

WELCOME  
TO THE  
NORTH AMERICAN TRAIL RIDE CONFERENCE  
(NATRC)

**REGION 1  
CLINIC HANDBOOK**



2016

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# ***INTRODUCTION TO COMPETITIVE TRAIL RIDING***

A competitive trail ride is a competitive distance event over a measured distance and completed within a window of time. In NATRC™ (North American Trail Ride Conference) competitions, the horses are evaluated by an approved veterinary judge, and riders are evaluated by an approved horsemanship judge. The judging begins at the preliminary examination, usually the day before the ride, continues during the ride, and concludes at the final examination one or two days later. The equines (horses, ponies, and mules) are evaluated on condition, soundness, way of going, and their trail ability and manners. Riders are judged on horsemanship as it applies to competitive trail riding. Trail safety and courtesy are key elements as is the ability to care for a horse during and after a long day in the backcountry.

NATRC rides are NOT races. Our rides emphasize the skill of pacing your horse to maximize his longevity as a distance horse. NATRC boasts horses with over 20,000 miles of competition.

Individual rides are local events with NATRC sanction given for using NATRC rules and approved judges. Each ride is unique, yet follows the same basic structure.

Competitors haul their horses to the ride site, perhaps in a grove of trees or in a meadow, where they set up camp. After checking in with the ride secretary, riders present their horses for a preliminary veterinary inspection. Later in the evening a briefing is held to tell riders about the trails.

Competitors are timed out from a starting point usually the next morning. With the aid of a map, they follow the marked course. How far and how fast they travel depends on the division of competition.

The horse's pulse and respiration (P&R's) are checked at least 2 times on the trail (see section on P&R's).

If the day's ride includes a lunch stop, it must be at least 45 minutes. Some rides do not hold a lunch stop on the second day to allow for earlier awards. Most rides will transport your lunch to the lunch stop and some will take your bucket too. Ride management can provide feed for all horses at lunch or other places on the trail. This varies from ride to ride and is at the discretion of ride management.

The judges examine the horses at the end of a day's ride and again before timing out on the second day. The final vet check, after the ride, is similar to the pre-ride examination. Competition is over when this final vet check is done. As soon as the scores and placings are completed, awards are presented, and riders are given a hard copy of their scorecards.

The Novice Division is for riders and horses new to competitive trail riding. The Competitive Pleasure (CP) Division is for riders who are more experienced in CTR but who prefer the distance and pace of the Novice Division. Novice and CP competitors cover about 40 miles in a 2-day ride at 3.5 to 5 mph. The Open Division covers 50 – 60 miles in a 2-day competition at a faster pace of 4 – 6 mph.

NATRC also offers a Distance Only (DO) option in all three divisions. DO participants do have to follow NATRC rules (except those pertaining to leg protection) and ride under the supervision of the veterinary judge. DO participants receive mileage (distance only), no placings or awards, and they do not count as competitors for establishing points. They do, however, receive scorecards with informative comments at the end of the ride. DO participants may do one day of a 2-day ride.

NATRC has six regions covering the country from Alaska to Florida. Each region puts on rides in their geographic area. It is not a requirement to be a member to enter a ride. All are welcome — all riders, all breeds, and all types of tack and disciplines of riding. Entries for any ride are welcome from anywhere. Some rides are held on private property or public lands that are not otherwise available to the individual rider.

Competitive trail riding is a great family activity. Children aged 10 or over at the beginning of the ride year can compete. Parents who are competing may ride with their competing children. Non-riding family members can relax in camp or perhaps assist management personnel while the riders are competing.

From the scorecards and from the experience of conditioning and competing, riders learn more about techniques of good trail equitation, pacing techniques, and methods of care that help their horses perform safely and well.

# **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

*Reprinted from Hoof Print, official publication of the North American Trail Ride Conference, Winter 2013*

The mission/vision/philosophy of NATRC has stood us in good stead for almost 55 years now. Sticking with these guidelines has allowed us to become the best at what we do — educating and informing horsemen and horsewomen about how to care for and manage their horses over long distance trail competitions. This is what we do and **No One** does it better. NATRC has always had great *value* to offer its members.

We have different faces and ride in different places, but the value and quality that make us NATRC haven't changed. We have an unsurpassed educational slant and endless learning opportunities, which have been honed over 52 years of providing distance riding competitions. Our expertise in what we do is the culmination of those years of hard work by every dedicated member sharing their knowledge, time, and energy.

This knowledge base, this expertise, and this hard work are all part of the much bigger picture that is NATRC. Our sport depends upon riders coming to compete, and the riders depend upon an army of vitally important ride volunteers coming to work. There are newsletter editors to inform us and photographers to immortalize us. We have members working as officers and directors and committee persons to provide the guidelines and structure that bring order to what we do. We are truly a large and varied family dedicated to the same goal — a sustainable and stable sport providing the fun and challenging opportunities we have come to expect.

Yes, indeed, NATRC is a big picture that could more accurately be described as a big puzzle. When all of the pieces are present, you have a beautiful picture that will likely look different to each set of eyes. One member may see, hear, and feel the moment their horse wins its first National Championship. Another member sees, hears, and feels the camaraderie and fellowship of a cozy campfire. Still another sees, hears, and feels the timer calling them “out” for their first ride ever with NATRC. And some will see, hear, and feel the great satisfaction of managing a ride that provides these opportunities for others. Yes, the big picture that is NATRC looks different to me than to you, but it is truly the same viewed from a differing perspective.

Every one of you involved in our sport, in whatever fashion you choose to serve, contribute to what makes us the best at what we do. You are a part of our big picture. Your hard work, dedication, effort, and generosity are so genuinely appreciated. Celebrate with your friends the successes of 2016 and think with a smile on the opportunities of 2017. Thank you for your continued dedication and allowing me to serve as another small piece of the puzzle that is NATRC's big picture.

Kim A. Cowart  
President, North American Trail Ride Conference

# ***NATRC 2016 RIDE SCHEDULE***

Your Region Ride Schedule here.

# NORTH AMERICAN TRAIL RIDE CONFERENCE



## MEMBERSHIP FORM – Renew, Join or Buy Items online at [www.natrc.org](http://www.natrc.org) or use this form.

Memberships run from January 1 - December 31. We offer six membership plans: four Regular; two Lifetime. We also offer a Platinum Upgrade to our family and single plans which adds personal excess liability coverage with a \$1,000,000 policy limit.

### **FIRST YEAR FREE FOR BRAND NEW MEMBERS!**

*Just check plan desired, fill in your name(s), etc. below, and mail. Platinum Upgrade not included.*

### CHECK PLAN DESIRED

All memberships include: electronic national newsletter-*Hoof Print*, your region's newsletter, E-News subscription, eligibility for annual national and regional high score awards and championships, horse and rider mileage awards, reduced ride entry fees, sponsor discounts, enhanced member services, and automatic membership in your region.

REGULAR			LIFETIME (One-time payment)		
___ FAMILY.....	\$90 /yr	Household of 1 or 2 adults & children under the age of 18 as of Jan 1 (2 votes)	___ FAMILY...	\$10,000	Same
___ SINGLE .....	\$60 /yr	Single adult member (1 vote)	___ SINGLE...	\$ 5,000	Same
___ ASSOCIATE...	\$50 /yr	Equine groups or businesses only (no vote)			
___ JUNIOR.....	\$40 /yr	Single Junior under age 18 (no vote)			

**Platinum Upgrade:** (Optional) Platinum members receive insurance benefits through Association Resource Group-ARG. Platinum members receive personal excess liability coverage with a \$1,000,000 policy limit. Coverage is for claims brought against members of NATRC™ (Platinum) arising from the use and/or ownership of a horse and for horse-related accidents involving third party bodily injury or property damage. Coverage will apply when engaged in any horse related activity, and coverage is in excess of any existing valid and collectible insurance. There is no deductible. Professional Liability is not included. Business exposures are excluded.

\_\_\_ FAMILY..... \$40 /yr    \_\_\_ SINGLE..... \$20 /yr    \_\_\_ NO UPGRADE..... \$ 0 /yr

### NATRC Specialties (Optional)

- \_\_\_ Patch ..... \$5.00
- \_\_\_ 10" Round NATRC Emblem Sticker ..... \$5.00
- \_\_\_ 4" Round NATRC Emblem Sticker ..... \$3.00  
(free with new membership)

**A Rule Book is free with your membership. To save NATRC \$\$\$, the Rule Book can be downloaded from [www.natrc.org](http://www.natrc.org) or a hard copy can be requested by checking here .**

**PRINTED HOOF PRINT** (Optional) Hoof Print will be delivered electronically. For a print copy, add \$15 & check box:

**\$ TOTAL ENCLOSED** \_\_\_\_\_ (Colorado residents please add 2.9% on Specialty Items)

**Please list first and last names, especially those with different last names, of all competing family members.**

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Jr(s) Birthdates \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ (We need your email for delivery of HOOF PRINT. Address stays within NATRC. Thanks!)

