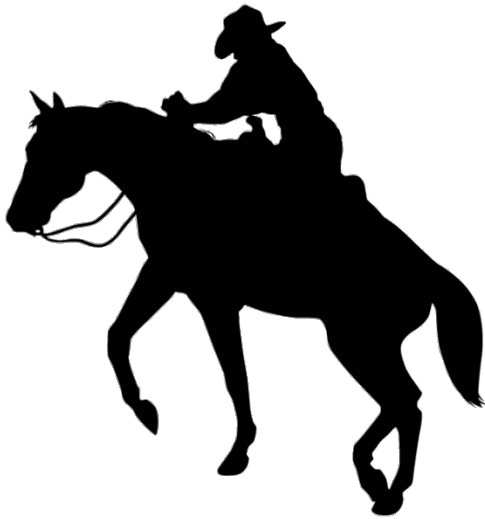


JUDGE'S MANUAL

2012 Revision



**NORTH AMERICAN
TRAIL RIDE
CONFERENCE**

JUDGE'S MANUAL

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SECTION 1. PURPOSE

- A. This manual is intended as a guideline for judges of the North American Trail Ride Conference (NATRC). At all times the standard basic objectives and concepts of NATRC must be kept in mind:
 - 1. To stimulate greater interest in the breeding and use of good horses possessed of stamina and hardiness and qualified to make good mounts for trail use.
 - 2. To demonstrate the value of type and soundness in the proper selection of horses for competitive riding.
 - 3. To learn and demonstrate the proper methods of training and conditioning horses for competitive riding.
 - 4. To encourage good horsemanship as related to trail riding.
 - 5. To demonstrate the best methods of caring for horses during and after long rides without the aid of artificial methods or stimulants.
- B. NATRC does not discriminate against any animal because of breed, type or conformation as long as the animal performs satisfactorily. Type and conformation will be reflected in the performance of a given animal.

SECTION 2. ENROLLMENT

- A. Any qualified individual may file an application to become an NATRC judge.
- B. Judges' application forms may be obtained by contacting:
**NATRC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, P.O. Box 969, Beatrice, NE 68310,
402-806-8708, natrc@natrc.org.**

SECTION 3. PREREQUISITES AND REQUIREMENTS

- A. Prerequisites:
 - 1. Must possess an interest in competitive trail riding and have a thorough understanding of the purpose of NATRC.
 - 2. Must be a member in good standing of NATRC.
 - 3. Minimum age of applicant shall be 21 years of age.
 - 4. Must have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the current NATRC rules (see NATRC Rule Book).
 - 5. Must have a thorough understanding of the Judge's, Rider's, and Management Manuals.
- B. Veterinary Judges
 - 1. Requirements
 - a. Must have a doctorate degree in veterinary medicine from a recognized college or university.
 - b. Must file an application with the NATRC office.
 - c. Must complete a test on basic NATRC rules and procedures, scoring 90% minimum.
 - d. Upon satisfactory completion of the above and with the approval of the Judges Committee, an Apprentice Judge's Card will be issued to the applicant.

2. Apprenticeship
 - a. Must be completed within three years.
 - b. The apprenticeship of a Veterinary Judge shall consist of judging four rides.
 - (1) The Applicant shall judge the Novice Division at the first and second rides as an Apprentice Judge under the supervision of an Approved NATRC Veterinary Judge.
 - (2) The Judges Committee shall review the Progress Reports and advance the applicant to Provisional status if appropriate.
 - (3) The Applicant shall judge the final two rides as a Provisional Judge.
 - c. The Apprentice Judge must obtain prior consent from the Veterinary Co-Chair of the Judges Committee, the supervising judge, and the Ride Chairperson before attending any ride he or she desires to apprentice.
 - d. The Apprentice shall not apprentice under the same supervising judge more than once.
 - e. Progress Report forms for the evaluation of an Apprentice or Provisional shall be furnished by NATRC to each Apprentice or Provisional Judge. It is the obligation of the Apprentice/ Provisional Judge to provide the forms to the supervising judge, the Horsemanship Judge, and either the Ride Chairperson or the Rules Interpreter at the time of check-in on each of the first two rides. On the final two rides the forms are provided to the Horsemanship Judge and either the Ride Chairperson or the Rules Interpreter. The forms are also available at www.natrc.org and can be mailed electronically.
 - f. It is suggested that an Apprentice Veterinary Judge avail himself or herself of an opportunity to work with management on a ride and also to compete as a rider to become better acquainted with the respective problems of these categories and to ensure a broader viewpoint when adjudicating a ride.
3. Because NATRC would like to attract new veterinary judges, veterinarians may, with the approval of the Veterinary Co-Chair, apprentice before sending in an application. Apprentices should read the Judge's Manual and Rule Book and must work with an approved NATRC Veterinary Judge when apprenticing.
4. Upon completion of the apprenticeship program to the satisfaction of the Judges Committee, the Committee shall present its recommendation to the NBOD who will vote on the issuance of an Approved Judge's Card.
5. Equivalent experience and qualifications may be accepted by the Judges Committee and the NBOD as a substitute for some of the above requirements.

C. Horsemanship Judges

1. Requirements

- a. Must be an accomplished horseman or horsewoman possessing a thorough knowledge of horses, their care and feeding, and horsemanship generally and specifically as related to the riding and training of competitive trail horses.
- b. Shall have completed at least ten NATRC Open Division rides.

- c. Shall have acquired a minimum of 100 horsemanship points in Open Division accumulated over a period of two or more years.
 - d. Shall have served as a secretary at least once for both an Approved Horsemanship Judge and an Approved Veterinary Judge.
 - e. Shall have assisted management on at least one sanctioned NATRC ride being present in planning, measuring, marking and timing of trails.
 - f. Shall be proficient at taking P&R's and scoring of same and shall have served as a P&R team member on the trail throughout at least one NATRC ride.
 - g. Shall have placed 4th or higher in annual, end-of-year placings for Open Division horse or horsemanship, regionally or nationally.
 - h. Must file a completed application with the NATRC office. The applicant shall list six references. Four of the references must be NATRC members in the applicant's own Region, two or more of these four being NATRC Approved Horsemanship Judges.
 - i. Must complete a test on basic NATRC rules and procedures scoring 90% minimum.
 - j. Upon satisfactory completion of the above and with the approval of the Judges Committee, an Apprentice Judge's Card will be issued to the applicant.
2. Apprenticeship
- a. Must be completed within three years.
 - b. The apprenticeship of a Horsemanship Judge shall consist of judging seven rides.
 - c. The first ride would be with a mentoring judge.
 - (1) Mentor judges should be experienced judges of long standing in NATRC. Judges should be approved as mentors by the Judges Committee. The mentor judges should not be the horsemanship judge for the ride being observed. He or she should be free to teach the prospective apprentice during the entire duration of the ride.
 - (2) Mentor judges and prospective judges should see as many of the basic obstacles as possible, i.e. check in and grooming, uphill, downhill, mount, backup, in and outs, trail care, tack, trailer check and check out. Discussion of safety issues should have a high priority. This may be done separately from the regular judging obstacles and should be done without interfering with the ride, management, or the regular judging. Unusual or contrived obstacles should be avoided. Observation is the key activity - not active judging.
 - (3) The first couple of obstacles should be observed and used at this time for evaluating what the apprentice is seeing. These observations will be for watching body position, hands, use of aids, balance and partnership between horse and rider. This gives the mentor judge a chance to see what direction the apprentice might need to observe at the next obstacles.
 - (4) The next couple of obstacles can be used to discuss techniques of observation, scoring methods and general philosophy of judging riders. Some discussion of the types of

obstacles that are appropriate should take place as well and how to avoid pitfalls of the wrong kind of obstacles. There is also a need to discuss how horsemanship judges support the veterinary judges and how the obstacles have different meanings to veterinary and horsemanship judges.

- (5) Discussion should take place about why one rider has a successful partnership with their horse and why another is less successful. Wording on the score cards is important to convey how the rider needs to not only be scored as positively as possible but also to tell the rider how to correct the various faults for future success.
- (6) The mentor judge should point out to the apprentice the importance of a good secretary, especially when first starting out since they can “make or break” a good judging experience. An apprentice judge needs to have an experienced secretary who will take notes that are exactly what he or she says when judging, both in field notes and on the finished cards. Reading back apprentice notes to the secretary as that person puts them in the book is a great way to clarify what is being put in the book and make sure it is accurate. Also, telling the apprentice that having a third person, if available, to keep track of numbers as a backup is very helpful since at least once every ride, there is a number mix up due to misreading of the vests.
- (7) By the second day the apprentice should try taking his/her own notes and discuss fairness in scoring as well. The mentor judge may also take notes and then compare results with the apprentice. Afterwards, comparing the notes is beneficial, especially the ones that have differences. At this time it is useful to discuss the ways to use “shorthand” on notes and translating them into more useful phrases for the cards. The scoring should be looked over to be sure that it is done properly and fairly.
- (8) After the trail work is done both mentor and apprentice should observe the check out. Work at this point should include scoring criteria for the check out. Special attention should be noted on what the veterinary judge sees on the horse’s condition and then compare this as much as possible to how the rider rode his/her horse and how that riding affected the end result of the ride. Everything should be on the riders’ cards at this point. Advice should be given on how to get the scores cards completed at the check-out and tallied properly in pencil. Now all that remains to be done is to sort the cards, break ties and ink in the final score cards for final awards.
- (9) After the ride is over, if possible, read the cards from the horsemanship judge who judged the ride and see how they compare with what the mentor and apprentice saw during the ride. This could be done after the first day if available or after the ride is completed.
- (10) If possible, the mentor and apprentice could get together at another time before or after the ride to go over a session on

saddles, bits and other equipment that are used on the typical ride. Any other topic should be approached as well that will be helpful information for the apprentice. Some questions are bound to pop up after digesting the experience.

