WESTERN TRAIL, Classes 14–15

APPOINTMENTS: Tack and attire will be as described in the Western Appointments section (pg. 16).

1. This class will be judged on the performance of the horse over obstacles, with emphasis on manners, response to the rider and quality of movement. Credit will be given to horses negotiating the obstacles with style and some degree of speed, providing correctness is not sacrificed. Horses should receive credit for showing attentiveness to the obstacles and the capability of picking their own way through the course when obstacles warrant it, and willingly responding to the rider’s cues on more difficult obstacles.

2. The judge(s) must walk the course and has the right and duty to alter the course in any manner. The judge may remove or change any obstacle he deems unsafe or non-negotiable prior to the start of the class. If at any time a trail obstacle is deemed to be unsafe by the judge, it shall be repaired or removed from the course. If it cannot be repaired and horses have completed the course, the score for that obstacle shall be deducted from all previous works for that class.

3. Horses shall be penalized for any unnecessary delay while approaching or negotiating the obstacles. Horses with artificial appearance over obstacles should be penalized.

4. Horses must not be required to work on the rail. The course must be designed, however, to require each horse to show the three gaits (walk, jog/natural gait, lope) somewhere between obstacles as a part of its work, and quality of movement and cadence should be considered as part of the maneuver score. While on the line of travel between obstacles, the horse shall be balanced, carrying his head and neck in a relaxed, natural position, with the poll level with or slightly above the withers. The head should not be carried behind the vertical, giving the appearance of intimidation, or be excessively nosed out, giving a resistant appearance. Gait between obstacles shall be at the discretion of the judge.

5. A committee of one to four individuals selected by the show management will score each horse as it goes through the course. At the end of the class the committee will turn in their scores. Certain obstacles will be designated as tie breakers and shall be selected prior to the beginning of the competition.

6. The judge may ask the rider to move on after a third refusal at an obstacle.

7. Scoring will be on the basis of 0-infinity, with 70 denoting an average performance. Each obstacle will receive an obstacle score that should be added or subtracted from 70 and is subject to a penalty that should be subtracted. Each obstacle will be scored on the following basis, ranging from plus 1 ½ to minus 1 ½: -1 ½ extremely poor, -1 very poor, -½ poor, 0 correct, +½ good, +1 very good, +1 ½ excellent. Obstacle scores are to be determined and assessed independently of penalty points. Penalties should be assessed per occurrence as follows:

   A. One-half (½) Point

      (1) Each tick of log, pole, cone, plant, or any component of the obstacle.

   B. One (1) Point

      (1) Each bite of or hit of or stepping on a log, cone, plant or any component of the obstacle.
(2) Incorrect or break of gait at walk or jog for two strides or less.
(3) Both front or hind feet in a single-strided slot or space at a walk or jog.
(4) Skipping over or failing to step into required space.
(5) Split pole in lope-over.
(6) Incorrect number of strides, if specified.

C. Three (3) Point

(1) Incorrect or break of gait at walk or jog for more than 2 strides.
(2) Out of lead or break of gait at lope (except when correcting an incorrect lead).
(3) Knocking down an elevated pole, cone, barrel, plant, obstacle, or severely disturbing an obstacle.
(4) Stepping outside the confines of, falling or jumping off or out of obstacle, with designated boundaries, with one foot.

D. Five (5) Point

(1) Dropping slicker or object required to be carried on course.
(2) Each refusal, balk, or evading an obstacle by shying or backing.
(3) Letting go of gate or dropping rope gate.
(4) Use of either hand to instill fear or praise.
(5) Stepping outside the confines of, falling or jumping off or out of obstacle, with designated boundaries, with more than one foot.
(6) Blatant disobedience (including kicking out, bucking, rearing, striking).
(7) Holding saddle with either hand.

E. One (1) to Five (5) Points

Faults, which occur on the line of travel between obstacles, scored according to severity:

(1) head carried too high
(2) head carried too low (tip of ear below the withers)
(3) over-flexing or straining neck in head carriage so the nose is carried behind the vertical
(4) excessive nosing out
(5) opening mouth excessively

F. Disqualified 0 – Score

(1) Use of two hands (except for junior horses shown with hackamore or snaffle bit) or changing hands on reins. Except for junior horses shown with hackamore or snaffle bit, only one hand may be used on the reins, but it is permissible to change hands to work an obstacle.
(2) Use of romal other than as allowed in Contest Rules, Regulations, and Procedures.
(3) Performing the obstacle incorrectly or other than in specified order.
(4) No attempt to perform an obstacle.
(5) Equipment failure that delays completion of pattern.
(6) Excessively or repeatedly touching the horse on the neck to lower the head.
(7) Entering or exiting an obstacle from the incorrect side or direction.
(8) Working obstacle the incorrect direction; including overturns of more than ¼ turn.
(9) Riding outside designated boundary marker of the arena or course area.
Failure to ever demonstrate correct gait between obstacles as designated.

Failure to follow the correct line of travel between obstacles.

8. Six to fifteen obstacles will be used. One of which will be mandatory and 5 to 14 others selected from the optional list. The use of PVC for obstacles is allowed but discouraged. Horses may be asked to walk, jog/natural gait, and lope between obstacles. The gait between obstacles will be at the discretion of the trail committee (the course will be posted) and failure to follow designated gait between obstacles will result in penalty.

A. Mandatory obstacle:

Opening, passing through and closing gate. (Use a gate which will not endanger horse or rider.)

B. Optional obstacles (suggested - not limited to):

(1) Ride over at least four logs.
(2) Ride over wooden bridge.
(3) Water hazard (ditch, shallow pond or simulated, etc.).
(4) Carry or drag object from part of arena to another. (Only objects which reasonably might be carried on a trail ride may be used.)
(5) Back horse through designated obstacles or patterns.
(6) Put on and remove slicker or simulate use of.
(7) Square box (maximum 6’) to do 360 degree turn.
(8) Side pass.
(9) Mail box.
(10) Any other safe and negotiable obstacle which could reasonably be expected to be encountered on a trail ride and meets the approval of the judge may be used.

C. When setting up obstacles in the trail class, it should be kept in mind that ponies do enter this class. Obstacles which require a horse to go over them, such as jump or side pass obstacles, should be kept low enough that ponies can clear them.

D. If disrupted, the course shall be reset. In the case that an obstacle is used in combination, the obstacle cannot be reset until the contestant finishes the entire combination.

9. Use of hands: Only one hand may be used on reins and hands must not be changed, except to work with an obstacle. Hand must be around reins. One finger between reins is permitted except with romal. Two hands may be used when using a snaffle bit or bosal on a horse or pony 5 years of age or younger.

10. While horse is in motion, rider’s hands will be clear of horse and saddle.

11. Spurs or riding crop will not be used forward of the cinch.

12. Class Procedure: The trail course will be closed until the start of the class (no practice on the obstacles). The period in which the trail course will be open at the area and state show will be posted and announced. It will be the responsibility of the exhibitor to arrange to work the trail course during this open period.