New member? Will you share how you found out about NATRC? \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\* **Mail completed form and check to : NATRC, PO Box 969, Beatrice, NE 68310** \*\*\*\*\*

A friendly reminder that you must be a current member to receive member rider fee discounts. To be eligible for year-end awards, you must be a member before the ride year ends. The Ride Year ends after the second Sunday in November. See you on the trail!

**Join Us on Facebook!**

# **HORSEMANSHIP CARD**

## **TRAILER SET UP**

Safe camping with your horse is an important part of an NATRC ride. How you will secure your horse and care for his needs should be thought of before you ever leave home. Rings, bucket brackets and other modifications may be needed to make the trailer your horse's "home away from home" safe.

At most NATRC rides, your horse will be tied to the trailer while not being ridden or walked. He should have water available to him at all times. It is a good idea to mount the buckets up over the wheels or at chest level on the trailer side to prevent a horse from pawing and accidentally catching his foot in the bucket. A hay bag should be hung within your horse's reach. Make sure it is tied up high and in such a way that it will not droop too low when it gets empty and entangle your horse if he were to paw at it. Most horses will stand quietly tied to the trailer if they have a constant supply of hay and ample water.

Next, check for any protrusions, hooks or latches where the horse could catch or cut himself. The most common one is the back door latch on most 2-horse bumper pulls trailers. Unless your horse is tied at midpoint on those trailers, he can usually stretch around and get his halter caught under the door latch while scratching his face. You can wedge a tennis ball over the latch and secure it with some duct tape for the duration of the ride. You will also need to fill up the V-shaped well where the fenders curve down to meet the frame (by the taillights). This notch makes it possible for a horse to snag a hoof in it. Protruding license plates are another common problem. If they cannot be relocated permanently, they could be wrapped with a towel and secured with duct tape for the duration of the ride.

If you have unhitched your trailer for the weekend while you are competing, be sure the wheels are chocked so your horse can not move it if he were to pull back. A panicked horse can drag a trailer a lot farther than you would think if it is unhitched. Make sure the blocks are back under the tires and don't stick out where the horse will be standing.

The horse should be tied with a panic snap or with a quick-release knot. The tail of the knot is pulled back thru the loop to "lock it down" in case the horse grabs it with his teeth and pulls. If a panic snap is used, the quick release end should be hooked to the trailer rather than to the horse as it can be very difficult to get close to a thrashing horse that needs to be released in a hurry. It is a good investment to get a nylon adjustable cross-tie and keep it in your trailer specifically for your trailer tie. Clip it to the ring where you intend to tie your horse and adjust it so the clip dangles 3-4 inches from the ground. If you tie with an extra lead rope, check the length during the weekend as they will tend to stretch and get too long. The horse should just be able to reach the ground. If you bring more than one horse, make sure they are not tied too close together. Ideally they should be on opposite sides of the trailer, but some people carry portable panels to separate two horses that must be tied on the same side of the trailer.

Stallions must be double tied at all times and tied to two different places. Please read the NATRC Rule Book for details if you plan to bring a stallion.

As with stabling situation, keeping the area cleaned and picked up is important. Do not leave brushes, rakes or tack lying within your horse's reach. Follow the ride manager's orders on manure and hay disposal. Some rides may allow you to scatter manure neatly away from the horses, and others demand you bag it for hauling out.

Make sure your rider number is taped to the trailer over where your horse is tied and that your horse has his halter tag number securely fastened. The halter should fit fairly snug and should not be loose enough that the horse can peel it off over his head in a panic. If he is blanketed, check to make sure the leg straps are adjusted correctly. The belly band should be snug enough that the horse won't get a foot caught when he lies down.

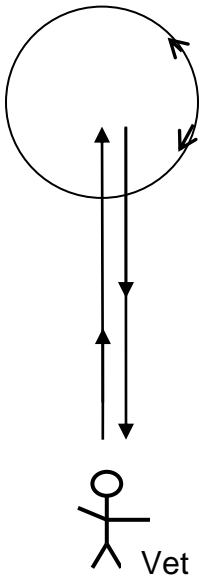
Once you are at a ride, take a break and walk about. Inspect other people's rigs and ask questions. Most NATRC people will be happy to share their knowledge and give you ideas for improving your set up. You will find that you become a lot more confident and safety conscious while camping with your horse.

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR HORSE CARD

By Suzanne Zane, DVM, with thanks to Robert Young, DVM.

There are three components to the veterinary (horse judging) score card: 1) *Condition* (40% of the horse's total score); 2) *Soundness* (45%); and 3) *Trail ability and manners* (15%).

Your horse will be evaluated by the veterinary judge at many points during a competitive trail ride. What we are looking for is an objective way to measure overall physical fitness of the horse for this kind of long ride, and see how he holds up as an athlete over the course of the weekend. The key to being able to sort out how the horses compare to one another is to judge every single one on the same things, the same way, using the same system of scoring. This is what we do on the score cards.



Each competitor has a “**check-in**” by the veterinary judge which is used to see what the horse's baseline is—that is, what is his physical condition *before* he starts the ride. That way we know if he has any fill in the legs from being trailered, recent tack rubs, interference marks, signs of lameness or soreness, what his normal activity level is at the trot out, etc. We mark everything down so that later on we can compare any changes that occur during the ride to what we saw before the ride. Most of the things we find on the horse at check-in do not count against the horse. However, if the vet sees a problem that may hurt the horse or become worse during the ride, such as a lameness, the horse will actually lose points at the first check-in or even not be allowed to compete. We try to discuss these kinds of findings with the rider when we see them because all of us are trying to look out for the best interests of the horse. The rider will be asked to bring the horse to the veterinary judge with only a halter and lead rope. You are welcome to use a longe line instead of a lead rope, and you may carry a whip for longeing. The veterinary judge will examine your horse hands-on, and the secretary will record all the baseline information on your horse.

When asked, you will trot out your horse: straight line away from the vet, make nice, even circles (1-2) in each direction, then trot back to the vet. Think of it as a lollipop shape.

After your horse circles in each direction, head straight back to the vet.

The vet wants to look at your horse directly from the front as you trot back to him/her. Try to stop a few feet from the vet – don't worry – they *will* get out of your way if you get too close. But do control your horse and be able to stop him if necessary.

Every horse also has a veterinary “**check-out**” at the end of the ride, which will be similar to the check-in. It is a good idea to use the same routine at check-out as you did at check-in; i.e. if you used a longe line at check-in, use a longe line again, not just a lead rope. Remember, the judge is using the trot-out to determine how the horse moves after the ride and compare it to what they saw in the beginning, so you want everything you do to best show off your horse the same way you did at check-in.

It is to your advantage to teach your horse to longe. Besides being an excellent training and conditioning aid at home, a horse that lunges well for the veterinary judge at a NATRC ride makes a much better impression in terms of movement than a horse that can only trot circles on a lead rope with the owner jogging next to them, interfering with their free motion. Also, a horse that is not making smooth circles or moving freely may look choppy or slightly “off” to the vet, when in reality the problem is just that he can't get his balance due to a short lead rope, etc. Note: although I will repeatedly use the word “trot” here, please know that for gaited horses, we really mean “your horse's gait that is the same relative speed as the trot”. So don't worry that you have to make your horse actually trot if he is gaited. However, if your gaited horse continually switches between similar-speed gaits when “trotting” out, it can be tougher for the vet to be sure that they are sound. If your horse is one of these gait-switchers, work at home on trotting out and longeing while keeping one consistent gait.

At other times and places during the ride, you will meet the veterinary judge out along the trail. Don't worry when you see them—the judge is just trying to evaluate how your horse is doing as many times as possible during the ride in order to get an accurate picture of how fit the horse is for the competition. Just relax, follow any instructions they or their helpers give to you, and do ask questions if you aren't sure what you are supposed to be doing with the horse during a vet check.



## **CONDITION (40%)**

**MM (mucous membranes):** Abnormal colors (bluish, bright red, brownish, or whitish) of the mucous membranes are signs of metabolic problems. We check the horse's gums, although we can also look at the inside of the eyelids or the vulva on a mare. Normal "mm's" should be a lovely pink color. If a horse's "mm's" are pink, I will write on the score card either "pink" or "1", which stands for normal baseline.

**CRT (capillary refill time):** This refers to the amount of time it takes for the gums to get their color back after the blood is blanched out by pressing with your finger. It is a sign, among other things, of the overall hydration status of the horse. Normal CRT is 0.5 to 2 seconds, and I will write a "1" on the horse's card to indicate it is normal.