- (11) It is recommended that the apprentice keep a journal of his/her experiences. This could be a time to reflect on thoughts with regards to the types of observations/obstacles observed. Would these be good for a distance competition? How did the observations correspond with the mentor or judge? If they differed, one might want to reflect on why that was so. Pictures taken at the time might help with these analyses. Finally, things that were confirmed, surprises, questions, and “ah ha!’s” should be noted.
 - (12) Apprentices should be encouraged when working with supervising judges to note their “style” of judging, scoring and emphasis. He/she should be encouraged to make an amalgamation of all information gathered during the apprenticeship. One should adopt what he/she feels are good techniques and reject those that wouldn’t work for him/her and formulate his/her own judging criteria. The apprentice should try to make a list of “card comments” which would be useful to help him/her formulate a plan for his own card documentation for riders competing under him/her.
 - (13) The apprentice should be encouraged to enhance his/her knowledge with any outside educational experience. These could range from riding lessons in other disciplines other than trail riding to reading about different types of riding philosophies and teaching. In this way the apprentice will know what other teachers, Western or English, may be teaching riders for a particular riding style or breed of horse. This will be useful information to better explain to a rider why we ride as we do and how it is similar or different from the other disciplines.
- d. The apprentice judge shall attend the second ride under the direct supervision of an Approved Horsemanship Judge. If observations are made and scored by the Apprentice, they shall not be used on the scorecards.
 - e. The Apprentice shall attend the next two (third and fourth) rides as an assistant to the supervising judge. Notations and scorings made by the Apprentice may be used on the scorecards with the approval of the supervising judge. At this stage in the apprenticeship, the Apprentice is not permitted to judge any division independently.
 - f. The Judges Committee shall review the Progress Reports and advance the applicant to Provisional status if appropriate.
 - g. During this process, the Apprentice will work under the supervision of the JC co-chair. Reflections of the rides, comments and scoring will be discussed in an effort to help the apprentice develop methods for conveying educational comments on the scorecards.
 - h. The Applicant shall judge the final three rides as a Provisional Judge, independently of a supervising judge. A Provisional Judge shall perform all the duties and responsibilities of an Approved Horsemanship Judge.

- i. The Apprentice Judge must obtain prior consent from the Horsemanship Co-Chair of the Judges Committee, the supervising judge, and the Ride Chairperson before attending any ride he or she desires to apprentice.
 - j. The Apprentice shall not apprentice under the same supervising judge more than once.
 - k. Progress Report forms for the evaluation of an Apprentice or Provisional Judge shall be furnished by NATRC to each Apprentice or Provisional Judge. It is the obligation of the Apprentice/Provisional Judge to provide the forms to the supervising judge, Veterinary Judge, and Ride Chairperson at the time of check-in on each of the first four rides. On the final three rides the forms are presented to the Veterinary Judge and Ride Chairperson. The forms are also available at www.natrc.org and can be mailed electronically.
3. Upon completion of the apprenticeship to the satisfaction of the Judges Committee, the Committee shall present its recommendation to the NBOD who will vote on the issuance of an Approved Judge's Card.
 4. Equivalent experience and qualifications may be accepted by the Judges Committee and the NBOD as a substitute for some of the above requirements.

D. Review

1. The name of all applicants and apprentices for Judge's cards will be published, and any NATRC member may send a letter of approval or disapproval to the Judge's Committee for consideration.
2. Judging applicants who are turned down by the Board of Directors will be furnished the opportunity to appear before the Board at the next scheduled Board meeting to discuss the reason(s) for refusal.

E. Annual Renewal of Approved Judge's Card:

1. A Judge shall be an NATRC member in good standing.
2. Within the 12-month period preceding the card's renewal date, a Veterinary Judge must have accomplished at least one of the following, and a Horsemanship Judge must have accomplished at least two of the following:
 - a. Judge a minimum of one NATRC ride.
 - b. Attend the National Convention and be present at all seminars related to judging and horse care information.
 - c. Participate in an NATRC approved regional judging seminar.
 - d. Conduct an NATRC approved introductory clinic or participate as a judge therein.
 - e. Complete a minimum of one Open or CP Division NATRC ride in competition, not Distance Only (DO).
 - f. Serve as ride chairperson, rules interpreter, P&R chair, judge's secretary, or trailmaster on at least one NATRC ride.
3. A notice of the requirements for renewal will be mailed annually to each judge. It shall be the responsibility of the judge to see to the adherence of the requirements. Non-compliance may result in deletion from the Judges List at the discretion of the Judges Committee. The

Judges Committee shall submit such recommendation to the NBOD for a final decision.

4. Equivalent experience or qualifications may be accepted by the Judges Committee as a substitute for some of the above requirements.
5. Judges who have not judged a ride in the past three years will be dropped from the active judges list. Special circumstances may be noted and a request made to remain on the active list upon written request to the Judges Committee.

F. Reinstatement of a Previously Active Judge

1. A judge with an expired/inactive card may request reinstatement.
2. The judge may be required to complete a written test or other requirements satisfactorily.
3. The Judges Committee shall advise the NBOD of its recommendation regarding a judge's reinstatement. The NBOD shall make the final decision on re-issuance of an Approved Judge's Card.

G. Renewing an Apprenticeship

Upon receipt of a request to renew an incomplete/ suspended apprenticeship, the appropriate co-chair of the Judges Committee will:

1. Send to the Judges Committee:
 - a. A copy of all recent documents sent to the committee for consideration. This should include all documents sent with the request as well as any documents received since the original suspension/ denial.
 - b. All documents that were exchanged during the original apprenticeship.
2. Request a vote from all members of the Judges Committee.
3. Compose a letter that notifies the applicant of the conditions of reinstatement or reasons for denial. This letter will be reviewed by the Executive Administrator and Executive Committee.
4. Send the letter of reinstatement or denial via USPS with a notification that the letter has been received.

H. Emergency Guest Judges:

1. The use of a Guest Judge is an emergency measure only and is not to be considered a part of the apprenticeship program. Refer to the restrictions in the NATRC Rule Book.
2. The Ride Chairperson may request an emergency Guest Judge's Card for an individual whom he/she feels is qualified to be used as an NATRC judge by sending the request and a membership application to the Judges Committee.

SECTION 4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF JUDGES

- A. All judges must have a thorough working knowledge of all NATRC rules. (See current Rule Book and manuals).
- B. Good judging depends upon a correct observance of the fine points for selecting the best trail horse according to the conditions set forth in this manual. A judge is obligated to adjudicate each class in conformity with the rules and regulations set down in the NATRC Rule Book. A judge is expected to be proficient in the correct evaluations of P&R's and other recorded data. The horsemanship judge must be able to evaluate horsemanship as it relates to the riding, feeding, and care of competitive distance trail horses.
- C. Judges are responsible for arriving in time to check horses in before dark on the day of check-in. Failure to comply is grounds for a valid complaint by the ride management against a judge.
- D. Judges should know what the riders know by reading the entry form and other instructions and by attending each night's briefing.
- E. Both Veterinary and Horsemanship Judges must be present for the preliminary check-in of all horses.
- F. Veterinary and Horsemanship Judges must inspect all horses at the completion of a ride. The practice of inspecting only those horses which are considered to be in line for award placing is not acceptable. All riders and horses deserve equal treatment.
- G. The judges shall attend the pre-ride briefing to become familiar with the layout of the trails and to hear any special instructions given to the riders. Judges are encouraged to address the riders and to answer the riders' questions. Particular emphasis should be directed towards helping Novice riders. We need to be able to communicate what we want to see, what we did see, what we think could be done to do better, in a concise manner. Be informative, not condescending. Riders don't mind point deductions as much as they mind surprises.
- H. A judge shall make evaluations of each horse, and both judges are encouraged to confer with each other during the ride. No judge should attempt to force individual preference upon another judge.
- I. A judge is not required to discuss the judging in progress with anyone except the other judge. No exhibitor has the right to inspect the scorecard of another contestant until after the final awards. However, Veterinary judges are encouraged to mention or discuss soundness or metabolic observations with the competitor if it does not interfere with the judging process. Horsemanship judges are encouraged to discuss safety concerns with competitors as soon as possible. Novice Division judges are encouraged to help explain procedures to the Novice riders. A rider may request to see one's own scorecard at such times that do not interfere with the judging.

- J. Judges, while competing or attending a ride as an observer, will refrain from making any comments about the judging in progress. Any deviation from the acceptable levels of judging procedure and quality may be reported to the Judges Committee but not discussed with any of the competitors or ride management.
- K. Safety Considerations - General
 - 1. Verify course (trail) is natural and native to the local terrain.
 - 2. Notify management of any unsafe situations in camp or on the trail.
 - 3. Err on the side of safety.
 - 4. Complete and sign liability release.
- L. Safety Considerations - Obstacles
 - 1. The use of artificial or unsafe obstacles is prohibited.
 - 2. Discuss obstacles with management.
 - 3. Notify management if you feel a selected obstacle is unsafe for the level of riders competing.
 - 4. Ensure safety of rider and equine first, versus level of difficulty of obstacle. The judge must consider the safety of an obstacle in light of the fact that there are green horses and novice riders on many rides. When deciding on an obstacle, the judge should consider if it will remain safe after a number of horses have gone through. The size of the horses and ponies entered should also be a consideration.
 - 5. Brief riders at each ride briefing to ensure they understand they are to use their own judgment when doing obstacles. If they believe the obstacle is unsafe for them or their equine, they have the option to bypass, recognizing that points will be deducted for the missed obstacle.
- M. Keep in mind that the ideal relationship between judges and riders is one of mutual trust. It begins with the judge in aiming to do best by the riders and in assuming their altruistic aims to do best by their horses.

SECTION 5. REGULATIONS GOVERNING JUDGES

- A. A judge shall not adjudicate in any division (Open, Novice or Competitive/Pleasure) in which a member of said judge's family or any horses owned by said judge is competing.
- B. A judge may not serve as a rules interpreter, chairman or other ride official for any ride in which said judge is officiating.
- C. A judge shall not discuss the purchase, sale or lease of any horse from the check-in until the final awards at a ride in which said judge is officiating.
- D. Where there is a question of horse placement, the Veterinary Judge's decision shall be final.
- E. Where there is a question of horsemanship placing, the Horsemanship Judge's decision shall be final.

- F. Failure of a judge to attend a ride to which the judge is committed to officiate will constitute grounds for revocation of his/her judge's card unless illness or accident can be proved. In any case, a ride should be notified as far as possible in advance to allow time to acquire another judge.
- G. Judges at sanctioned NATRC rides and events are serving as ambassadors of the organization as well as performing their official duties. Therefore, the Judges Committee will recommend to the NBOD a reprimand, suspension, or revocation of the Judge's Card for any judge who is found guilty of any of the following acts or offenses:
 - 1. Disrespectful, abusive or offensive language or behavior toward riders, volunteers, management or others in attendance.
 - 2. Habitual intoxication or use of illegal drugs while in attendance at a ride or any NATRC event.
 - 3. Inequity in judging, dishonesty, lack of impartiality or integrity, or dishonorable conduct while judging a ride.
 - 4. Repeated or habitual delegation of duties as a judge.
 - 5. Professional incompetence.

