite a few horses at a time. The P&R teams do the entire job, leaving the judge free to observe horses and make decisions on questionable P&R recoveries.

If any P&R person has an immediate family member’s mount or any monetary interest in any mount in the ride, it is recommended that another P&R person do that horse at the halfway and final checks.

10 mins after arriving at the halfway, the P&R team (usually 2 people) checks the horse’s pulse and respiration. For accuracy, the pulse should be taken with a stethoscope, counted over 15 seconds and multiplied by 4, but hand held heart rate monitors can be used. Any abnormal pulse should be reported to the judge.

If the horse has not recovered to parameters set for the day, usually 60 for pulse and 40 for respiration, 5 points are deducted on the conditioning score sheet, and P&R retaken in another 10 minutes. If the horse has recovered to the proper pulse and respiration level at the end of the 20 mins hold, they can be allowed to continue. If they have not recovered to the 60 after the 20 mins, they will be excused from the ride. If the judge elected to use other than 60 and 40 for parameters, due to weather, etc., riders must be advised at the pre-ride briefing. The recovery P&R is recorded on the rider's score sheet.

A rider may call for pulse at any time before the required 10 mins at the halfway hold. The hold will still be 20 mins long. If a horse has failed this early pulse exam, it is subject to the same penalties as before, with P&R retaken in 10 mins. Horses whose 10 min pulse time has arrived will have priority for the P&R team's time, over those who have called for early pulse exams.

Inversion, (conditions where respiration is higher than pulse), merits careful evaluation when found at the end of 10 mins. Some horses work at inverted values but a well-conditioned horse should rapidly return to proper ratios at rest. After 10 mins, an elevated or rising reading may indicate a heat retention problem. This is most common in humid weather. It can also indicate a prelude to heat stroke and should be carefully monitored. Riders are encouraged to use natural water (not hoses) to bring down a horse's temperature and P&R rate. In suspected heat stroke problems, a rectal temperature is invaluable.

The judge should observe horses leaving the hold at a trot to check for soundness.

POST RIDE EXAM

A mandatory P&R is taken 20 mins after the horse crosses the finish line. The P&R teams go to the horse for this final pulse. The timing of this interval must be accurate and equal for all horses, as this reading will be used in the final scoring. These P&Rs are taken for a

minimum of 30 seconds, multiplied by 2 and taken with a stethoscope.

After the final P&R, the horse is to go immediately, in order of finish, for their final trot out to evaluate lameness and mechanical fatigue categories.

The post ride exam occurs one hour after crossing the finish line. It should duplicate the morning exam in location and technique. With the aid of pre-ride notes, horses are examined and deductions are made for deterioration. The horse is scored as it is being examined; when the horse leaves the exam area, all the deductions are already scored on the score sheet. No changes in scoring should be made after this point. A separate crew should be available to do all the final calculations and deduct time penalties from the sheets. After placings and awards are determined, judges should sign the score sheets. The master score sheet must be completed before judging sheets are given to the competitors. Riders should check their sheets for calculation errors and notify management if any are found.

SCORING SYSTEM

ACTRA has devised a numerical system for scoring conditioning on CTRs. Using an objective evaluation, each horse is judged against itself with points deducted for loss of condition. Deductions are limited to the number at which area is valued on the score sheet, e.g., 10 points is the maximum deductible for legs. Judges are respectfully reminded of the importance of the fatigue categories in determining the condition of a horse. Riders appreciate written comments as well as the numerical notations on the judging sheets. On CTRs, the following conditioning placings are acknowledged: juniors, 1st to 6th and seniors, 1st to 6th

ANALYSIS OF SCORING COMPONENTS

See also the ACTRA Conditioning score sheet for CTRs and IDRs at the end of this chapter.

TACK AREA Value 10 points

Under the initial exam there will be 2 side views of a horse for the writer to actually draw in bumps, rubs, soreness, etc., on the back, girth, chest and head areas. The pictures are in half tones. If a judge prefers descriptive phrases, the writer may write over the outlines. Final exam findings will be compared to initial and differences (deterioration) scored. The bridle and saddle areas should also be evaluated, as well as areas covered by a breastplate or crupper, if used. The number of points deducted should correspond to the severity of the lesions. Only those changes that occur during the ride may be scored against the horse.

LEGS Value 10 points

Half tone drawings are again available. This category considers self-inflicted trauma such as interference, swellings, windpuffs, scratches, fillings etc. Again, the number of points deducted should reflect the severity of the trauma. Lameness is not considered here. ACTRA accepts all types of sole protection provided the attachment strap, keeper or gaiter does not extend above the pastern. The judge may request to observe the covered area at any time. Any devices for the protection of horses' legs (interference boots, bandages, etc.) are prohibited. Unshod horses may be entered, but may be disqualified at the discretion of the judge.

LAMENESS Value 20 points

The 5 step grading system corresponds with that of the American Association of Equine Practitioners, with a brief description of each grade of lameness as follows:

- 0 Sound
- 1 Very Slight – Inconsistent
- 2 Consistent – Some Conditions
- 3 Moderate – Always Observable

Here the judge can not only mark down if the horse is off at the pre-ride exam, but they can give the horse a point value within that grade. This is for reference at the final exam and gives riders a good idea of how they are judged. Examples: Horse "A" is a Grade 1 at the initial exam and the judge marked the horse at 4 points. The horse finished the ride as it started, Grade 1 – 4 points. Horse "A" did not deteriorate so it received 0 deductions for lameness. Horse "B" started at a Grade 2. Firstly, the judge must decide whether or not to eliminate this horse, decides not to, and places it at 13 points. This horse deteriorated during the ride. At the final exam the judge gives this horse a point value of 18. Horse "B" loses a deduction of 5 points (i.e. 18-13). Please note horses at Grade 3 lameness will not start a ride, and if an animal is considered a Grade 4 at any time, it should be excused from competition.