**Hy (hydration):** We check hydration by pulling up a pinch of skin over the point of the shoulder and seeing how fast it sinks back into place. Older horses are normally a little slower on the skin test than young horses because their skin is not as elastic. Again, this is a reason for checking a baseline, so that we can see what is normal for a particular horse before the competition starts. 0-1 seconds is normal (a "1" on the scorecard).

**GS (gut sounds):** Gut sounds are an indication of gut motility and related fatigue. A horse's intestines should normally be making nice, gurgly contractions every couple of seconds which you can hear with a stethoscope. I mark a "1" on the card if I can hear strong gut sounds every 4 or fewer seconds.

**MT (muscle tone):** Muscle tone is a measure of condition, electrolyte balance, and fatigue. I am looking for well-defined, relaxed muscle groups and also normal firm tone of the anal sphincter. These rate a "1".

**MAW (movement, attitude, and willingness):** This is just what it says: the horse's look of animation, activity level of his movement, and attitude. This is scored as a "5" for a very active, hyper-alert, animated, eager horse; a "4" for an attentive, good mover who is relaxed, coordinated, and picks up his feet; a "3" for a slow mover who is still willing and paying attention, maybe shuffles a little bit; a "2" for a horse who is showing a lot of fatigue, not very willing to trot out, and disinterested; and a "1" for a horse who refuses to trot out on his own, is sour and depressed, hanging his head and ears. The numbers themselves are not a point score: a horse with a 3, 4, or 5 on check-in are all considered normal. It is the *difference* in that same horse's MAW between check-in and check-out that matters in terms of scoring. I have also checked in perfectly fit, rested horses that I have called a "3-minus"-just those very mellow, slow trail horses. That's not a problem either-it's normal for them, and if that same horse checks out as a 3-minus, they do not lose any points.

**P&R (pulse and respiration):** This is explained in a separate section of this handbook.

## **SOUNDNESS (45%)**

**Gait (Way of going):** We use this area to mark comments about soundness overall. We may also make comments such as "stumbles a lot" or "forging" or "nice, athletic mover."

**WBL: Withers, back, and loins.** This is where we note muscle soreness or pain in these areas or tack rubs/ tack sores of the withers or back.

**Legs:** (LF=left front, RR=right rear, etc.). Any swelling or fill, painful or hot areas, stiffness, fresh interference marks during the ride, etc., of a particular limb is marked here. I will generally mark an "ok" on the card for each normal leg.

**Write-in areas** under soundness are used to record other findings, such as tack rubs on the girth, mouth, chin or crupper area that occur during the ride.

## **TRAIL ABILITY & MANNERS (15%)**

The vet judge uses this area to note any problems or to write in positive comments for especially well-mannered equine partners. The degree of scoring depends on how bad a problem is. For instance, if your horse is a bit antsy and won't stand still for the vet at check-in, I will make a note of it, and it might cost the horse 1 point. But if the horse tries to kick me in the head, I will have to mark off a lot more!

In evaluating trail skills, what I am looking for here is the *horse's* trail ability and manners, not the rider's (the horsemanship judge scores the riders). If, for instance, we are doing a judged off-side mount on the trail, and the horse just walks off while the rider is trying to mount, that is scored against the horse. However, if the rider, in getting aboard,

throws the horse off balance and the horse takes a couple of steps so that it doesn't fall over, the horse did his job properly.

**Some additional things:** Each vet judge uses slightly different systems to note things that are normal. For instance, I use a "pink" for normal "mm's" and a "1" for all the other condition parameters on the card. Another vet judge might use "OK" or "normal" or "0" for these instead. As long as the judge is doing things the same way through each card and for each horse, the actual way they mark something as being normal doesn't matter.

At the ride briefings after dinner each night, your judges will give information, tips, or feedback to the riders on any portions of the ride that were done that day and on what is coming up the next day. Listen and learn, and don't be afraid to ask questions!!

All the people putting on the ride - the ride chairs, P&R crews, trail master, safety (drag) riders, radio/communications people, ride secretaries, and usually the people making the yummy food - are **volunteers**, and are working like crazy to make sure you have a good ride and that the competition is fair. Remember to take the time to thank them for all their hard work!

# KNOWING YOUR HORSE'S VITAL SIGNS

*Disclaimer: This information is not to replace veterinary care. It is meant to educate you, the horse owner, about the horse's body vital signs. Knowing how to assess for yourself, on a regular basis, the vital signs of your horse allows you to be more aware when something is 'not quite right'. This will help you know when to call your veterinarian or how your horse is doing during a competition.*  
*by Debbie Murphy*

## ■ Why is it important to know your horse(s) vital signs?

- If you do not know what the *normal* vital signs are for your horse, how would you be able to assess if your horse is *abnormal*?
- When you call the veterinarian, having vital sign information is critical for the vet to determine whether or not your call is an emergency.

## ■ What are the *critical* vital signs? *Normal may vary, horse to horse.*

### PRIMARY

- **Pulse** - what is the resting heart rate of your horse?  
*Normal is between 28-36 BPM (beats per minute).*
- **Respiration** - what is your horse's resting respiration (how many breaths per minute does your horse take)?  
*Normal is between 12-18 BPM.*
- **Temperature** - what is your horse's normal temperature?  
*Normal is between 99-101.*
- **Gut Sounds** - *this may be critical if colic is suspected.*  
Gurgling, roaring sounds are normal. Very loud sounds may mean the gut is hyper motile. There are four quadrants to the gut.  
LEFT: Upper left side - small intestine, Lower left - large intestine.  
RIGHT: Upper right-large intestine and cecum, Lower right - large intestine.
- **CRT (capillary refill time)** - Normal gum color should be light pink or salmon colored.  
When blanched with using a finger, how long does it take (in seconds) to return to normal?  
*Normal is between 0-2 seconds.*

### SECONDARY

- **Mucous Membranes** - normal membranes are pink and moist.  
Deviations from normal:
  - pale/white-anemic - low red cell count, loss of oxygen in red blood cells;
  - yellow - jaundiced, liver damage;
  - blue - lack of oxygen- call vet immediately;
  - brick red - may indicate dehydration.
- **Ocular Membranes** - redness in the sclera may indicate loss of oxygen in red blood cells.
- **Muscle Tone** - Muscle should give to pressure. If firm and horse reluctant to move, suspect rhabdomyolysis (tie-up).
- **Hydration** - (A.K.A. Skin tent or skin turgor) - one way to determine if a horse has been drinking adequately.
- **Jugular Refill** - How fast does the jugular vein refill when pressed?



# HORSE CARD BACK



## Scoring Guidelines

Point assignment is at the discretion of the veterinary judge.

### SOUNDNESS 45 Points

#### Lameness Grades

Questionable Soundness: (Use sparingly) -1 to -2  
Grade 1: Lameness is difficult to observe and is not consistently apparent regardless of circumstances (e.g. under saddle, circling, inclines, hard surfaces, etc.) -3 to -5

Grade 2: Lameness is difficult to observe at a walk or when trotting in a straight line, but consistently apparent under certain circumstances (e.g. weight carrying, circling, inclines, hard surfaces, etc.) -6 to -10

Grade 3: Lameness is consistently observable at a trot under all circumstances. Do not allow to start a day! A horse observed during ride should be pulled. If observed at final check, completion only may be granted at the discretion of the judge with card scored. -11 to -15

Grade 4: Lameness is obvious at a walk. PULL  
Grade 5: Lameness produces minimal weight-bearing in motion and/or at rest, or a complete inability to move. PULL

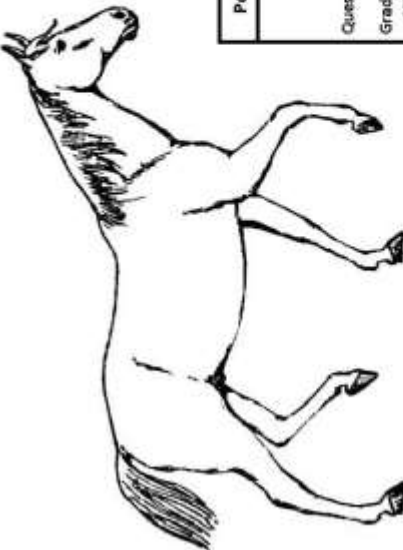
**LEGS** Heat - each leg Pain - each leg  
Slight -1 -2  
Moderate -2 -3  
Severe -4 or pull -5 or pull

**FILL** Slight -0 to -1 "FILL" refers to edema of the distal limb  
Moderate -1 to -2 that may occur post-exercise.  
Severe -2 to -3

**WBLG** Withers, Back, Loins, Girth  
Discomfort or pain to palpation  
Slight -1  
Moderate -2  
Severe -3 or pull  
Score each side of horse separately, i.e., R loin, L loin, R back, L back, etc.