SECTION 6. JUDGES COMMITTEE

- A. The Judges Committee shall consist of a minimum of five NATRC approved judges in good standing. At least two of its members shall be Veterinary Judges, and at least three shall be Horsemanship Judges. There shall be two Co-Chairs: one a Veterinary Judge and one a Horsemanship Judge, both being members of the Committee. Persons other than approved judges may be appointed to the Committee at the discretion of the NBOD.
- B. The Judges Committee and its Co-Chairs shall be appointed annually by the President of NATRC and confirmed by the NBOD.
- C. The Executive Administrator shall maintain the records of judges/ judging and serve as the "clearing house" for communications with judges.
- D. Duties
 - 1. The Judges Committee, with the approval of the NBOD, shall be responsible for setting standard qualifications for recognized judges and for recommending judging guidelines.
 - 2. The Committee shall review all applications for judges' cards and shall screen each candidate.
 - 3. The Committee shall have the responsibility of sending questionnaires to selected individuals concerning the qualifications of an applicant. All questionnaires shall be returned to the appropriate Co-Chair of the Committee, and the contents shall remain confidential.
 - 4. The Committee, at its discretion, may automatically approve an applicant who has met all qualifications and requirements to proceed in the apprenticeship program. Subsequently, an Apprentice Judge's Card may be issued on the approval of the Committee.
 - 5. The Committee shall advise the NBOD of its recommendations regarding the issuance of an Approved Judge's Card for each

candidate. The NBOD shall make the final decision regarding approval of an Approved Judge's Card.

6. The Committee shall be responsible for an investigation of any judge who no longer exhibits the standards or qualifications required by NATRC and shall make a recommendation to the NBOD as to disciplinary action if needed. The NBOD shall make the final decision as to disciplinary action or the revocation of a judge's card after the Committee has found that the person no longer exhibits the required standards or qualifications.
7. On receipt of a complaint or protest that a judge has failed to judge according to the rules of the current NATRC Rule Book, the guidelines of the Judge's Manual, or the guidelines of the NBOD, the Committee shall investigate by appropriate means. If a complaint or protest is upheld, the judge so charged may have his/her judge's card revoked for one year. A second violation may constitute grounds for permanent revocation of the judge's card, at the discretion of the NBOD.
8. The Committee shall hold meetings either by phone, U.S. mail, email, or in person. The decision of a majority of the entire Committee shall be required for any action taken.

SECTION 7. JUDGING PROCEDURES—HORSE

A. INTRODUCTION TO VETERINARY JUDGING

NATRC sanctioned rides offer the ultimate opportunity for you, as a Veterinary Judge, to sharpen your clinical skills regarding lameness and athletic stress to horses. And in so doing, you will mingle with many outstanding horse people and enjoy some great recreation in many beautiful places in the country. But, as a judge, you must not approach a ride with selfish motives. NATRC trail rides are rigorous athletic contests to which the athletes (horse and rider) have devoted many weeks or months of hard preparation. Careless scoring and casual officiating have no place in the sport of NATRC competitive trail riding. Every horse, every leg, every heart requires an adequate examination and your full attention, without prejudice to horse or rider.

The athletes may push to their very limits of physical ability, risking life or serious injury. Hence, in addition to judging and scoring, the Veterinary Judge must protect the horses from abuse by exuberant riders, yet still be fair to prudent competitors and let the competition flow without undue interference and harassment.

Judges often have to contend with issues such as large numbers of horses, inclement weather, inexperienced secretaries and whatever else. To further complicate the issue, some competitors may be beginners, uneducated regarding the proper care and use of trail horses. The Veterinary Judge, in the role of referee, sheriff, humanitarian and scorekeeper, must also be educator.

The key is to remain as cool headed and as patient as possible. Try to remember a couple of mental rules when judging: 1) Don't confuse the riders and 2) Don't surprise the riders. Chat with the riders and let them know what is going on – keep them in the loop. This will save a lot of grief after a ride.

The trail ride also tests the Veterinary Judge. It's an "athletic" contest requiring skill, stamina, patience, and mental agility-not an easy task. To be a good judge, the proper mental attitude is critical. You must be "up" for the ride just as an athlete must be "up" for the competition. Any less is unfair to the many competitors that have trained hard for the ride.

Remember to enjoy yourself as a judge and gain all that is offered by the event. Share this attitude with the riders, the management, and volunteers so that NATRC Competitive Trail Rides can flaunt the positive experience that is so inherent in this sport. Our riders are our clients. We must keep them happy by being FAIR. Nothing affects a ride more than a judge's attitude. If you are having fun, they are having fun. Give the rider and the horse the benefit of the doubt. Problems always show themselves by the end of the ride, so be kind at the beginning. This is a hobby and it is recreation, so approach it in that manner.

B. EXAMINATION PROCEDURES

The Veterinary Judge must perform several specific examinations on each horse. Like a careful ritual, each exam must be a carbon copy which examines ALL horses in a like manner, constituting fairness and completeness. Every judge develops his or her own method but must be flexible in order to cooperate mutually as a team with the Horsemanship Judge. The judge should examine each horse identically and completely in a very few minutes.

The preliminary examination is usually the day before the actual riding begins. Begin by saying "hello" to the competitor! Let them know Veterinary Judges are human and take a few seconds to settle the horse also. This will save time in the long run. Don't make the exam showy; keep it subtle but complete.

Begin the typical exam by spreading the lips to make sure the age of the horse is appropriate for the class in which it is competing. Also while in the mouth, press the gums to measure capillary refill, note membrane color, moisture, and look for cuts and bruises from the bit. Glance at the corners of the mouth and under the chin. Look at both eyes and the head in general. Next move to the left side and auscultate the heart and lungs. This takes time in order for the sounds (or lack of sounds) to register, so use this time to simultaneously test skin pliability along the neck and shoulder for an approximation of hydration. Also, while listening, feel the chest and girth areas for tack rubs, calluses, lumps, bumps, etc. While the stethoscope is out, move to the flank and listen to abdominal sounds. Don't do this with your eyes closed! While bending over to listen you have an excellent opportunity to view the feet and legs before you begin to palpate. Carefully palpate the back and loin areas using varying pressure of the fingers and heel of the hands. Use a flat hand; don't dig. Now move to the rear quarter, glance at the croup, pull the tail to one side and look at the perineum. Take a couple of steps behind the horse to look at the overall symmetry of the croup, rear end and legs. Walk to the right shoulder, looking at the right side as you go. Now you are ready to begin looking at feet and legs.

You do not need to chronicle a horse's past medical history by logging each and every blemish. You must learn to quickly evaluate significant from trivia as related to the trail horse. Not all scars are important, but those that could potentially interfere with function or may become inflamed due to the rigors of the ride should be recorded.

Develop a routine for each leg that is consistent. On the front legs, examine the hoof first, then progressively work up the leg. Any abnormalities of the sole and frog can be studied now to insure suitability to the expected ride conditions. While the leg is up, moderately flex the fetlock joint and note the degree of flexion and absence or presence of pain. Palpate each structure in the lower leg, specifically: the deep and superficial flexor tendons, tendon sheath, inferior check ligament, suspensory ligament body and both branches, both sesamoid bones, fetlock joint capsule, common and lateral extensor tendons, extensor process of P1, pastern joint capsule attachments, XYZ ligaments, and medial and lateral splint bones. When running your hand over an area, consciously think of each structure, and fewer lesions will be missed.

Upper leg exams are very brief on the front legs. Few lamenesses occur there. But on the rear leg exams, begin at the top, taking care to palpate the hocks, stifle joints and quadriceps. Again, emphasize performing a set routine on each leg: left front, left rear, right rear then right front, so that a leg is never overlooked.

Have the horse trotted in-hand so that you can observe going away, coming toward you, and circling both right and left. First, look for evidence of lameness, then watch the legs for interference, paddling, etc. Get an overall impression of the horse's way of going and an idea of the horse's general attitude.

With practice the exam should take three to four minutes, which is important when 40, 50 or 60 horses must be examined in the short space of a few hours. However, don't feel the pressure of time constraints and examine the last horses less thoroughly than the first ones. Concentrate on perfecting your exam routine,

and speed will develop. During the exam you will be speaking aloud your observations for a secretary to record on the scorecard. It is perfectly acceptable for the competitor to hear your comments, but hopefully he/she will not delay the exam by asking you to elaborate on each comment. If a rider gets too chatty, ask if you may answer questions later when not so busy or, possibly, at the ride briefing so that all persons may benefit from that information.

The final exam, after the finish of the ride and prior to award presentation, is virtually identical to the preliminary exam. Other partial exams will be performed during the ride at specific times but usually are for selected problems and are much abbreviated from the complete exam. These include exams at P&R stops, lunch stops, and on "A" and "AA" rides, the evening and morning exams.

Each stage of the ride may have certain aspects that are fruitful for examinations, but many areas have too few findings to justify the time spent. It is usually better to spend time looking at the areas that are likely to demonstrate the most significant changes. Circumstances will be different for each ride situation, so prepare a plan prior to the ride in order to utilize time efficiently. For example, the evening exam is a good time to check the back and girth areas for soreness and rubs, but don't waste time looking at backs early in the ride. Feet and legs will show more symptoms after standing a few hours, late evening or first thing in the morning. If it has been a very slow ride on good footing, don't waste much time looking for non-existent leg problems.

Hearts, lungs, hydration, mucous membranes, etc., are not very productive areas at the night or morning exams unless the ride is VERY stressful; these are better checked at P&R stops during the heat of the afternoon. Manners are better evaluated when the horse is fresh, early in the ride when physical parts have not been stressed enough to register changes. On physically easy rides manners will become more significant scoring factors than on difficult rides because of less stress on soundness and condition factors. Look at way of going under saddle early in the ride when the horses are fresh and then compare to later in the ride when they are fatigued. Lameness may begin to show when fatigue develops, so do not expect to see lameness at the start of the first day. Many experienced Veterinary Judges have few scoring comments until the latter stages of the ride. They use the early stages of the ride to educate riders and develop their confidence.

Some exams are not "hands-on" exams, but are "flybys," or observations, in that you see the horses in motion but do not handle them. These allow you to critically judge the way of going, lameness, and trail ability. Planned obstacles are also points for observations, but use care to select such exams that do not create a dangerous situation or a prolonged delay yet are productive. As a Veterinary Judge, expect to glean only comments on trail ability/manners at obstacles.

To sum up the exams given at a ride: the preliminary exam (check-in); the final exam (check-out); on-trail exams at P&R stops, lunch stops, flybys, and obstacles. Two and three-day rides will feature evening and morning exams. The preliminary and final exams are extensive but not exhaustive; whereas, the partial and flyby exams are very brief and discover as much information that can be gained in a short amount of time.