FATIGUE MECHANICAL Value 20 points

Coordination, animation and impulsion are graded under the headings of: Length of stride, Height of stride, Coordination, Willingness, Toe Dragging, Muscle Soreness (other than back), and optionally, Muscle Tone. Judges are encouraged to make comments in this category. The AM score is subtracted from the PM score to arrive at deductions. If the optional muscle tone is graded, the possible points increase to 22 but 20 is still the maximum that can be deducted in this category.

FATIGUE METABOLIC Value 20 points

Dehydration and mucus membranes are measured under the skin pinch and capillary refill time. These tests are to be timed in half seconds-0 to 3. Each half-second of change is equal to 1 point. Judges should note, horses that improve in these categories are not penalized or rewarded. Gum color and moisture are judged in whole numbers only. Optionally, anal tone and gut sounds may be graded; whole numbers are used here also. The maximum possible loss

in metabolic fatigue is 20 points. To test for dehydration, pinch the skin on the side of the neck between thumb and forefinger for a few seconds, and then release it. The rate of return to the normal state is related to the degree of dehydration and scored as indicated on the score sheet. Skin pinch location should be uniform on all horses.

PULSE AND RESPIRATION Value 20 points

Final P&R-Total value 15 points For pulse, deduct ½ point for every beat over 44 per minute, with a maximum deduction of 10 points. For respiration, deduct ½ point for every breath over 16 per minute, with a maximum deduction of 5 points.

Halfway Hold P&R-Total value 5 points Horses not meeting parameters on the 10 minute check will lose 5 points. Failure to pass a second check at 20 minutes is automatic elimination from the ride.

Parameters may not be lower than 60 and 40, but may be raised by the judge if weather conditions indicate. Riders must be advised at the pre-ride briefing if different parameters are to be used.

NOTE: The above categories total a maximum of 100 conditioning points. In these categories a horse loses no points if a given limit is better at the post-ride exam than it was at the pre-ride exam.

BEHAVIOUR PENALTY Maximum 5 points

Behaviour penalties are found with time faults at the bottom of the sheet. These will be deducted for kicking, striking, biting and rearing. These vices should be noted during the examination and throughout the ride. A judge may eliminate a truly dangerous animal.

TIME PENALTY Maximum 30 points

Any time penalties will be calculated by the timer and placed on the scoring sheets by the calculation people. A rider/horse team whose time penalties exceed 30 points will be eligible

for mileage only, if they still pass their final exam.

SOME GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Judges should record a reason for all deductions. ACTRA score sheets are designed to have educational value for riders, and should be helpful to them in better managing their mounts.

Great emphasis must be placed on equal examination of all horses in every respect. If an individual animal cannot be examined in this manner, the judging methods should not be altered. Any area not possible to examine initially must be assumed to be in perfect condition at the pre-ride. If the area is not possible to examine at the post-ride exam, maximum deductions must be made for this category. If the animal allows post-ride examination of an area not examined initially, all deterioration will be scored against the animal, as it was presumed to have started clean.

BREAKING TIES

Using the following order of comparing categories between mounts whose scores are identical, judges are to look at:

1. Lameness-the higher score breaks the tie, no need to look further.
2. Fatigue Metabolic-the higher score breaks the tie, no need to look further.
3. Pulse-the lower pulse(beats per minute) at the final reading breaks the tie, no need to look further.
4. Fatigue Mechanical-the higher score breaks the tie, no need to look further
5. Legs-the higher score breaks the tie, no need to look further.
6. Respiration-the lower breaths per minute at the final reading breaks the tie, no need to look further.
7. Tack Area-the higher score breaks the tie.

TRAIL HORSE JUDGING

All judges should select trail horse placings jointly. The methods of judging are offered as guidelines. The final decisions are somewhat subjective and need not be justified. Horses should be capable, a pleasure to ride and examine. On CTRs, the following trail horse placings are acknowledged: juniors, 1st to 3rd and seniors, 1st to 3rd.

SUITABILITY Score 60%

Mounts should be quiet, with a free and easy way of going and willing to be ridden in the company of other horses. This category is judged throughout the ride, at examination and on the trail. It does not evaluate a change from start to finish, but rather assesses such characteristics listed, throughout the ride: happiness, eagerness, willingness, keenness, partnership with rider, self-confidence, cooperation at exams (be patient with “green” horses) and safety of the animal around other horses and riders. Stallions are not given special considerations. Only those characteristics listed should be considered in this category.

CONDITIONING Score 25%

Serviceably sound, physically capable of completing the ride. Should probably be shod, but is not a requirement. It is unlikely a lame horse should place in the trail horse category.

TRAIL SAFETY&OBSTACLES Score 15%.

Willing to cross bridges, streams and mud. Remains calm in traffic and around unforeseen obstacles. The use of man-made obstacles is acceptable provided these obstacles are not scored more than 15% of the total ride score.

HORSEMANSHIP JUDGING

Any ride manager hosting a competitive trail ride has the option of adding a horsemanship category. On CTRs, the following horsemanship placings are acknowledged: juniors, 1st to 6th and seniors, 1st to 6th. For further information on horsemanship judging criteria, riders and managers should consult the “Judged Pleasure Ride” chapter in this handbook.