**SPP** Sores, Plaques, Rubs at girth, cinch, mouth, etc.  
Interference marks are also scored using this scale  
Slight -1  
Moderate -2  
Severe -4 or more

Windpuffs, windgalls (synovial swelling of joints or tendon sheaths that do not cause heat, pain, or lameness) are not penalized.



### PULL CODES

Strike a diagonal line across the face of the card. Write the words "PULL" and one of the following pull codes.

**Lameness:** Any degree of lameness  
**Metabolic:** Non-recovery, colic, thumps, tie-up, etc.  
**Surface Factors:** Wounds, sore backs, rubs, etc.  
**Rider Option:** illness, injury, fatigue, weather, etc.  
**Disqualification:** Rule violations, dangerous horse, etc.

### TRAIL ABILITY / MANNERS 15 Points

Obvious kick at Judge, Rider or Handler -5 to -10  
Obvious bite at Judge, Rider or Handler -5 to -10  
Frenzied, Unruly, Dangerous (biting, kicks, Threatens, Consistently Dangerous) DISQUALIFY  
Stands quietly for exam, mount -0  
Moves 1 to 2 steps or turns -1  
Walks off -2  
Maneuvers obstacle with adequate to excellent skill -0  
Maneuvers obstacle with difficulty and/or slight resistance -1  
Refuses obstacle or unable to maneuver within a reasonable time frame. -3

Misuses obstacle: Deduct one more point than deducted from the poorest performing horse at the same obstacle.

Downhill, uphill, creek/leg crossings 0  
Attentive to trail and rider -1  
Mild disobedience -2  
Moderate disobedience -2  
Out of control or refuses -3

Breaking Ties: Refer to current Judge's Manual

### CONDITION 40 Points

**MM (Oral Mucous Membranes)** Normal / Moist -0  
Injected / Tacky -1  
Pale / Dry -2  
Dark / Toxic Pull

**GS (Gut Sounds)** Strong to slight -0  
Prolonged -1 to -2  
Silence -4 or Pull  
(if other factors corroborate)

**HYD (Hydration)** (shoulder pinch - seconds)  
0 to 1 Normal  
2 to 3 Mild  
4 to 6 Severe  
7 and up Pull

**MAW (Movement, Attitude, Willingness)**  
5 Bold, animated, attentive  
4 Attentive, good mover, no animation  
3 Slow mover, but willing & attentive  
2 Showing a great deal of fatigue, not very willing to trot out  
1 Refuses to trot out on own  
MAW: -1 per degree the horse deteriorates

**SLUG (Lacrimal)** (Seconds)  
0 to 1 Normal  
2 Mild  
3 Severe  
4 to 6 Severe  
7 and up Pull

**CS (Cap refill)** (Seconds)  
0 to 1 Normal  
2 Mild  
3 Severe  
4 to 6 Severe  
7 and up Pull

**SCORING HYDRATION, JUNCTURAL, REFLIL, CSRT**  
Slight Change (1 degree) -0 to -1  
Moderate Change (2 degrees) -1 to -2  
Severe Change (3 degrees) -2 to -3

**PULSE: Base = 12 (48 bpm)**  
Point deduction: -1 per each beat over base  
13 -1 Always score the first recovery PRR as described above. For each 10 minute  
14 -2  
15 -3  
16 -4  
17 -5

**RESPIRATION: Base = 9 (36 bpm)**  
Point deduction:  
1 to 9 -0  
10, 11, 12, 13 -1  
14, 15, 16, 17 -2  
18, 19, 20, 21 -3  
22, 23, 24, 25 -4  
25+ -5

Hold criteria is at the discretion of the veterinary judge  
Solic, Tie-Up, Thumps: Pull—Recommend Medical Attention Immediately

# WHAT IS A P&R?

NATRC competitions involve traveling many miles on your equine partner. To make sure the animals are not over stressed, several P&R (pulse and respiration) stops will be encountered over the course of a competition. At these stops, your horse's pulse and respiration will be taken over a 15-second interval and recorded.

At the ride briefing the night before the ride, the trail master will usually tell you where the P&R stops will be. The veterinary judge will announce the P&R "Go/Hold" criteria. Criteria vary from ride to ride based on terrain and weather conditions on ride day. Usually it will be said something like, "16 Go, 17 Hold." This means that after 10 minutes of standing quietly, if the count is 16 or below, you will be allowed to continue. If the count is 17 or more heartbeats and/or breaths in a 15-second count, you will be held an additional 10 minutes to allow the horse to recover. This time will be **added** to your minimum and maximum time allowed.

Most P&R stops are held out on the trail. When you know you're getting reasonably close to a P&R stop, stop for water if it's available. Let your horse drink his fill, and sponge his body if the weather is hot. Fill any horse water bottles you're carrying if you plan to use them at the stop. As you enter the P&R stop, you will be handed a time card and shown where to "park" your horse. The time on your card will be marked for your check which will be ten minutes from the time you arrived.

You should dismount and quietly lead your horse next to the last horse in line, facing the same direction as everyone else. Leave enough room for the P&R crews to get around between the horses safely. If the next horse in line has yellow ribbons in his forelock and tail (denoting a stallion) or red ribbons (potential kicker), give some extra space. After you have dismounted, you may tend to your horse in almost any fashion as long as it does not disrupt the horses on either side of you. It's a good idea to loosen your cinch just enough to give the horse a little more breathing room. It's also a good idea to run the stirrup up or throw it over the saddle so the P&R team doesn't have to fool with it later. Everyone has their own routine to calm their horse down, and you'll have to work out what is best for your horse. Some riders stroke their horse's face and ears using T-Touch, while some feed electrolyte cookies or sing to their horses. Some people like to pull the saddle if it is a hot day. Others carry lots of water and keep their horse sponged off. Some carry fans and create a little breeze of their own. Some horses don't like being messed with and will simply drop their heads, relax and go to sleep.

If you want to feed your horse a treat, remember that it can be very upsetting to the horse next to you who isn't getting one. It's usually better to wait until those around you have been checked. If your horse begins to act up, disturbing those around you, the P&R chair might request that you move your horse away from the others. It usually takes a new horse five to six rides before he understands and gets used to the routine, so be patient. The more relaxed you are around your horse, generally the calmer he will be.

Ten minutes after your arrival, at the time written on your card, the P&R volunteers will come to check and record your horse's pulse and respiration. The pulse is given first, followed by the respiration for a 15-second count. The rules allow your horse a maximum of 12/9 for a P&R count without penalties. That means if your horse's heart beats 12 or fewer times, and he takes 9 or fewer breaths during the 15 second count, there will be no points deducted from his condition score. One point will be lost for every pulse count above 12 and for every 4 respiration counts above 9. For example, if the P&R volunteer records a 14/7, your horse will lose 2 points. If you feel that your count was incorrect for some reason, you may ask for a recheck which will be done by the team captain. You must accept the second count, even if it is a higher number.

When your count is done, if you have removed your saddle, get tacked up quietly and check with the horse behind you to make sure it's okay for you to leave. If they are in the midst of getting checked or only have a few minutes left, please wait. Some horses get very excited when they think they're being left behind. You are given 15 minutes total time at each P&R stop to allow for this and other "necessities". It is permissible for a volunteer to hold your horse if you need to go to the bathroom, get a drink of water from the trucks, or fix your tack.

You might be instructed to carry your card to the veterinary judge. Other times the team will keep the card.

Remember that the P&R crews are volunteers and are donating their time and energy. Be polite and courteous and remember to thank them for being there. If they weren't there, we wouldn't be either.

# **BASICS OF CONDITIONING**

## ***What is Conditioning?***

Conditioning is a step-by-step process. It is not something that can be rushed or accomplished overnight.

## ***What is the Goal of a Conditioning Program?***

It is to safely help your horse achieve his highest athletic potential. The goal is to increase the efficiency of the heart and lungs, to help your horse build strength and endurance, and to help your horse build bone density, tendon, ligament and muscle strength. It is the intelligent application of stress to help your horse build a body that operates efficiently under distance conditions.

## ***Where Do I Start if I Want to Prepare for Novice Rides?***

The key words are *Long Slow Distance Training*. It is imperative that you build a sound foundation for your horse's distance career. LSD training is to improve your horse's *aerobic* metabolic capacity. Aerobic capacity means that your horse's heart works at a rate of 120 to 150 beats per minute (bpm).

To start, you should spend several weeks at a walk. A horse usually walks from 3 to 5 mph. You should walk out briskly. Begin your program with an hour's walk or between 4 and 6 miles per day every other day or even 2-3 days a week. Get in what you can – twice a week is better than nothing.

