

Colorado 4-H Competitive Trail Ride Events

A. Rules and Regulations

1. The Ride is open to all 4-H Horse member is in Colorado. A Leader/Adult Division is also included which is open to enrolled 4-H Leaders.
2. All youth and adults are strongly encouraged to attend and participate in a county-wide or state offered introductory clinic, and an “action clinic” or a practice ride before registering for one of the competitive trail ride events, offered either by the state 4-H office or through other organizations such as the North American Trail Riders Conference (NATRC) or the American Competitive Trail Riders Association (ACTHA). Participation in such an event will fulfill the exhibition requirement for completion of your project.
3. Please read and refer to the Colorado Competitive Trail Riding Manual for important facets of selecting a horse, evaluating your horse’s vital signs, conditioning and Training, ride strategies, “trailer guidelines”, trail use guidelines, and what to expect at a trail ride event.
4. Please read and become familiar with methods of scoring by the Veterinary Judge – see page 18 of the CTR Manual. The score sheet directly reflects the health and condition of the horse, which in turn reflects the amount of care and conditioning the horse has received in preparation for this event.
5. All 4-H members must maintain and complete the 4-H Competitive Trail Riding Conditioning Record as required by the Colorado Competitive Trail Riding program. This is in addition to your county’s record book requirements. The conditioning record must be brought with the competitor to any ride or event, as it will be examined by the ride or event manager’s part of the required paperwork at “check-in.”
6. There will be a limit to the number of riders on each Competitive Trail Ride event. The trails, the conditions, and the availability of resources will dictate the optimal number of riders. Registration is on a “first come first served” basis. Registration is not considered complete until all of the necessary forms have been approved by the ride manager.
7. Each trail ride event may have “site-specific” rules and requirements that will be include in pre-registration materials and will be required for registration to be considered “complete.”
8. 4-H/FFA members may use any member of the equine family as a project animal. All horses must be 4 years of age or older. Only mares and geldings are permitted. Nursing mares, horses that are not serviceably sound and animals that have been “nerved” are ineligible.
9. It is recommended that all horses and ponies (including horses of volunteers) be vaccinated as prescribed by owner’s personal veterinarian and meet all health requirements of the State of Colorado.

10. It is strongly recommended that all horses be shod. A farrier will not be available unless a local farrier can be secured. Any services performed shall be at the rider's expense.
11. Positively no drugs, medicines or stimulants may be administered by injection or ingested before or during the ride. If any traces of drugs are found in any animal, that animal will be disqualified. External medication may be used, but only with the Trail Ride Veterinary Judge's knowledge and permission. Any animal showing evidence of contagious disease is ineligible and to compete and, in addition, that horse and trailer will be physically isolated from the group. Upon the advice of the Veterinary Judge, the exhibitor will be directed to promptly leave the ride grounds.
12. Any medicating or treatment done by the Veterinary Judge will be at the rider's expense.
13. Use of blankets, grooming tools and sponging is permitted, but external medication, compresses, bandages, artificially heated or cooled water, and "hosing down" are forbidden. The judges have the authority to withdraw any horse at the pre-ride check or if any animal's health becomes endangered at any time during the ride. This is to protect both the horse and rider. All riders in sight of a vet check station must proceed forward.
14. Riders must remain in the saddle while the horse is moving over the course. Dismounting and resting of horse and rider is permitted providing they do not advance forward. When the competitor is in sight of the finish line, rider and mount may not stop, but must continue forward. Riders who leave the trail, intentionally or otherwise, must return to that same point to continue the ride.
15. If a rider comes to a situation he/she feels is dangerous, the rider may dismount and lead their horse through that small section of the trail. This must be reported directly to the Ride Manager at the next vet check or at the finish. This rule is established for the safety of both horses and riders. If it is abused, it may be grounds for disqualification.
16. Mileage markers will be placed every 5 miles and every mile for the last 5 miles to assist in timing. Riders must have access to a trail map. Removal of the trail markers is prohibited.
17. No smoking or littering is allowed on the trail.
18. All riders must use a saddle for the event. The type of saddle and other equipment is at the discretion of the rider – make your decision based on good horsemanship principles. It is recommended that your tack includes a breast collar. Of course, no inhumane methods or tack are to be used. The Ride officials may disqualify an entrant and/or refrain them from further riding if it is determined that his/her tack is inappropriate or in dangerous condition.
19. All riders when mounted on their horses must wear protective headgear or helmets. Please see the Colorado 4-H Horse Rulebook that defines helmet usage. Riders must wear boots or shoes that have a definite heel as viewed from the side while riding. See 4-H Competitive Trail Ride Manual for suggestions on proper attire.

20. No pets of any kind will be permitted on the ride grounds. NO DOGS – PLEASE.
21. At the mid-point check station, the “in-time” will be recorded and in 10 minutes the rider and mount will be called for a P&R (pulse and respiration) check. Riders are responsible for knowledge of all rules involved with the ride. The judges’ decisions are final.
22. Violation of any rules may result in disqualification and is at the discretion of the Ride Manager and Judges. Any rider or horse deemed “unsafe” can be stopped from competition and from further riding in the event – it is at the discretion of the ride officials.

B. Competitive Trail Ride Divisions

1. **Junior Rider** – 4-H members who have not reached his/her 14th birthday by January 1st of the current year.
2. **Senior Rider** – 4-H members who are 14 years (as of January 1st of the current year) or older and have not passed his/her 19th birthday by January 1st of the current year.
3. **Adult Division** – Screened volunteers will be accepted in the ride on a pre-determined ration of adult to 4-Hers as outlined in the event registration materials and the actual registered 4-H riders. The adult riders are included for safety and supervision along the trail and can participate in a judged division. Adults must be sponsored by a 4-H member who is entered and accepted in the ride.
4. Division A – Junior Riders
5. Division B – Senior Riders
6. Division C – Adult Riders
7. Ride Distance = 15-25 miles. Ride Time will vary depending on length of trail, terrain, and local conditions. Exact mileage and times of the ride will be announced in acceptance letter or at the pre ride meeting. One point will be deducted per minute over or under the window of time given for the specified ride time for that particular trail ride. Riders in excess of 30 minutes over or under will be disqualified.