C. SCORECARDS AND SCORING

Scoring is based on a system of deductions for negative performance rather than a positive response for exceptional achievement. This does not mean that positive comments should not be recorded on the scorecard. Riders appreciate these positive statements, and they help break ties between two otherwise closely paired horses. Each horse begins the ride with a total of 100 points from which the Veterinary Judge deducts faults to arrive at the final score. There are three categories: Condition 40 points; Soundness 45 points; and Trail Ability/Manners 15 points. Any penalty points that may have been assessed for rule infractions are deducted from the subtotal score on the scorecard. (See sample scorecard and notes on pages 57-59).

Consider the Suggested Scoring Guidelines on the back of the card. The point deduction system is very well thought out and allows for some degree of consistency between rides and regions. In the same vein, try using whole point deductions instead of half point deductions. This will also make separating horses quite a bit easier. Remember, the cards are worth 100 points. If we put our hands on the horses we will see the differences between these athletes. If you judge something, record it. In many ways the scorecard is like a medical record; if it wasn't written down, then the observation didn't happen.

The easiest way to complete the scorecards at final check-out is to be sure that all entries prior to final-checkout have been entered and scored. This includes the P&R scores. When you complete the final exam and the secretary has entered your notations on the card, you should immediately score your notations, take a quick look at the overall card and be finished with that horse. Your secretary and another score checker can then tally the scores, separate the cards into divisions and classes, and place the cards in order of placing for your inspection.

NATRC does not allow ties in the placings of the top six horses of each division. Breaking ties should be done in the following manner. A horse that has a better condition and soundness score should be moved ahead. If horses are still tied, an overall look at the P&R's and metabolic parameters might tell you which horse is in the better condition. However, do not work the horses again to break a tie; competition is over after the final veterinary examination. Carefully consider your notes and, if necessary, briefly discuss the situation with the Horsemanship Judge (as a trained observer) to break ties. Remember the relative significance of each category.

Indicate placings through seventh or eighth in case a mistake is later found that removes one of the horses from the ribbons.

D. CONDITION: 40 Points

Condition is the approximation of the horse's stamina or physical conditioning. The Veterinary Judge must assign an objective score to the subjective evaluations of fatigue that he or she has observed on the trail. These signs become more significant when evaluations are made serially and when the different signs collaborate to support an opinion.

Pulse and Respiration

Pulse is the most reliable and the easiest parameter to measure. In a normal and well-conditioned horse, the working pulse rate quickly returns to a diminished rate following brief rest. As fatigue develops, this recovery time takes longer. For standardization of measurements, NATRC rides allow a 10-minute rest period before measuring the recovery pulse. A recovery pulse of 12 (or less) beats in 15 seconds indicates optimum conditioning for a given level of exertion. Deductions are taken for recovery or "out" pulse rates by scoring 1 point for each beat above 12: e.g. 13 = (-1); 14 = (-2); 15 = (-3); 16 = (-4); etc. The "in" pulse is a measure of the working pulse and does not factor in scoring although it does indicate the intensity of work just prior to the P&R stop and helps to more quickly recognize latent disorders.

Respiratory rate is taken at the same time as the pulse, but interpretation is less precise. In a fatigued horse, the respiratory rate may remain elevated for some time after working, but in many cases it more likely reflects the horse's body temperature or its metabolic state. Often a recovery (out) reading exceeds the working (in) reading due to the horse's heating up while standing; air moves over the body and significantly cools the moving horse, but while the horse stands still, no cooling occurs. Respiratory counts often become a measure of the rider's efforts to cool and care for the horse and a measure of the horse's metabolic balance rather than a measure of the horse's conditioning. Yet conversely, a horse can become conditioned to hot, humid weather and subsequently display lower respiratory rates. Respiratory rates are a valid scoring parameter, but an experienced rider can significantly (and rightly) influence the values.

Therefore, the character of respiration is significant. Oxygen and CO₂ exchange is greatest with deep breaths. Hence, high recovery rates with a deep breathing pattern would indicate exhaustion or a potentially serious metabolic disturbance. On the other hand, rapid shallow breaths, would denote a horse compensating for heat stress. Regardless of the cause, respirations are scored according to the NATRC score guide. Rapid respiration requires a subjective evaluation by the Veterinary Judge and should not be faulted separately, unless correlated to other parameters that suggest a compromised condition. The character of the respiration becomes a major factoring in deciding if a horse may continue to compete when its respiratory rate exceeds the pulse (called an inversion). An inversion while tachypneic with a normal pulse may be insignificant, whereas inverted deep breathing with an elevated pulse can be critical.

Normal recovery is considered to be 9 (or fewer) breaths per 15 seconds. Refer to the latest P&R scoring guide for scoring values. At a given P&R stop, two horses may have equal point deductions but different respiratory readings; this may be considered in breaking ties.

The "hold" is another scoring consideration related to P&R's. This occurs when a horse does not recover to the safety values as announced by the Veterinary Judge at the ride briefing. For its own safety, the horse shall be held for one or two additional 10-minute increments until recovered. The initial recovery (out) reading is scored as usual, according to the P&R scoring guide. In addition, 5 points are deducted for each "hold." No additional points are deducted for the holdover values themselves. The hold time (10 or 20 minutes) is added to that day's minimum and maximum riding times, thus giving that horse additional

time to finish. If a horse has not met recovery criteria after two 10-minute holds (a total of 30 minutes recovery time including the initial P&R), the horse shall be pulled.

Only the 15 second count is recorded on the scorecards.

Avoid handling any horse during the 10 minute P&R, except for a horse in trouble.

In-camp P&R's are to be discouraged unless necessary to meet minimum requirements of 2 per day.

When using mandatory forward motion (into a P&R stop) as a judging method, the judge or management should consider carefully the terrain and distance. The person responsible for giving the instructions to the rider must be specific.

Example: "You may rest your horse, but once you pass me, you must maintain forward motion at the trot (extended trot, walk, etc.) until you reach the P&R stop."

PULSE AND RESPIRATION SCORING

HEART RATE		RESPIRATION RATE	
15 SEC	MINUS POINTS	15 SEC	MINUS POINTS
12.....	0	9.....	0
13.....	1	10-13.....	1
14.....	2	14-17.....	2
15.....	3	18-21.....	3
16.....	4	22-25.....	4
17.....	5	26 and above.....	5
18.....	6		
19.....	7		
20.....	8		
21.....	9		
22.....	10		
23.....	11		
24.....	12		
25.....	13		
26.....	14		
27.....	15		
28.....	16		
29.....	17		
30.....	18		

10 MINUTE HOLD = SCORED A TOTAL (-5) POINTS ONLY

Hold criteria at the discretion of the judge. Before the ride begins, it is the Veterinary Judge's responsibility to inform management, *riders*, and P&R teams of hold and recovery criteria.

Capillary Refill, Mucous Membranes, Hydration and Gut Sounds

Capillary refill time is a crude estimate of a horse's blood pressure and tissue perfusion. Press firmly on the gum above the teeth until the tissue is blanched. Then count the seconds after release until the color returns. Each horse may have a different baseline normal (1-2 seconds is the range for most horses). Moderate metabolic alterations may delay refill to 3 seconds, and severe changes may take 4 or more seconds. Before faulting for capillary refill, refer to the preliminary exam for a baseline, and score the change from then. An opinion corroborated by several criteria is much more significant than a single, isolated value. Deduct (0-1) point for slight change (0-1 degree), (-1-2) points for a moderate change (2 degrees), and (-2-3) points for severe changes (3 degrees).

Mucous membranes should be evaluated each time capillary refill is checked. Note the color and moisture of the gums and compare to the preliminary findings. Again, each horse has its own normal that must be recognized. Normal for most horses is pink and slightly moist. Increased demands for blood by the large muscle masses and viscera may cause the gums to appear pale initially. Then, as demands exceed the horse's ability to compensate, the tissues become locally ischemic; other color changes occur. Yellow, or jaundice, may be observed, but many times that occurs as a sequel to dietary factors. Darker red color or a brownish muddy color develops as the horse dehydrates further and fatigues. With further compromise of the metabolism--dehydration and mild alkalosis due to the loss of sodium, chloride, and potassium--the color becomes darker and may assume a blue or cyanotic color. Again, scores are relative to the change from baseline. For injected/ tacky, deduct (-1); pale/ dry (-2); dark/ toxic (pull).

Hydration may be estimated by the skin fold or skin pliability test. Pinch a fold of skin over the shoulder and allow it to return to its resting position. Estimate how many seconds passed until the skin returned flat. Normal is 0-1 seconds, mild dehydration is 2-3 seconds, severe is 4-6 seconds. Pull at 7 seconds. Recognize that some horses disembark from long trailer rides dehydrated, and that some riders present their horses for the preliminary check-in right off the trailer; therefore, re-evaluate those that show mild dehydration at check-in. Deduct for slight change (0-1), moderate change (-1-2), and severe change (-2-3). Pliability of the skin can often be compared to changes in the character of sweat and saliva. They change from watery to thick and sticky to totally absent in cases of extreme dehydration, but many times riders unintentionally mask this by sponging and by squirting water into the horse's mouth. Recognize that idiosyncrasies occur with the skin-fold test because of ambient air temperature and humidity. For example, sponging a hot horse when the air temperature has cooled may prolong the skin-fold test due to stimulation of pilo-erector muscles. Do not unfairly fault a horse for the rider's honest attempts to take proper care of his/her mount. Find collaborating signs of dehydration before scoring.

Gut sounds should be evaluated as the horse becomes fatigued. As a response to dehydration, fatigue, or shock, blood may be shunted from the viscera to the muscles or conversely may be pooled in the splanchnic vessels. This compromise of the blood supply causes anoxia to the muscles of the intestines, which slows or stops normal peristalsis. Peristalsis normally decreases during extreme exercise also, but it returns quickly with rest. Prolonged cessation for even a few hours may cause changes in the oxygen content of the bacterial flora, sequestration of fluids, etc., leading to subsequent

colic. These may often be correlated to other signs such as hydration, appetite, thirst, attitude, etc. Score strong to slight sounds (-0), prolonged silence (-1 to -2), and no sounds (-4 or Pull). If trail conditions require any further stress, the horse may have to be pulled from the ride to avoid colic.

Record and score capillary refill time, character of the mucous membranes, hydration, and gut sounds at each observation so that an overall trend can be documented. The well-conditioned horse will recover to the baseline as recorded at the check-in, while the not-so-well conditioned horse is slow to return to the baseline reading and may not return to the baseline value at all. An overall evaluation of the horse should be a part of the scoring, not just the elevated numbers. A horse that recovers quickly (numbers during the ride remain close to baseline) is obviously a better conditioned athlete than one that is slow to recover (numbers during the ride are higher than baseline). Points taken off per degree of change (ex. -1/2 or -1) depend on how many observations are taken so that a balance is kept within the category and relative to other categories such as lameness. Each day should be evaluated separately. Point deductions must be consistent within a ride but might not be hard and fast between rides.