Progress to walking & trotting. You may walk a mile, then trot a 1/2 mile. Build the foundation slowly and with care. Remember your goal is to safely build the stamina and endurance of your horse. **DO NOT INCREASE SPEED AND DISTANCE AT THE SAME TIME.**

Later in the season, increase either the speed or the duration (miles). Go from 5 miles to 8, then 10 or 12 miles twice a week. Include a longer ride every 2 weeks. Do not increase your speed at the same time. After you have reached a specific goal in miles, then slowly increase your speed.

## ***How many miles and how fast should I be conditioning for a Novice Ride?***

The first year, your goal should be to do about 30 miles per week. Once your horse is accustomed to the distance, you can increase the intensity by asking for more trotting time or adding a slow canter. It is very important to not over condition the horse. The reason for taking days off is to allow the horse's body to rest and repair itself from the mild stresses of the beginning conditioning program.

The average speed for a Novice ride is 3.5 - 5 mph. The rides will have a variety of terrain. Some may include a long up hill 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.

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, walk. Then, walk, trot, walk, trot.

## ***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, energy demands (muscle types, lactic acid, etc.) One of the best is *Go the Distance* by Nancy Loving, DVM.

# **HORSEMANSHIP CARD**

## **PRESENTATION/ TROT OUT**

During the course of the competition, the judges will be observing and evaluating many things about you and your horse. If you want to do well, you need to pay attention to many little things. Veterinary judges monitor the horses to see what the effects of the ride are on the horse. Notes are made on the horse before the ride, during the ride, and after the ride. Doing a good job of presenting the horse to the veterinary judge is very important for a good evaluation.

When you present your horse to the judges, it is your opportunity to show your horse at his very best. Make a good first impression. The horse should be well-groomed; clean, clear ears and nostrils, no lingering sweat marks, no bot eggs or ticks. The hooves should be cleaned out and the shoes secure and in good condition. The halter should fit well, and all the ends should be tucked away.

As you approach the judge, for safety, make sure both hands are on the lead rope. It should be folded in a figure-eight (not a loop) in one hand. The other hand should be grasping the lead rope 6-10 inches below the halter. If you hold the halter for extra control, be careful not to accidentally slip a finger through the ring. Stand beside your horse and pay attention to the veterinary judge. Unless instructed otherwise, you should be on the same side of the animal as the veterinary judge to maintain control and to be able to turn the horse's hind legs away from the judge. It's risky to stand directly in front of the horse except to momentarily allow access to the mouth to check the mucous membranes and capillary refill.

Follow the directions you are given to trot out. Usually you will be asked to trot away from the judges, circle the horse in each direction, and then trot straight back to the judge. Practice this at home with some variations. Some riders prefer to longe the horse in a circle for the judge, while others prefer to lead the horse in-hand. Either is allowed, but it is very difficult for most riders to keep up with the trotting horse. It is usually better to lead the horse from the right side (inside) to trot a circle in-hand going clockwise. For safety, keep both hands on the lead or longe line. Make large, smooth, round circles to show the horse to his best advantage. Practice at home until you are proficient. The ride is NOT the place to teach your horse to trot.

Be careful to not let the lead rope drag the ground or get tangled around your feet. If you look back at your horse while you are trotting beside it, it will probably take that as a cue to slow down. Try to not block the judge's view by getting between the horse and the judge. Letting the horse crowd into your space at any time, including the trot-out, is hazardous and usually reflects problems with respect in other areas as well. In the case of gaited horses, keep the horse in a lively, consistent gait through the trotting presentation.

The in-hand presentation is one of the most important parts of the ride. Practicing your presentation at home until you and your horse are relaxed and confident will pay off handsomely on your scorecards later. As one horsemanship judge said, "It's not practice that makes perfect, it's PERFECT practice that makes perfect."



# HORSEMANSHIP CARD

## EQUITATION

*(Reprinted from Hoof Print, Official Publication of the North American Trail Ride Conference, May/June 2003, with permission). By Priscilla Lindsey*

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Happy is the horse that carries a well-balanced rider with a secure seat and soft hands. The goal of every rider should be to ride this way all the time, whether riding for 1 hour or for 8 hours or more.

Riding in harmony with the horse's movement is achieved by riding in balance all the time. When the rider is not in balance, excessive muscle tension (grip) is used. This results in rider fatigue and consequently pounding the horse's back and bumping his mouth. Riding in balance requires only good muscle tone (rather than tension) to keep the rider **light** in the saddle.

Riding in balance begins with the alignment of the rider's ear, shoulder, hip and heel in a vertical line when the horse is standing, walking, jogging or cantering. Also, this vertical line balances the riders of horses with lateral and four-beat gaits such as running walk and foxtrot. The faster trot, gallop and going up hills requires a change, so it is the rider's center of gravity over the heel, with shoulder ahead of the vertical line and hip behind, counterbalancing each other. The amount ahead and behind the line depends on the speed of the horse or the steepness of the hill.

The first step in achieving this ideal alignment is to have the pelvis in true vertical position, neither tipped forward (rider with hollow back) nor tipped backward (rider with rounded back). You might need visual feedback from a friend or a riding instructor to help determine if you are sitting hollow-backed or rounded. If you can easily feel your seat bones (the bony knobs that you sit on when sitting properly), rock back and forth on them until it feels like they are pointing straight down at the ground beneath your horse's belly. Also, when the pelvis is in the true vertical position, you will feel the least amount of muscle tension (abdominal or lower back muscles) holding it there. If you can't feel your seat bones in the saddle, try practicing on a flat, hard chair.

If you don't have someone to visually assess your position, try this: pull your knees up over the pommel of the saddle until your thigh is parallel to the ground. Feel how you are sitting on your seat bones. Then lower your legs without changing the position of your pelvis.

When your pelvis is correctly aligned, the next step is to position the legs and feet to provide a solid foundation. Your feet need to be directly under your hips to provide this support. Otherwise, you will have to use a lot more grip, rather than balance, with your hands and legs to overcome the effects of gravity and the motion of the horse.

Do this exercise to understand what I mean: sit in a chair with a flat seat and no arms. Sit all the way back in the chair with your feet flat on the floor out in front of you. Now try to stand up on your feet. You will have to throw your upper body forward before you can do it. Sit back down and notice how heavily you land in the chair. Now sit toward the front of the chair and place your feet flat underneath your hips. Notice how easily you can go up and down and how lightly you can land in the chair. Try this same exercise in the saddle to see if you have been riding with your feet too far forward. (Be careful not to land heavily on your horses back!)

When you ride in correct balance, relaxed and easy, yet with energy and good muscle tone, you will notice your horse starting to move out more freely. He will willingly give you his back if he is not worried about your slamming down on his back or being thrown off balance with every stride.

# ***HORSEMANSHIP and HORSE CARDS***

## **GOING UP AND DOWN HILLS**

You will probably be judged going up and down hills by both the veterinary and horsemanship judges. Regardless of whether it is a mountain or a creek bank, the judges will be looking for the same things. The horse should proceed with calm deliberation at a consistent pace, carefully placing his feet and going straight up or down the trail when asked. The horse might lose points for “crabbing” sideways going up or down, rushing, crowding another rider, being excessively nervous, or tossing his head.

For the rider, the ascents and descents present a multitude of ways to excel. Whether you are going up, down, or on the flat, leg position is of paramount importance. Ideally this position is one that if the horse were to suddenly evaporate from under you, you would land upright, on your feet.

Going up hills, there is a “window” of good upper body position. If you lean too far back or are too far forward over the neck, you will make the horse’s job more difficult. If you are too far out of the saddle, you sacrifice stability and safety. You should fold slightly forward from the hips in an amount appropriate for the slope of the hill and the speed of the horse. Support yourself by rolling up onto your inner thighs so you can have your seat lightly off the saddle to make it easier for the horse to get his rear legs under it for upward push. It is permissible to take a handful of mane to steady yourself as long as it doesn’t interfere with the rein control. The reins should be short enough to guide your horse easily, but long enough that he can get his head down for balance on the climb. Maintain your form and control to the top of the hill. It takes muscles and coordination that come only with practice. The judge will interpret how well you’re moving with your horse.

Maintain your balance going down hills. Don’t lean back; this makes it harder for the horse to use his hindquarters to “brake” himself. Don’t grab the back of the saddle to stabilize yourself. Doing so puts you off balance and twists you in the saddle. One of the most common faults is “body sway” which is the rolling of your upper body from side to side as the horse descends. This not only makes it very difficult for the horse to stay in balance, it can cause saddle rubs.