C. Judging

1. A ride must have both a Head Veterinary Judge and Head Horsemanship Judge. Each judge’s scoring responsibilities may vary according to each judge’s expertise. The Head Veterinary Judge or the Head Horsemanship Judge or the Ride Manager may disqualify any horse and rider team for behavior deemed unsportsmanlike or abusive. If disqualified for any reason, the rider has the option of appealing to the panel of ride officials which consists of the head Veterinary Judge, the Head Horsemanship Judge, and the Ride Manager. Their decision will be final.

2. These items are only to be used as a tiebreaker if any of the horses involved in the tie actually lost points in these areas.
 - a. Pulse
 - b. Lameness
 - c. Fatigue – Mechanical
 - d. Fatigue – Metabolic
3. Awards: Placing ribbons will be awarded in each division for each category (based on Condition Scores and Horsemanship Scores). There are participation awards for all non-placing riders that compete in the ride.
4. The Ride officials will assign all contestants a number at check-in. The numbers assigned to each entrant for check-in until the concluding awards ceremony that day. No entrant will be given a score without a visible number.

D. Condition Award

1. The scoring system is based on both a subjective and objective basis by veterinary and lay judges. The judge should conduct the same exams both pre- and post- ride. Specific factors are evaluated for each horse during the pre-ride exam and again upon completion of the ride at the final exam. Specific factors are evaluated for each horse during the pre-ride exam and again upon completion of the ride at the final exam. Each horse starts with 100 points. Points are deducted at the final examination for **changes**, which signify stress of loss of condition as defined by the scoring system. The number of points deducted for a given change will be at the discretion of the judges, but will be uniform from horse to horse for the same degree of change, except as noted
2. The final examination by the judges will be one in order of finish and should be conducted exactly as the pre-ride exam. The final examinations will begin at the completion of the P&R, or as soon as possible. The final examination will be identical to the pre-ride examination and includes the following:
 - a. **Pulse:** Base Pulse = 44 beats per minute. 1 point is deducted for each 4 beats above base value. No points deducted if recovery is 44 or below.
 - b. **Respiration:** Base respiration = 24 breaths per minute. 1 point will be deducted for each 8 breaths above base value. No points will be deducted if recovery is 24 or below.
 - c. **Final pulse and respiration (P&R) rates** will be taken by teams 20 minutes after horses cross the finish line. All P&R values are to be obtained for a period of at least 30 seconds.
 - d. **Tack Area:** the tack area is examined closely and points are deducted for an increase in the severity of pre-existing tenderness or lesions, and for the appearance of new lesions or tenderness. Comments and deduction will be consistent from horse to horse.
 - e. **Legs:** the legs are examined closely and points are deducted for any physical evidence of trauma or stress on the legs that appeared or worsened during the ride.

- f. **Lameness:** Horses are trotted for lameness and deductions are made according to the table on the score sheet. Final pre-ride examinations of lameness are compared and points deducted for new or increased lameness.
- g. **Mechanical Fatigue:** Mechanical Fatigue is scored at the same time the horse is being trotted for lameness. Comparisons of the horses' animation, impulsion, willingness and coordination with the pre-ride examination will be made. Deductions are made according to the table on the score sheet.
- h. **Metabolic Fatigue:** Metabolic Fatigue is usually scored by the veterinary judge and includes comparisons of metabolic functions, as determined by skin pinch, capillary refill time, gum color, gum moisture, gut sounds, and anal tone. Deductions are made according to the table on the score sheet.
- i. **Behavior:** Horses should behave reasonably during examinations, but the judge may tolerate some degree of nervousness and uncertainty. However dangerous horses, such as "rearers", "kickers", "biters", and "strikers" will be severely penalized or may be eliminated from the ride. Behavior is judged throughout the ride and during examinations.

E. **Horsemanship & Management Award**

1. The Horsemanship Award is determined by a separate judge and is judged in a separate category. The Horsemanship Award reflects good horsemanship and the contestants' ability in trail riding. The horsemanship judge evaluates how horses and riders handle trail obstacles and trail conditions, and how the contestant rides and cares for the horse before, during and after the ride. The horsemanship judge also evaluates sportsmanship and presentation of horses to the judges. The rider is required to totally care for the horse including all grooming, tacking, care and control. Riders may have someone hold the horse during midpoint and at the end of the ride (one holder only).
2. Riders are allowed to have one horse holder during the midpoint and at the end of the ride, but this person should not be instructing the rider on what to do. A rider can help another competitor. This is good sportsmanship and a good opportunity for a more experienced club member to develop their leadership skills, by instructing the younger rider in correct grooming, tack care and horse management necessary for trail riding. Outside assistance could eliminate a rider from Horsemanship & Management Award.
3. All riders in each division will be judged for this award.
4. Horsemanship will be judged on:
 - a. Safety
 - b. Horsemanship
 - c. Organization, Neatness, and Appearance (suitable clothing and equipment)
 - d. Grooming

- e. Tack and Equipment, including condition and fit
- f. Management and care of their horse
- g. Trail manners and ability to negotiate obstacles
- h. Sportsmanship
- i. All presentations to the judges
- j. Suitability of horse to rider

The Horsemanship and Management Award category is a good test of your horsemanship knowledge, your abilities, and your etiquette as a trail rider.