Other Factors

Muscle trembling and fasciculation, loss of tone, etc. may be scored under the Condition category. Many other symptoms of a horse's metabolic well-being may be observed and scored as the severity warrants. Also, make comments on the scorecards related to character of manure and urine, the muscle tone (e.g. cramps or fasciculations), colic, thumps (SDF), tying up, etc.

Movement, Attitude, and Willingness

Movement, attitude and willingness (MAW) are evaluated together and are primarily your estimate of the horse's appearance of well-being: presence, ear carriage, alertness of eyes, interest in surroundings, willingness, tail carriage, springiness of gait, length of strides, stumbling, plodding. These actions are a good reflection of the condition of the horse at the time of assessment and should be collaborated with other indications of fatigue. Movement, attitude and willingness can best be compared from the pre-ride trot-out exam to the trot-out exams at the end of each day. A score of 5 would indicate the horse is bold, animated, and attentive. A score of 4 would indicate that the horse is a good mover, is attentive, but not very animated. A 3 would be for the horse that is a slow mover but is willing and attentive. A horse showing a great deal of fatigue but still willing to trot out would be scored a 2, and the horse that refuses to trot out on its own would be scored as a 1. Deduct 1 or 2 points for each degree of deterioration from the initial score.

When looking at movement, consider the breed and conformation: heavy breeds such as a draft or draft horse cross, Quarter Horses, Appaloosas or Missouri Foxtrotters do not move like Arabs or Thoroughbreds. Aspects of the MAW score are very individual to each horse.

Any symptom of distress may be used as a valid judging criterion, but the deductions should be based on the potential severity of the condition and the reliability of evaluating the signs. Award a lesser fault score (or none at all) when a particular reading seems to be isolated and not consistent with other findings. Do not significantly fault isolated and subjective findings that are not collaborated

by other signs. Likewise, those signs which are supported by objective or subjective parameters may be scored more heavily.

Cardiac Recovery Index

Veterinary judges may use the Cardiac Recovery Index (CRI) as an optional tool to help evaluate the overall status of the horse's condition. This is a useful measurement of fatigue at the end of a ride, and CRI can be a part of the end-of-day exam. Be sure that the riders are aware of the in-camp CRI so that there will be no surprises. A downside of the CRI is the one minute time frame needed to perform the procedure. If the ride has 60 horses this automatically adds 60 minutes to the total exam time. A time-saving option is to have a competent P&R person perform the CRI while you are doing a regular check.

The CRI is very simple to perform. First, take the horse's resting heart rate. Immediately following this pulse reading the horse is trotted out 125 feet and back 125 feet. If you are performing the CRI, you can use this trot-out to judge movement, attitude, and willingness. At exactly one minute from the time the horse started the trot out and back, take the heart rate again. The horse usually completes the 250-foot trot in less than one minute, so that gives you some time to examine other parameters. A horse that isn't having metabolic problems should recover to the resting heart rate taken before the 250-foot trot or preferably 4 bpm less than the starting rate.

Most of the veterinary judges scoring the CRI count one point off for each final 15-second beat above the initial heart rate according to NATRC P&R scoring guidelines. For example, a horse that started at 48 (12) and ended at 52 (13) would lose 1 point. A horse that started at 40 (10), ended at 48 (12) would lose no points. A horse that started at 52 (13), ended at 64 (16) would lose 4 points.

Try to be considerate of some of our older riders (who have bad knees or whatever), who have a hard time getting off and back on, and let the riders remain mounted if the situation warrants. Take the pulse, have the horse trot out 125 feet and back, then allow them to just stand quietly until the minute is up. As long as it's done uniformly for all the riders, it is fair.

E. SOUNDNESS: 45 Points

This segment of judging constitutes 45 points of the possible 100 and begins at the preliminary exam. Scoring, however, is done in later stages of the ride when the degree of unsoundness may be determined. If, for example, a horse checks in slightly lame, it shall be faulted under soundness. But the severity of the lameness, hence the point deduction, may not be apparent until the end of the ride. If that lameness has gotten no worse, or perhaps it's even better, the soundness deduction may be minor. However, for those that become more lame, the deduction should be more severe. This typifies the scoring method for all soundness related items: **score each soundness factor relative to the degree of detriment it causes the horse in the course of the trail ride.** Particular areas of interest in soundness evaluations are lameness, gait (way of going), injuries caused by interference or overreaching, heat and swelling in the legs or joints, muscle soreness, galls and chafes under pieces of tack, eyesight, and any other physical factors that may affect its serviceability as a trail horse.

Lameness

NATRC bases its lameness grading and scoring on the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) Lameness Scale. The AAEP adopted this Grade 1-5 system to establish a uniform method to describe lameness:

- Grade 1: Lameness is difficult to observe and is not consistently apparent, regardless of circumstances (e.g., under saddle, circling, inclines, hard surface, etc.).* -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 surface, etc.).* -10
- Grade 3: Lameness is consistently observable at a trot under all circumstances* - 11 to-15; Pull
Do not allow to start a day! Award completion only, Or Pull, if observed at end of ride.
- Grade 4: Lameness is obvious at a walk.* Pull/Disqualify
- Grade 5: Lameness produces minimal weight bearing in motion and/or at rest or a complete inability to move.* Pull/Disqualify

The criteria for pulling lame horses or allowing slightly lame horses to start a ride varies, somewhat, to the judge's discretion. However, a horse with a Grade 3 lameness should not be allowed to start a day's ride. A horse presenting with a Grade 3 lameness at the initial veterinary examination may be re-evaluated before the start of the ride at the discretion of the Veterinary Judge. A horse developing a Grade 3 lameness during the ride should be pulled. If the lameness would warrant pulling from the ride but is manifested only after the horse has finished, the judge may, at his/her discretion, allow completion points but should not place the horse in the standings. The distinction between Grade 2 and Grade 3 is not the severity of the lameness, but the consistency of the lameness.

Scoring is based on the severity of the lameness and if it becomes worse or improves during the ride. Assign a score to lameness at the final exam: Grade 1 = (-3 to-5), Grade 2 = (-6 to -10), Grade 3 = (-11 to -15), completion only, or pull, Grade 4 = pull, and Grade 5 = pull. If a Grade 4 or 5 lameness is manifested back in camp, completion points should not be awarded. Competition continues through the final veterinary exam.

"Questionable" lameness is not on this scale. Therefore, the use of "Questionable" as a lameness category should be used sparingly if at all. In other words, if a vet judge is unsure whether a horse presents with lameness, then the horse should not be penalized for that "lameness".

What constitutes proper shoeing is controversial. If shoeing is sufficiently detrimental to the horse, it will cause problems resulting in the loss of points on the horse card. Veterinary judges, therefore, should restrict their observations on shoeing to comments only.

Effective for ride year 2011, *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.*

Leg protection, such as bell boots or wraps, is still not permitted. A “sock” or wrap under a gaiter would be considered leg protection. Such protection should not be necessary if the gaiter or attachment fits properly.

Horses should be examined at a trot-out exam as they do the ride. If a horse is ridden shod, he is trotted out in shoes; if he is ridden with pads, he is trotted out in pads; if ridden in boots, he should be trotted out in boots; if he competes truly barefoot (without sole protection), he should be trotted out barefoot. If a horse does part of the ride without sole protection and part of the ride with boots, the method used for the trot out would be a judgment call.

Judges may, and are encouraged to, check for fit and adjustment as well as rubs or chafes under any boot or its attachment. We can anticipate that waiting for a rider to remove the boots may be time-consuming. Unless the rider can quickly remove the boots, the rider should step aside and allow for the next horse to start its exam. At some point during or after the second horse's exam the first, now unbooted, horse can be checked. The vet judge will have to determine what works best for him or her.

There should be no scoring advantage for horses that compete barefoot, nor should there be point deductions for the use of any type of boot or shoe. In essence, the use of sole protection throughout the ride is at the rider's discretion. This last point is important. For instance, if a rider chooses to check in or check out without boots and the horse trots out lame in front of the vet judge, that rider may not return with their horse, this time with boots, and ask for a "second chance" soundness exam. This is not within the spirit of the rule.

Scoring is dependent upon the rider making the proper choice for his or her horse.

Gait/Way of Going

Gait (way of going) is included in the soundness section and is an area for comment by the judge. Here is where many other areas correlate. The choppy moving horse often has heat and swelling in both front ankles. The horse winging on the left front leg often has heat and swelling in that ankle and an interference sore on the right front. Evaluate the horse's way of going in as many different situations as the ride allows. Much information can be gained when you contrast the fresh horse versus the tired horse; moving uphill vs. downhill vs. flat; cantering vs. trotting vs. walking. The winning horse many times has a long, easy and relaxed walk, outdistancing horses that are trotting. This category is excellent for positive comments. But as opposed to horse show judging, this desirable way of going is not a scoring or tie-breaking item. It is instead its own reward. Score your observations only for the collaborated faults, those with interference marks or apparent articular inflammation, but record the other comments for the rider's information and as possible factors for breaking ties.

Make comments under “Soundness” regarding forging, interfering, length of stride, gait coordination, stumbling and whatever observations you feel comfortable making within your own scope of knowledge. Score for freshened interference marks (-1) and for fresh interference marks (-2). Score the same for scalping and other obvious gait related problems. Penalize only those traits that detract from the safety and/or well-being of the horse or rider. Do not deduct points for breed related gaits such as single footing, fox trotting, etc., nor for natural actions like choppy, short stride, winging, paddling, etc., unless extreme and deleterious.

Injuries to the Skin/ Surface Factors

Other injuries to skin and superficial structures include cuts and abrasions caused by the horse's actions and those caused through no fault of the horse. Those caused by external factors should not be faulted unless a loss of function occurs, such as lameness or injury under a piece of tack. Those caused by the horse itself, interference and overreaching (scalping), should be faulted.

Heat and Swelling

Readily palpable heat, when not caused externally by the sun, reliably indicates inflammation, especially if detected after recent soaking in a cold stream. Therefore, an ideal time to examine for heat in the joints would be the evenings at the trailer.

To score swelling fairly you must first determine the probable cause, the extent, the loss of function, the pain associated, and the duration. Stocking up that disappears after ten minutes of walking is very minor. On the other hand, a puffed ankle with some heat, reduced flexibility, and flinching when the ankle is flexed, warrants a noticeably more serious deduction. Edema, secondary to an otherwise innocuous scratch, should not penalize a horse. Mild wind-puffs and soft swellings are an almost normal response to a rigorous day's ride, but turgid and distended joint capsules or tendon sheaths are excessive responses. One leg affected suggests more significant faults than when both are equally involved. And more points may be deducted when many criteria correlate. Heat in a joint or ligament should be scored on each leg separately: slight (-1), moderate (-2), severe (-4 or pull). Pain will be scored separately: slight (-2), moderate (-3), severe (-5 or pull). Be sure to flex the fetlock joints when checking for pain.