In doing a down and up such as in a gully, or an up and down such as over a hump, maintain the appropriate body, leg position and control throughout. If you are balanced and moving as one with your horse, you should not get thrown off-balance or put behind the action of the horse as he makes the transition.

# ***HORSEMANSHIP and HORSE CARDS***

## **JUDGED MOUNT**

Rarely a ride goes by where you aren't asked to demonstrate your abilities doing a mount in front of the judges. Being able to mount safely is important; horseback riding always involves first getting on the horse. The perfect mount consists of a horse that is standing still and listening to his rider and a rider who mounts quickly and smoothly and lands lightly. As with other challenges the judges present to you, this one has lots of opportunities for you to do your best.

Before you present your horse for the judged mount, be ready by making sure the girth is snug, the breast collar is attached, the stirrups are down, saddle pads are snugged down, and the reins are attached to the bit. Proceed to the mounting place when it is your turn. It would be inconsiderate to the judge and the other riders to fiddle with your equipment and do last minute tack adjustments when you should be doing the mount.

Walk to the side of your horse and look directly over the saddle. Pick out something in the distance, a tree, a rock, anything on which you can focus as you mount. Put the rein hand on the neck and the other hand on the other side of the pommel to help prevent the saddle from shifting. Settle your horse before committing your foot to the stirrup. With your foot in the stirrup, push off with the other foot with a certain amount of "bounce." As you leave the ground, maintain your focus on the tree/rock. Settle lightly in the saddle, lowering yourself down instead of just dropping. The horse must not walk off and "leave" without the rider. Once you are up and straight, change your focus to looking above or between your horse's ears.

It is better for the horse to use the terrain to mount as it helps you land more squarely into the saddle. Use a rock, log, or stump whenever you can. If you have any questions, simply ask the judge, "May I use that rock/log/stump to mount?" You might be asked to position your horse next to something to do the mount.

If you are asked to do an offside mount, do the same as described above, but as a mirror image.

Some people train their horses to "park out" while they mount. This not only gets the horse in a position where he is less likely to move/walk off during the mount, but also usually lowers the stirrup and makes it easier for the rider to get mounted.

The key is practice, practice, practice. Your horse will never learn to stand still for the mount unless you insist that he stands for every single mount. Bev Tibbitts, one of our early and best horsemanship judges, always seemed to have the perfect mount. She would practice by mounting and dismounting six times each time she got on her horse. She mounted on the near side, dismounted on the off-side, then mounted from the off-side and dismounted on the near side. The horse soon learned that it wasn't going anywhere for awhile.

You can also practice backing up after a mount, turning left or right, anything but going straight ahead. Don't let your horse anticipate which way he's going to go.

# ***HORSEMANSHIP and HORSE CARDS***

## **PRACTICAL TRAIL SKILLS**

A good trail horse is much more than one who will go forward down the trail. In order to deal with the unknowns of the trail, a good trail horse should be able to do certain trail skills. These types of skills highlight your horse's trust in you and your ability to guide him using your seat, legs, and hands. In the interest of safety, judges will often simulate a natural trail condition to ask you to perform a trail skill.

**Back up:** Since backing does not require any special props, such as logs or water, the judges may ask for this anywhere. The judge might stop you on the trail and ask for such things as to back your horse five steps, back between two trees, back between two logs on the ground, back up a slight incline, or even back in an L-shaped pattern. Collect your horse, glance back to make sure the space is clear, take a deep breath, and ask your horse to back. If backing a certain number of steps, back **ONLY** the number of steps requested. It helps to count the steps out loud so both you and the judge are in sync. Being able to control single steps of your horse is a wonderful tool for maneuvers on the trail or anywhere. Regardless of what you are asked to back through or over, the judges will be looking for a horse that backs straight, smoothly, and willingly.

**Side pass:** Being able to side pass can make a difference in safety on the trail as well as on your scorecards. This skill is useful in opening/closing a gate from the back of your horse, tying a ribbon, or picking up something lying over a fence.

**Water and log crossings:** Under most circumstances, the techniques used to cross water or logs are pretty much the same. The horse should cross obediently, without hesitation, paying attention to the rider's aids and where he puts his feet. Follow any instructions carefully. Don't be afraid to ask questions. It is usually permissible to let your horse stop and drink when crossing water, but you should not hold up other riders. Be considerate. If you think your horse needs to drink, move off to the side after the judge has evaluated you so as to let the next rider pass.

Most veterinary judges like to see a horse cross logs without touching them. This shows that the horse is focused, aware of his surroundings, and not clumsy. The horsemanship judges are looking for riders to be balanced in the saddle and guiding the horse over the safest route. To stay balanced, do not look down as you cross. This moves your weight over the side and interferes with your horse's balance. Size up the situation **BEFORE** you begin, then keep your eyes focused ahead as you proceed through/over.

It is usually considered unsafe to jump an obstacle. If you choose to jump, maintain your balance and stay with the action of the horse so you don't get whiplash. Don't look down as you go over. Fortunately, Mother Nature has given us lots of material to use to practice these skills at home. Instead of looking at the winter's downed trees and branches on the trail as a nuisance, consider them as an opportunity to practice your trail skills. For times when you can't get out on the trail, use logs or small jumps set up in a pasture or arena to practice on. Be creative...the judges certainly are!

**Be safe:** Above all, be safe. If you are asked to do something that you don't think you or your horse are ready for, just tell the judge that you'll pass on that observation. Yes, you will lose points, but just one more point than the horse/rider that did it the worst. It's better to be safe than getting you or your horse hurt.

**Tip:** When you practice these skills at home, be sure to do them from the ground as well. Not only can this help the horse understand the maneuver, sometimes the judges will ask you to perform these skills in-hand. Fortunately, these skills require no special equipment and can be easily practiced anywhere, even in an arena. Once your horse backs up and side passes willingly for you, you will find more and more occasions to use these new abilities. Saddle up and ride!

# **HORSEMANSHIP CARD**

## **TRAIL CARE**

Most of the time the concern is to help the horse dissipate the heat generated by the exercising muscles. Avoid tack that covers more of the horse's body (and sweat glands) than necessary. If your horse has a heavy mane, it would benefit from having it braided or pulled to have more evaporative surface area. The hair coat can trap heat and thus reduce cooling. Body clipping or trace clipping (neck, chest, and belly) could help the horse during certain times of the year. Before the beginning of the ride, gradually warm up the horse's muscles to get the cellular engines operating more efficiently.

Dehydration is a huge enemy of the competitive distance horse. A loss of 3% of body water (about 4 gallons) can have an adverse effect on performance. The horse should be given a chance to drink at every opportunity, every hour on the trail if possible. Horses that are hot and breathing hard don't drink well. Give the horse a few minutes to catch his breath at a water stop, and give him a fair chance to drink before you go on. After he has drunk well, then give electrolytes if you so choose.

Sponging water on the horse at water stops is at your discretion, but never foul a drinking source. You can scoop water at water crossings or squirt water on the neck as you ride. If you soak the horse's neck and chest with water, scrape it off after a few seconds. The horse heats the water, and it can act as a heat trap. Soak, scrape, soak, scrape until the skin no longer feels hot.

If you loosen the cinch at the P&R stops, be sure it is still tight enough to remain functional; re-tighten it before you leave. Because there are a lot of sweat glands in the back, it is often beneficial to remove the saddle at a P&R stop or at lunch. If you let the horse graze with the bit in its mouth, be careful to not let the horse step on the reins and injure its mouth.

At the lunch stops and at the end of the ride, take care of the horse before yourself. Feeding at stops is at the discretion of the rider; hay would be better than grain for the horse. Tie the horse with a halter and lead rope. Avoid tying too close to other horses. The tie should be at about the height of the halter ring, and the lead should be long enough that the horse can just get its head to the ground. Use a quick-release knot with the end of the lead passed through the loop to secure the tie. Check and clean the horse's feet.

At the end of a day's ride, weather conditions determine how the horse should be cooled out. Reasonable sponging or bathing may be appropriate on hot days. Blanketing would be more appropriate on cool, windy days. Water should be available at all times. Hand-walking is helpful. Feed hay first, then grain.

# **HORSEMANSHIP CARD**

## **TRAIL SAFETY AND COURTESY**

Use your common sense when it comes to trail safety and courtesy. When approaching a water stop, don't crowd in, wait your turn unless the other rider(s) say it's okay. Some horses will stop drinking if crowded by a strange horse. On the other hand, if you're the one watering your horse, don't prolong your time and crowd others out. If you want your horse to drink more, move away and come back in a few minutes. A horse might also not drink if a horse ahead leaves. At any trail "obstacle," judged or not, wait for the horse behind you to complete it before you move off down the trail. Otherwise the second horse might get in a hurry to "catch up with the herd."