Fill (edema-type filling) is a minor problem in physiologically normal, especially older, horses. It can be scored, but puts a disadvantage on older trail horses. If there is pain or heat with the fill, then score: slight (-1), moderate (-1 to -2), and severe (-2 to -3). Wind-puffs (synovial swelling of joints or tendon sheaths that results from trauma, but does not cause lameness and has no heat or pain) that are present at check-in are not penalized.

Muscle Soreness

Muscles in each of the various areas of the body are subject to different stresses and subsequently may be stiff and sore from assorted causes. The areas that often are aggravated require closer examination.

The long muscles of the back that support the saddle tree may become bruised from a long ride. Back pain can be severe enough to require pulling the horse from the ride. This pain can result from ill-fitting tack, poor equitation, disorders of the horse's musculo-skeletal system, or (most likely) a combination of all. Refer to the initial examination to avoid unfairness in questionable cases and remember that mild back pain may be difficult to discern from a ticklish back. Scoring can therefore range from (-1) for very minor to (-3) for those horses that buckle under light palm pressure. The same scoring values are used for withers and girths. Score each side of the horse separately. Pull the horse if any of these parameters are severe.

Soreness of the loin and/or croup muscles calls for a closer look elsewhere. It correlates well with pain in the hocks or stifles and results from a change in the normal leg carriage. Scoring is related to severity and correlation to other findings.

The quadriceps muscle may be strained by taking downhill too fast. Deep palpation with both hands anterior to the femur will produce a definite pain response in these cases. Score relative to the severity. The Horsemanship Judge may have supplemental information regarding the rider's pacing.

Hamstring muscles may become sore when not conditioned to hill climbing, but more often the soreness here is unilateral and related to a misstep or slip while negotiating a steep hill. The horse may be obviously lame and should be scored accordingly.

Muscle trembling, fasciculations, loss of tone, etc. are not significant soundness factors but result from dehydration or fatigue. They are scored under the Condition category.

Galls and Chafes

Surface injuries created by tack can range from very minor hair rubs to such open and painful sores that the horse must be pulled from the ride. When these injuries are found at the evening exam, make a point to re-evaluate them before the start of the next day's ride. Concentrate your attention on the back, girth, chest, chin, commissures of the mouth, and under the tail if a crupper is used. Deductions should be relative to the degree of impairment caused by the lesion: minor rubs or edema only (-1), painful and edematous plaques (-2), open sores with edema (-4 or more). Caution! Do not fault those mysterious heat bumps that suddenly appear over the back and just as mysteriously disappear. They can be recognized by the pattern which is not consistent with the tack used; the bumps are tiny and not painful.

Eyesight

Eyesight is a difficult parameter to finitely evaluate in a trail situation, so penalties are rare except for obvious blindness. Most horse events require the horse to be sound of limb, wind and eyesight. In addition, a horse with limited vision traveling over rugged terrain with unfamiliar horses creates a safety dilemma. A one-eyed horse that is unsafe to himself, his rider or others should be penalized. A one-eyed horse that appears to be particularly nervous, and/or if the trail has potentially dangerous parts, should not be allowed to start. However, there are many good, one-eyed trail horses. Many veterinary judges feel a one-eyed horse does not have to be automatically penalized. Use your discretion for the situation; judge the results.

Other Physical Factors

Other areas of soundness are too numerous to mention and must be scored consistently with the degree of impairment. Old lesions that are inactive, such as splints, are not scoring factors unless they are inflamed or re-injured during the ride.

F. TRAIL ABILITY/MANNERS: 15 Points

Trail Ability/Manners for the trail horse presumes, above all, that it shall be a safe horse! Then, consideration may be given to the features that make a horse pleasant during the rigors of traversing challenging terrain.

A pleasant horse performs the task without undue harassment to or from the rider; it allows the rider to relax, subsequently see the scenery, and enjoy trail riding even more. The scoring of manners should reflect this priority. Dangerous behavior by the horse may be grounds for disqualification and removal from the ride. A fractious or unruly horse, especially at exams or P&R stops, should not be allowed to compete. It endangers the volunteer help, other competing horses, and riders.

Scores should be consistent with other factors so that relatively innocuous incidents do not cause a sound and fit horse to be placed below a well-mannered but unsound and/or unfit horse. Conversely, a dangerous incident relating to manners should penalize that horse out of the top placings. Obviously the degree of each incident is very subjective and must be scored according to the judge's viewpoint. But remember to be fair; give the benefit of doubt to the horse, knowing that truly ill-mannered horses will soon show their colors again.

The traits considered important are: standing quietly for an exam or P&R check, standing for the mount, readily responding to aids and cues, being respectful and responsive to the rider, willingly stepping through obstacles, lightly traveling at the rider's set pace, standing quietly tied to the trailer, trotting in hand willingly and safely, and socializing with other horses.

Make positive comments when possible. Scoring reflects the negative comments: head tossing, refusing obstacles, shying, jiggling, buddying with stable mates, being barn sour, being dangerous to mount, chronic whinnying, charging or rushing obstacles, crowding or kicking other horses and ride personnel, etc. Scoring includes: obvious kick at judge, rider or handler (-5 to -10); obvious bite to the same individuals (-5 to -10); fractious, unruly, dangerous (DISMISS). At the mount score the horse that stands quietly (-0); moves 1 to 2 steps or turns (-1); walks off (-2). At obstacles, attentive to trail and rider (-0); mild disobedience (-1); moderate disobedience (-2); out of control or refuses (-3). If rider passes (does not attempt) an obstacle, deduct one more point than deducted from the poorest performing horse at the same obstacle.

Remember that artificial or unsafe obstacles are prohibited. Ask yourself:

- (1) Is the obstacle safe for horse and rider?
- (2) Is it appropriate for the sport of competitive distance riding?
- (3) Does it adversely affect the flow of the ride?

Give instructions clearly and consistently to each competitor. Please remember that the Trail Ability section constitutes only 15 points of the horse card. The other 85 points relate to Soundness and Condition. Spend your "judging" time accordingly. Ride managers hire veterinary judges to use their veterinary skills and riders expect to see those skills in use.

G. GENERAL

The Veterinary Judge should score in a consistent manner so that unsound horses are not placed above horses with minor faults, such as mild dehydration, interference, slightly objectionable manners, or with a subjective observation such as slightly depressed attitude. The judge's final selection of a winner should

be the competitive trail horse that can continue to take a rider down the trail. Horses that are lame or unsound cannot do this. Be observant and score points off for evident faults and keep the recommended scoring guide in mind.

No simple formula applies to every situation; hence the title "Judge." At best this manual can only provide cues to your methodology. The blank spaces must be completed by your own process of logic based on personal experience and must, of necessity, be operated within the confines of the current NATRC Rule Book. Your individual exceptions to the rules and judging guidelines as described on the back of the horse card, regardless of how valid the reasons, create confusion for riders who compete in many rides and may deprive them of otherwise just awards.

As an aid to the process, become familiar with the Horsemanship section which follows, because it contains information to add to your awareness of the judging process.

SECTION 8. JUDGING PROCEDURES--HORSEMANSHIP

A. THE ROLE OF THE HORSEMANSHIP JUDGE

Four functions comprise the role of the Horsemanship Judge. The primary one is to evaluate horsemanship as it relates to the riding, feeding, care and safety of competitive trail horses AND in those areas to score all the competitors in order to produce a final list of placements. That final list is the product for which management hired you.

A secondary function--a subordinate role to the Veterinary Judge--is to contribute any significant observations on the horses. A third function deals with the teaching role, and the fourth is to serve the sport of NATRC by what might best be termed public relations.

Our goal in this sport should be to go from A to Z in the safest way possible with a horse that is still able to carry on tomorrow. Good horsemanship helps us achieve that goal.

The Primary Role

To do justice to the job, the judge should have as many observation sites as possible. The more observations, the less the effect of luck--as in the unfortunate situation wherein a good rider has a bad go at one out of a mere three trail observations.

Maximizing the number of observations involves numerous techniques, some to be dealt with before the ride--even by letter along with the judging contract. The first is to appeal to management for a list of all--or many--reasonable access points to the trail. Thus, if it is not possible to get ahead of the first rider, a judge can leapfrog to the next nearest site and continue in that way throughout the day. At times, an extraordinary observation spot might have to be sacrificed, but in the long run it is far better than waiting at the special site for over an hour and sacrificing a number of other observations down the trail.

An important question to ask the trailmaster is the vehicle travel time to the judging locations. As a prime example, often you learn that the arrangement for your first observation is an hour or so into the ride time but that it takes only five minutes to drive there. In such a case--depending on the number of riders--you have at least four judging choices before departing camp. You could either check tack before the starting line or judge the mount or simply observe the riders as they pass the timers. For the latter, notations on rider ability to communicate with the horse and/or to adapt to stimulating conditions can be significant. Another alternative is to observe close out of camp where body, leg, and foot position can be judged.

Another technique regarding the number of observations concerns the judge's driver. First off, since not all drivers know the precise road route, questioning the trailmaster on the matter will stimulate a detailed map briefing with the driver. Subsequently, you, the judge, must meet with the driver to arrange the next morning's getaway, meanwhile explaining your hope to hustle along throughout the ride. Communications of that kind can make or break the day for a judge.

Late in the afternoon, regardless of the previous number of observations, try for another close to camp--either within the two-mile point or at the finish line.

For judging inside the last two miles, it is important to be obscured from view because riders tend to hold back courteously when they see a judge watching others ahead on the trail. The situation can snowball into a major slowdown of forward progress and interfere with some riders' timing to the finish line.

Judging at the finish line should not involve halting the riders. If a tack check needs to be accomplished, then so be it, but it must be done cursorily out of consideration to the horse's natural motivation to get "home" to the trailer. Riders' feelings are similarly motivated and should be considered as well. Obstacles here are, therefore, inappropiate.

In general, the primary purpose for hiding at any time is to free the riders from distraction. For riders to do best with their horses--which is really what you want to see--often requires their concentration on dealing with their horses and on their own balance and focus on the trail.

A contrary purpose for hiding would be to catch riders at fault. A negative aim of that kind indicates a poor approach to the philosophies of NATRC.

To avoid the situation of riders going off course and missing a judging site, the judge must be sure to carry marking ribbon and add what is necessary. If a substantial number of riders miss the trail either from poor markings or a disorienting map, the judge will be faced with the need to throw out all the notations at that site.

Unquestionably, if you, the judge, see or hear riders off trail, you must see to it that they are called back. To do otherwise is not reasonable.

Increasing the number of observations also involves noting as much as possible on each rider within an observation site. Frequently the rider shows both faults and attributes in a pass-by. Faults, of course, directly affect final placement. Noting attributes, however, has desirable, multiple purposes. It tells riders where or how they performed well and adds a measure of instruction plus encouragement for the future. It also aids the judge in recalling a mental picture of each rider. The memory helps the judge in verifying the scorecard's notations when perusing the cards at the end of each day. The mental picture can also aid the judge in breaking ties. Assuredly, outstanding positive comments on the cards influence the breaking of ties.

All judges must attend the final check and participate in the judging. The final inspection frequently reveals new information concerning horsemanship. For example, the Veterinary Judge might find a new withers or girth soreness related to the tack and/or its adjustment. The Horsemanship Judge might observe an aspect of a rider's handling that is markedly different from the check-in. An example would be a first-time rider's improvement in trotting the horse. Not only would the judge want to note that on the card, but the rider can thereby receive positive reinforcement for the learning process. Also, for the purposes of Completion Only (CO), pulling or disqualification, the horse and rider are considered a team, and the verdict for the horse applies to the rider as well.

The Secondary Role

Frequently, the Horsemanship Judge functions as a subordinate to the Veterinary Judge chiefly for noting unusual horse manners on the trail. Any significant observations and the trail circumstances need to be discussed with the Veterinary Judge for possible use on the horse scorecards.

How extensively to judge manners will depend on the Veterinary Judge's wishes. Veterinary Judges who observe primarily at P&R stops usually look

forward to receiving numerous trail comments covering many aspects of manners--positive and negative. Additional observations by the Horsemanship Judge might also include repeated forging, frequent stumbling, signs of distress, etc.

Veterinary Judges who are strongly trail-oriented and use numerous observations for judging may neither want nor need more comments from the Horsemanship Judge--with the exception of serious vices such as bucking, rearing, kicking, and instances where a horse endangers the rider or others.

In any case, the time to establish the judging plan is at the check-in with both judges conferring. The Horsemanship Judge can ask the Veterinary Judge to report anything significant on the part of the riders that might occur in the course of the ride. Similarly, the Veterinary Judge might state his or her wishes regarding the horses. The pair can then decide on a plan--general or specific. Their concurrence is a form of team judging which can add to the thoroughness of judging horses and riders.

Neither judge is obligated by NATRC rules to use the information submitted by the other. If it is used, it's helpful to identify it with the other judge's initials. If either judge encounters a horse exhibiting dangerous behavior toward ride personnel, the information on the safety risk must be passed on to the other.

The Teaching Role

Teaching is not a judge's required duty, but Novice Division riders often expect the function. On the other hand, judges who assume a teaching role might offend some experienced riders. The subject is one of many dilemmas facing judges.

Directly teaching new riders depends first on their need for safety instructions at the instant and secondly on their personal requests to be taught. Whether or not the latter is forthcoming, the judge should project a demeanor of openness to questions and respond as time and circumstances permit.

Instructions can be especially meaningful when delivered by the judge at briefings. Scorecard comments accompanied by explanations and recommendations give riders a reference source for future rides.

For competitors in any sport, learning comes largely from within by experiencing what works best and what does not. However, a good teacher expedites the process. In NATRC, a judge's helpful remarks can also stimulate riders to pursue further in the sport.

The Public Relations Role

In addition to good judging, serving NATRC can be accomplished in easy person-to-person ways at a ride. For bystanders, explain about the sport as much as time allows. The bystanders might be parents of juniors, prospective NATRC riders, the ride's property owners--to whom you offer respect and gratitude--or park personnel to whom you can also remark on the sport's wholesomeness for taxpayers. For Ride Management, understanding the stresses of their work efforts and relating to them accordingly is important to their weekend's enjoyment.

The ideal relationship between judge and riders is one of mutual trust. It begins with you by trusting their integrity and their aims to do best by their horses. Overlook personality traits that appear negative. A frowning rider might

merely be concentrating. A rider who looks bored might instead be tired or even ill. A face that rarely shows a smile could be simply structured that way rather than reflecting a poor spirit. The rider's trust in a judge comes ultimately from the quality of judging. In the meantime, however, the judge's attitude and demeanor hold sway.

There is a prerequisite to the appropriate attitude. It is that you want the rider--all the riders--to do well. Given that feeling, you will automatically project whatever is appropriate in the way of being friendly, open, caring, and understanding of rider concerns. At the same time, you have been hired to handle a job, and in that regard your demeanor is also professional.

After the awards ceremony, listen willingly to questions or complaints regarding the judging. Take no affront by the latter. Instead, think with care before responding. Try first to identify with the rider's point of view, then analyze the complaint for its possible merits. In other words, try to view the situation through the "lens of the rider". A judge who has kept the feeling of a campaigning rider will be alert to riders' concerns such as poor maps, markings, timing, etc. and will take those matters into consideration when warranted. If you still find no errors or flaws in your judging, appeal to the rider's mind by presenting your own point of view and the reasoning that led to the judgment call in question.

An easygoing, rational, person-to-person exchange of views can have a good effect on both judge and rider--with each coming away having learned something.

B. SCORECARDS AND SCORING

NATRC bases its scoring system on the positive assumption that each rider's horsemanship quality is 100%; thus, for practical purposes, each rider is allotted 100 points at the start of the competition. No rider can gain or lose more than that amount by the conclusion of the event.

The NATRC scorecard shows further limits in scoring. Each of the horsemanship card's three sections has an assigned percentage value which translates into the maximum number of points that a judge can deduct or award per section. For example, if a rider's equitation is fault-free, the score for that section is 50 points regardless of any number of plus marks. Correspondingly, if a rider's equitation is faulted two points, the equitation score is 48, no matter how many plus marks appear in that category.

The other two sections of the scorecard group several categories of horsemanship. A judge should consider score limitations for each of the categories. For example, the 20% section includes three categories (grooming, in-hand presentation, and tack/equipment), each with a relative value of less than 7%. If a judge deducts more than seven points for any one of those categories, the judge has over-weighted the category.

Other than the percentage allotments, NATRC does not dictate a set of scores for judging horsemanship. Judges are expected to evaluate a rider's horsemanship--merits and faults--with an eye to the circumstances at the particular time and place, including the horse/rider interaction.

In general however, the scoring of a fault depends on the fault's magnitude. For example, following a horse too closely should be faulted under Trail Safety & Courtesy in an amount relative to the closeness. Following nose-to-tail should be scored more heavily than when the distance is slightly less than the standard one-horse length - and most heavily on a hazardous section of trail.

Additionally, the number values of all fault scores should be relative to one another on the rider's scorecard. An example of poor relative scoring on a ride would be this set of scores: bot eggs on left flank (-2); breast collar too high and tight (-1/2); unsecured, spilled water bucket at horse's feet (-1); body sway on descent (-3). Not one of those scores is relative in degree of importance to any of the others.

Scorecard Phrasing

Scorecard comments reflect the brief snapshots we have of riders on the trail and impart our views on the capabilities and limitations of the riders. Riders use the cards to help them achieve these goals. It is through our expertise that we influence riders to hone their understandings and abilities to achieve their goals for themselves and their horses. Scorecard comments should help the rider know what to do to better help the horse.

These comments communicate to the rider in what way an aspect of horsemanship was faulted or praised. Although it may sometimes be adequate to write "Good," try to note specifically what was "good." Ex: Good cueing for in-hand trot."

An example of inadequate communication would be to write "Poor (-2)." Not only will the rider learn nothing from the comment, but also the judge might be revealing deficiencies in workmanship and horsemanship knowledge.

An NATRC judge needs to have a grip on what made the performance poor and how it might be corrected. Think about what's wrong, why it's wrong, and how to fix it. Understanding the importance of communicating matters clearly on the scorecard will in turn stimulate the judge to sharpen observation skills.

Comments such as "horse moved," "head tossing," "horse refused" are horse comments, not rider comments. We should be looking at what the rider is doing or how the rider is asking to cause the action of the horse. A more appropriate comment might be "Jerked rein causing horse to move."

Saying, "Allowed horse to rush" implies the rider was giving permission to the horse to rush. It would be better to say, "Need more rein control to keep horse from rushing up hill."

Trail Observations and Notations

Noting as much as possible on each rider at each observation site adds to thoroughness in judging. If the judge is quick and observant, the judging itself is not difficult. Recording the observations, however, can be fraught with problems without a good system.

Some judges dictate to their secretaries and find it works well for them, particularly for keeping their eyes on each horse and rider. However, such a system relies heavily on several factors: the abilities of the recording secretary, the spacing of the riders in the scene, and the judge's ability to articulate concisely. Various circumstances such as heavy rain and interfering sounds (strong winds, rushing creeks, nearby road traffic) can further complicate dictations. Other judges take their own notes on the trail and find it advantageous for concentration. The technique to make the system work best utilizes a list of abbreviations of the judge's own devising. The abbreviations become like one's native tongue--for example, GDP for "good downhill position."

The judge gives a copy of the abbreviations (previously alphabetized and typewritten) with their definitions to the secretary. During the ride, the secretary transcribes the Horsemanship Judge's trail notations to the scorecards. (Notations on the horses are handled separately; the secretary writes them on a sheet of paper for possible use by the Veterinary Judge.)

The list of abbreviations can be extensive, *but for purposes of illustration*, the following list applies to the scene described after it:

- BH: Behind horse's action
- F: Following too closely (Secretary: Put under Trail Safety & Courtesy.)
- G: Good
- GDP: Good downhill position
- GUP: Good uphill position
- H: Horse
- HT: Head Tossing (Secretary: for vet's use only.)
- LB: Leaning back on descent
- OA: Overanxious (Secretary: for vet's use only.)
- OC: Over controlling
- POB: Put off balance by horse's action
- RTL: Reins too long for best/ ready control
- TFF: Too far forward for best balance
- XL: Excellent

Wording on the scorecard itself could be expanded. For example, BH could be expanded to, "*Behind horse's action (-2)*, makes it difficult for horse to maintain best balance. Can use mane to help maintain balance."

POB could be expanded to, "*Put off balance by action of horse (-3)*, need to be alert to trail and ready/ prepared for horse's action. Can use mane to help maintain balance."

LB could be expanded to, "*Leaning back on descent (-2)*, your weight tends to interfere with working of horse's hindquarters."

TFF might be worded, "*Hip angle too closed (-2)*, torso folded forward causes you to be off balance forward; open hip angle for better balance and lightness."

F, "*Following too closely*," is a safety issue and deserves a harsh score. A kick from the horse in front can break a leg of the horse or rider behind.