Don't dip your sponge directly in a water trough. No horse wants salty water full of horse hair. Carry a collapsible bucket or a zip lock bag to fill with water, then move your horse away from the trough to sponge.

One of the most common errors of new riders is to ride in a bunch or right behind the horse in front of them. Remember to keep a safe distance between horses.

Always let the person you're passing know that you're coming and on which side you will pass. Do not do an extended trot or canter past a horse that is walking or you might over excite it. Wait until you're well past to pick up your pace again. Always check to be sure the horse you passed is not throwing a fit because you're leaving. Finally, if you need to pass another horse because your horse is faster paced, do not just pass by one horse length. Pass the horse and rider and get going down the trail. Riders will appreciate it if you get out of sight after you pass.

If your horse is particularly slow, find a place to pull off the trail and let others by. Sometimes this may take awhile, but let people behind you know that you'll pull over as soon as you can.

When going through a gate, the first rider usually opens it and holds it for the others. After they have all passed through, they should wait until the gate is closed and the rider who opened the gate resumes his place in front. Occasionally, one rider will open the gate and ask the last rider in the group to close it. This is fine as long as you know the message was heard and the gate will be closed.

While you're being judged on your manners on the trail, your horse will also be judged on his manners. You, as the rider, will be responsible for his behavior and need to be alert to any situations that could cause a problem.

If your horse has been known to kick at other horses, put a red ribbon in his tail to warn other riders. Try to keep that horse from being crowded by other horses by pulling over if being followed too closely or moving the horse away when others get too close.

# ***CHOOSING TACK FOR THE TRAIL***

Whatever discipline you ride, the tack must fit your horse properly, be safe, humane and in good repair. NATRC requires that a saddle be used; type is a personal choice. Other equipment, as described in the current NATRC Rule Book, must be in the “bounds of good horsemanship.”

Besides a saddle, other tack may include, but not be limited to, a breast collar and crupper for holding the saddle in place in steep terrain; a pommel bag and/or canteen bag for carrying miscellaneous emergency supplies and water bottles; and a lead rope for tying your horse at the lunch stop. Type of bridle is a matter of personal preference. Using a halter as the only headgear can be a good training tool in the round pen or arena, but halters often do not offer effective control in a competitive situation. While trotting the horse in-hand for the veterinary judge during the ride, a halter/bridle combination or some type of halter under the bridle works well. It is usually considered better to lead with a rope attached to the halter rather than by the reins attached to the bit. The horse will not only move more freely, but you will not be bumping the horse’s mouth with the bit.

All types of hoof boots that provide sole protection are allowed. However, any attached strap, keeper, or gaiter must not extend above the pastern. The judges may request to observe the area covered by the attached strap, keeper, or gaiter.

Protective devices on the horse’s legs are not allowed. The leg is defined as any part of the leg above and including the coronet band. Distances and speeds in NATRC rides aren’t considered great enough that protective leg devices are needed. Also, protective leg devices themselves can cause problems if improperly applied, if dirt gets in between them and the horse’s leg, etc.

Any equipment you use should fit comfortably on your horse; should not bind, rub, or encumber movement. Any new equipment, saddle, pads, etc., should be tried out during training rides well before you consider using it in competition.

Many different styles and types of equipment are used. Often, you will obtain ideas how you can best modify your present tack to be the most effective for you on the trail. You don’t need to worry about everything matching and being color coordinated, but you do need to be sure your tack is functional and safe. The saddle pad should be clean and free of any object that might rub. Extra equipment should be securely attached to the saddle so it does not flop or dangle, causing irritation or rubbing, while you are riding.

Many riders become creative with the items they carry on the trail. A homemade scoop made from one-half of a Clorox (or similar) plastic container or a collapsible vinyl or canvas bucket can be used to obtain water from sources your horse may not be able to get to safely. They may also be used to offer water at P&R or lunch stops. Some riders use various types of see-through containers to hold their trail maps. A few may use a GPS or some type of horse “pedometer.” Others use heart monitors to readily assess their horse’s pulse rate from the saddle. Training to use these items must be done before you use them in competition.

Learning from others is just another example of what competing in NATRC can do for you and your equine partner. If it works for others, it may work for you. Experienced competitors and the judges can often help you solve your challenges more quickly than trying to figure it all out on your own. Horse people love to share their knowledge. NATRC riders are no exception!

# YOU AND YOUR SADDLE

Another thing you must consider is the design of your saddle, because it is going to affect where you *can* put your feet. The point where the stirrup leather attaches to the saddle determines where the stirrup will hang. If the leathers are hung too far forward on the tree, as is typical with many western, Aussie, and forward-seat jumping saddles, it will be difficult for you to keep your feet in the correct position. No matter how hard you try to pull your leg back, the leather is going to keep pulling it forward as it seeks to hang vertically. This is an important thing to check when shopping for a saddle. Ideally, the stirrup will hang from just forward of the center of the saddle tree (or center of seat) so that when your foot is in the stirrup your heel will be directly below your hip joint.

This problem can also be caused by a saddle that does not fit level on the horse and is sloping down from front to back. This can be corrected by using a wedge pad that lifts the back of the saddle, providing the tree is not so narrow it pinches the horse's withers. The opposite problem is caused by a saddle that is too wide for the horse's withers and sits too low in front. This will cause your lower leg to swing too far back. Your upper body will feel like it is being pitched forward, causing you to grip with your knees. A wither pad that raises the front of the saddle can help, providing it does not interfere with the saddle fitting the horse properly.

Bracing hard against the stirrups or pushing your heel down too far (yes, you can have your heels *too far* down!) will send your leg out in front of you and cause you to sit back against the cantle, out of balance and behind the motion of the horse.

The next consideration is stirrup length. There should be enough bend in all the joints, hip, knee and ankle, to allow the legs to work as shock absorbers. A general rule-of-thumb is for the thigh to be placed at a 45-degree angle between level ground and true vertical, although many riders prefer a slightly longer stirrup length. Actually, it is smart to change the stirrup length during a long ride. Use an inch or two shorter for fast pacing and lots of hill work; then lengthen an inch or two for slow, level going. This allows different muscle groups to work and the others to rest.

Too long a stirrup length can cause many problems. A long, straight leg results in locked joints, thus no shock absorbing action. Also, having to stand on tip-toe and grip the stirrups with the toes during fast pacing results in considerable muscle fatigue, as well as putting you in precarious balance.

The placement of the feet in the stirrups can also hinder or help with fatigue. We are often told to "ride on the ball of the foot", but that is not quite correct. Your foot has a reflex point - just behind the ball and in line with the space between your big and second toes - that is the natural balance point of your foot. If the stirrup crosses this point, you'll be able to relax your heel down rather than forcing it down, and the circulation will remain better in your foot for those long hours in the saddle.

Perhaps you have also been told to ride with your foot parallel to your horse's side. This is not correct, as it stiffens your ankles and puts strain on your knees. Think about the way your knee joint works; it only bends one way, back and forth, not sideways. Keeping your foot and ankle joint in line with your thigh and knee is the most comfortable position. If a judge says, "Toes too far out," you probably also have your knees turned out. If your stirrups are the right length so you have bend in your knees, your knees are resting softly against the saddle and your feet are flat on the stirrup, then your toes should be in the correct position.



# HORSEMANSHIP CARD

NATRC HORSEMANSHIP CARD		TOP 2 COPIES TO NATRC OFFICE	HARD COPY TO COMPETITOR	SCORES
<p><b>GROOMING:</b> Brushing, Dirt, Sweat Marks, External Parasites, Feet &amp; Shoeing</p> <p><b>TACK &amp; EQUIPMENT:</b> Cleanliness, Proper Fit, Adjustment, Repair, Trail Gear Placement &amp; Security</p> <p><b>TRAIL EQUITATION:</b> Ascending, Descending, &amp; Level Terrain: Balance &amp; Lightness of Seat, Cues, Body &amp; Leg Position, Control, Hands &amp; Aids to Horse; Mounting &amp; Dismounting; Obstacles: Control, Cues, Timing, Form; Teamwork (TW)</p>	<p><b>IN-HAND PRESENTATION(S):</b> Safety, Turning, Lead Rope, Response to Directions, Consideration of Others, Teamwork (TW)</p>	<p><b>IN-HAND PRESENTATION(S):</b></p>	<p>20 Points</p>	
<p><b>TRAIL SAFETY &amp; COURTESY:</b> Crowding; Riding in a Bunch; Response to Directions; Potential Danger to Horse, Self &amp; Others; Consideration of Others</p>	<p><b>STABLING:</b> Horse Care, Safety, Feed &amp; Water Container, Tie (Height, Length, Quick Release Knot &amp; Security), Blanket, Tack &amp; Gear Storage, Choice of Parking Location</p>	<p><b>TRAIL CARE:</b> Cinch, Saddle, Blanket, Pad, Feet, Water Stops, Tie &amp; Safety, Pacing &amp; Timing, Cooling Out</p>	<p>50 Points</p>	
<p><b>Rider #</b></p> <p>Horse Name</p> <p>Rider Name</p> <p>Division &amp; Class</p>		<p>Breed</p> <p>Age</p> <p>Ride Name</p> <p>Vet Judge(s)</p> <p>Hsp Judge(s)</p>	<p>Date</p> <p>Region</p> <p>Penalty Point Explanation</p>	<p>30 Points</p> <p>Subtotal</p> <p>Penalty Points</p> <p>SCORE</p> <p>PLACE</p>

Attn Competitors: REVIEW ADDITION AND REPORT ERRORS TO MANAGEMENT

Labels 1 X 2 5/8 or larger —Judges may initial labels

# READING YOUR TRAIL MAP

## *Tools that will be helpful*

\_\_\_ Highlighter pens (various colors)

\_\_\_ Pen or pencil

\_\_\_ Flashlight

\_\_\_ Clipboard

\_\_\_ Map holder for saddle

\_\_\_ Calculator

You may look at the map and think it looks hopelessly complicated! It isn't once you understand the information on it. Each map will be a little different. Study the map before the rider briefing. To get your bearings, look where base camp and the trail start are located on the map. Make notes on things you don't understand and feel free to ask questions.

*LISTEN AND PAY ATTENTION DURING THE RIDE BRIEFING!* Save the chatting for later.

The first thing to do is make sure you have the right map for your division (Novice, CP or Open). They may be different. Determine what color ribbons or "pie plate" markers you will be following for the day. Often the markings will change after lunch. Look for water stops (for your horse) shown on the map. If they are not shown, ask where they are. It is helpful to highlight these with a blue "dot." Look for obvious landmarks; they will help you keep your bearings when on the trail. There is nothing more comforting than saying to yourself (or out loud), "That's the tower they mentioned. I am on the right trail!"

If the map is a topographic map, you might want to look to see where the hills are to help pace yourself along the trail. The "squiggly" lines on the map will be closer together to represent more elevation change in that section. Mark your P&R stops on the map (use a different color); they are usually at the top of a hill. Find out what the pulse and respiration criteria are for the ride. Usually they are "16 go and 17 hold" (count for 15 seconds). Make a note of criteria on your map somewhere.

Review the timing and points designated for the trail. The points are shown on the map and correlate with the time you are expected to be there. This is usually expressed in "ride" time. Most rides use a start time of 12:00. That means, no matter what "real" time is, when you cross the start line, **your** "ride" time is 12:00. If the first marked point on the map is at 15 minutes, it would be indicated as 12:15. It is helpful to set your watch to 12:00 and push the stem in when you cross the line. Some riders wear two watches; one with real time, one with ride time.

You will notice that there is a minimum time and a maximum time to complete the ride. That means that you have 30 minutes from the minimum time to finish. During the ride, try not to be more than 15 minutes faster or slower than the time designated to be at certain points. Judges and ride management are often hurrying to get to observation locations, and their efficiency depends on your timing being accurate.

Riding time is just that, the time you are actually riding. The difference between your riding time and elapsed/total time is the time added in for P&R stops (15 minutes each) and lunch. If the pace is not listed on your map, you can figure it out yourself. It is the miles divided by the riding time. You should know how long it takes your horse (mule or pony) to walk a mile (generally 15 to 20 minutes per mile). If you can walk a mile in 20 minutes, it would equate to 3 miles per hour.

The trail master will usually tell you at the ride briefing if the trail is a dirt road, single track, rocky, or the like. It may be helpful to make those notes on your map. Obviously, it would be hard to make up time on a rocky trail, but you could do some trotting on a dirt road.

Don't be afraid to ask questions at the ride briefings. If you are a first time rider, say so, and many will be glad to help you.

Ok, you have some hints for map reading and timing. You will find what works for you.

## ***DISTANCE ONLY (“DO”)***

If you like what NATRC has to offer but aren't ready to compete yet, the DO (Distance Only) option might be just for you.

Please refer to the current NATRC Rule Book for complete rules. Basically

- DO entries follow all NATRC and ride rules except those pertaining to leg protection.
- DO entries will accrue mileage only.
- DO entries pay the same or a slightly reduced entry fee, at management's discretion.
- DO entries can choose to “DO” any of the Divisions, depending on the pace and distance they want to accomplish, as long as the horse meets age requirements of that division.
- DO entries have the option to ride DO for both horse and horsemanship or DO for horsemanship only.
- DO entries do not compete for placings, but do have to follow NATRC rules and ride under the supervision of the Veterinary judge (i.e. examinations, P&R's, etc.).
- DO entries may opt to do, or pass on, observations regarding horsemanship and/or trail ability for practice/ learning/ etc.
- DO entries may choose to do the first day only of a 2-day ride.
- DO entries receive scorecards with educational comments but are not placed.
- DO entries are not counted as a competitor for points purposes in any class, but rider & drug fees will be charged and submitted for DO entries.

# RIDE CHECKLIST

(Reprinted with permission from the NATRC Rider's Manual)

## HORSE SUPPLIES

- Hay, hay bags
- Grain & scoop
- Buckets
- Electrolytes
- Salt or range mix
- Halter & lead rope & spares
- Longe line
- Manure fork, rake
- Saddle
- Girth or cinch + spare
- Saddle pad
- Crupper, breast collar
- Bridle, reins
- Rain sheet, stable sheet (light)
- Shipping boots/ wraps
- Fly spray
- Wand/ whip
- Saddle soap

## Grooming Supplies

- Brushes (assorted)
- Clean rags, sponges
- Hoof picks
- Shampoo
- Sweat scraper

## Repair Supplies

- Duct tape
- Leather thongs
- Leather punch
- Snaps/ rings

## In Glove Box

- Coggins test papers
- Directions & map
- Health certificates
- Registration papers

## RIDER SUPPLIES

### Easy access

- Camera
- Flashlight

### Camping Supplies

- Cot, foam pad, mattress
- Hatchet, hammer
- Lantern
- Pillow, sleeping bag
- Tent, stakes
- Trash bags
- Waterproof tarp

### To Take on the Trail

- Black electrical tape
- Canteen/ water bottles
- Halter
- Helmet
- Hoof pick
- Horse's lunch
- Knife
- Lead rope
- Leather thongs
- Lip balm
- Lunch, unless delivered
- Nylon ties
- Saddle bags
- Sponge on a thong
- Watch
- Wire cutters

### Food Supplies

- Aluminum foil
- Cooking utensils
- Cooler
- Ice
- Matches or lighter
- Paper cups & plates
- Paper towels
- Plastic utensils
- Potluck item
- Sharp knife
- Snack items

### Personal Supplies

- Alarm clock
- Deodorant
- Hair brush
- Hiking boots
- Insect repellent
- Jacket/ sweater
- Jeans
- Lotion
- Makeup
- Medications
- Mud boots
- Nail clippers
- Nail file
- Pencils/ note pad
- Poison ivy/oak cream
- Rain gear
- Riding boots
- Riding pants
- Shampoo
- Shaving gear
- Shirts/ t-shirts
- Shoes
- Soap
- Spray Conditioner
- Sun-block lotion
- Tissues
- Toilet paper
- Toothbrush & paste
- Towels
- Tweezers
- Tylenol/ ibuprofen
- Underwear
- Warm hat & gloves
- Washcloths

## TRAILER SUPPLIES

- Blankets
- Fire extinguisher
- First aid kit
- Hangers
- Horse divider panels
- Lantern
- Pillows
- Propane
- Propane heater
- Quilt
- Sheets
- 6 T-posts
- T-post driver
- Trailer ties
- Trailer wheel chocks
- Wheel well covers
- Wire (extra)
- Wire ties

### Trailer/ truck check

- All items loaded
- Brakes checked
- Extra oil
- Fluids OK
- Fuel OK
- Hay
- Hitch on
- Hitch pin locked
- Horse doors secure
- Horses in and tied
- House-sitter keys
- Interior gates latched
- Jack support boards in
- Lights hooked up
- Light harness secured
- Lights checked
- Tire inflation OK
- Trailer doors locked
- Wheels unblock

# **THINGS TO DO BEFORE YOU CALL THE VETERINARIAN**

*Your vet will be better able to assess the situation if you provide the following information:*

1. Does your horse have a temperature?
2. What is the pulse rate?
3. What is the respiration rate?
4. Are there gut sounds in all four quadrants?
5. Is your horse dehydrated?
6. Where is the wound, if applicable? Is it bleeding profusely? Is there swelling? Heat?