Visualize a scene where the trail comes down a slippery bank on the right, crosses a fast-running creek with boulders, then rises up a steep slope with a sharp turn midway. (Ample water has been available at many nearby water crossings, and this confined spot does not lend itself well to stopping.)

Rider #1 on the descent is leaning back and over controlling the horse to the extent that the horse's movement is awkward and unbalanced. In the creek, both horse and rider look good, but on the climb-out, the rider is behind the horse's action. A loose rein permits the horse to miss the tricky turn momentarily as the horse takes a few strides in the underbrush above it.

*Judge's notes: LB & OC (H unbalanced) (-).
G in creek. BH & poor RC on climb (-).*

Rider #2 meanwhile enters with a good downhill position. At the creek, the rider gives the horse its head to choose the route - poorly, for the horse slips on a boulder and stumbles briefly. Both proceed well on the climb.

*Judge's notes: GDP. Poor creek route (-).
(Vet:H slipped, stumbled)
G on climb.*

Rider #3, less than a horse length behind #2, descends by leaning too far forward for best balance. The horse hits the level hard, putting the rider far off balance. The rider regains poise, chooses a good route for the crossing, and both horse and rider make the climb smoothly.

*Judge's notes: F (-).
TFF on descent (-). POB (-).
G in creek. XL on climb (+).*

Rider #4 approaches on a whinnying horse, and you observe that indeed the horse is overanxious. The rider appears to be dealing with the animal as well as possible - without hostility - and on the descent, the rider's balance is excellent. In the creek crossing, the rider's hands are light while maintaining appropriate control. On the climb-out, the horse throws its head violently, but the alert rider readily ducks the near blow and remains balanced to continue on well.

*Judge's notes: OK with H problems. XL on descent (+)
Creek: G RC, Light hands. (Vet: OA, HT)
Climb: GUP. Kept balance (+++).*

The notation "(+++)" would be this judge's expression of superior quality on an aspect of horsemanship.

The notes on horses #2 and #4 need to be discussed with the Veterinary Judge. The problem with #2 is partly the rider's fault for assuming the horse would pick its way carefully. Horse #4 appeared in the judge's view to be temperamentally ill-mannered--even a jeopardy to the rider.

Avoiding Errors

At each judging spot, both the secretary and judge must write the riders' numbers in the order observed since it is not uncommon to record a wrong number. Bibs are often faintly printed or otherwise difficult to read. Therefore, having the driver also list the numbers can be a crucial third check--no matter where the driver parks.

While en route to the next site, the judge and secretary compare their number lists. The judge should then--if possible--read over the trail notes for clarity and accuracy and make sure the secretary understands how and where they are to be recorded on the cards.

At any one judging site, a few of the notations might refer to both equitation and trail care--perhaps to trail safety & courtesy also. Since most trail observations deal with equitation, the judge needs to explain to the secretary that the non-equitation comments are to be written in another category on the scorecards.

All trail notations must be titled as to the location of the observation—for example, “Point D.” Thus, not only would the equitation comments be titled “Point D,” so would comments for trail care and trail safety & courtesy if noted at that location. The primary purpose of titling is for the rider's information. From the judge's standpoint, the purpose is to stimulate the memory of the rider in the scene partly as a check on the secretary's recording on the card. If something doesn't ring true, the judge can refer back to the day's trail notes for verification.

A useful aid to the judge's picture of a rider is to write a few descriptive words on each horse and rider at the time of check-in. The brief notations can be squeezed into the spaces on the judge's copy of the entry list. The descriptions are also helpful on the trail when a passing rider's number is obscured.

By the end of each day, including the check-in day, the judge should read each scorecard to assure that all the observations have been recorded properly, phrased correctly and scored relative to the degree of fault.

For tallying scores after the final inspection, a systematic procedure must be used to affirm accuracy and to produce the list of placements quickly for the awards ceremony. The production line for the scorecards can be handled well as follows.

After reading the notations that had not been read earlier, the judge passes the card to the secretary for the arithmetic work. The secretary pencils the scores for each section near the score column and does the same for the total score. The secretary then passes the card to a checker—if available—who repeats the process for verification. And so it goes for each card. The cards are sorted into divisions and classes in this process in order of high to low score.

The judge then takes all the cards that the checkers have finished. To confirm the total score on each card, the judge adds all the minute fault scores on the card overall and subtracts the sum from 100. If the total score matches that of the checker, the judge pens in the score noted for each section and the total score. After thumbing through the cards to check the order and to be alert for ties, the judge finally pens in the placements.

For the final tallying process, concentration is vital to the production of an accurate list of placements. Throughout the ride, the judge needs to keep attuned to the books to assure accuracy.

The Use of Plus and Minus Marks

Pluses and minuses on the scorecards serve a number of purposes. One is for communicating to a new rider that something was good rather than bad—for example, “light and balanced at trot (+)” and “placed horse crosswise on hill to rest (+).”

Plus marks can be used frequently to abbreviate comments. An example is “hands (+), legs (+), seat (+).” More importantly, their use emphasizes quality in performance: “Balanced and light (++)” is the kind of communication that stands out on a scorecard, speaking well to the rider and to the judge's recall of the scene when perusing the card. Such a comment also contributes highly to breaking a tie.

Often a fault is so slight that in the judge's view it does not require a numerical value, but it warrants a minus sign: “Recommend a stouter tie rope (-).”

Breaking Ties

Often a brief comparison of the tying scorecards serves readily to break a tie--for example, when one card shows several comments about the rider's excellence, but the other does not. If both cards appear equal in their notations of excellence, but one shows more of them for the major category of equitation--or a higher overall score in equitation--the judge can base the tie-break on that.

Similarly, if an observation was especially meaningful, the comment or score for it can break the tie with justification. Any outstanding comment, positive or negative, on either card should influence the judge in breaking a tie--for example, "good attitude with nervous horse" versus "questionable attitude with young horse."

For ties that are difficult to break, the judge needs to scrutinize the cards to weigh the significance of each comment. The judge can do best in this process by recalling the mental picture of both riders. For any difficult tie, a consultation with the Veterinary Judge might resolve the matter by way of additional information or by that observer's valuable judgment.

Methodically counting all the plus and minus signs as a means to break ties is used by some judges; however, the routine would be better applied as a last resort since it is a rigid one without regard to where the positives or negatives appear on the card. Breaking ties is always resolvable with a small amount of effort and mere minutes of time without resorting to the poor practice of altering scores.

C. RIDE BRIEFINGS AND MEETINGS

Attending the ride meetings is part of the judging job and essential to its quality, especially for the first briefing. As a judge, consider the main purposes from your standpoint:

1. To learn firsthand what the riders hear from management regarding special camp and ride rules, property owners' requests, and the like.
2. To make notations on your map of the trailmaster's instructions to riders about trail markings, route, water sources, potential hazards along the course, and other details of the next day's ride as the riders hear them.
3. To announce to the riders some of your judging plans and expectations.

Not attending a briefing might mean missing some information indispensable to the judging with the result that you fault riders wrongly on some point. A further consequence could be a formal complaint or protest against the ride.

For your announcements to the riders, **include items of special concern to you wherein you differ from most judges or from your own previous practices. Riders don't mind deductions as much as they mind surprises.** Such matters might run anywhere from specifics of tack and equipment to how you ribbon observations. (See the sections on scorecard categories for other possible differences worth mentioning at briefings.)

Partly to serve your own purposes on the job, point out to the riders that the following interfere with judging out on the trail and may be faulted: bib numbers not clearly visible, riding with others in tight bunches, and pacing far ahead or way behind management's suggested schedule.

How much horsemanship you go into depends mainly on which division you are judging and/or the number of new riders.

Explain that good trail equitation aims at helping the horse carry the rider over many miles for long hours and that you will, therefore, be judging balance and the quality of lightness in riding form appropriate for this equine sport (distance riding). In a few words, describe your recommendations for position on the ascent, descent, level walk, and trot.

For concerns in stabling, briefly state the safety standards for rope length, knot, and container security and the importance of making the horse's tie area free of potential hazards such as tack and camping gear.

If you plan on judging the morning mount, inform new riders that although they are to lead in-hand to the starting line, they are permitted to ride any time before the scheduled start of the first day. Mention that this will enable them to practice mounting, make tack adjustments, and to warm up their horses.

Tell the riders that you will stay awhile after the briefing to answer individual questions. If the hour is not late, you might elect to hold a short session for new or novice riders after the general meeting, thus postponing until then the discussion of equitation, stabling, and other subjects to guide them.

The second night's briefing is an appropriate time to address the subject of in-hand presentation in order to prepare new riders for the important final inspection. A practical reason for not discussing it at the first briefing is that late arrivals will not yet have checked in with their horses.

You can also tell the riders where you observed them during the day. **Never, however, speak of your observations as if they were "I gotcha's."** **Putting things in that manner is exceedingly poor public relations and is counter to the purposes of NATRC.** Instead, you can speak instructively on how to improve performance.

The final meeting, the awards ceremony, offers a number of opportunities. First off, publicly thank your hard-working secretary and your driver by name. Tell the riders precisely where your judging sites were as an aid to their interpretation of the scorecards. If you used any abbreviations, clarify their meaning. Mention that although the scorecard arithmetic was triple-checked, errors sometimes occur and that any error must be rectified--the sooner the better. Emphasize that if anyone finds a mistake, it should be brought to your attention immediately so that trophies and ribbons can be exchanged, if necessary, before breaking camp.

Announce that you will remain awhile after awards to answer individual questions about the scorecards and to discuss any aspect of your judging or other concerns. Just as riders learn from a variety of judges, judges too can profit from riders' comments and questions.

How you present yourself to those assembled--which includes not only riders but also workers, family members, and prospective competitors--may affect the overall tone of a ride and the sport of NATRC riding in general. Aiming to do well for the riders and their horses is a prerequisite for a good judging philosophy, and if your attitude projects that honestly, the effect can be positive.

D. IN-HAND PRESENTATION

At the time of greeting the rider for the pre-ride inspection, the judge should verify the scorecard information since riders often change divisions, classes, and/or horses after mailing their entry forms.

Many riders, newcomers and old-timers alike, feel apprehensive at the check-in partly because the competition begins then. A judge's friendly or open demeanor can ease the feeling. However, the judge must be careful not to distract the rider's attention from the horse or the Veterinary Judge's examination.

To new riders unsure about the routine or what is expected of them, the Horsemanship Judge can casually offer instructions particularly on matters of safety. For example, if the rider stands with his or her back to the horse and the horse is on a loose lead, the judge can quietly tell the rider to face the horse and hold the rope near the snap. For the sake of the competition, the judge would still note the faults on the scorecard.

The handler should keep both hands on the rope during the close, hands-on inspection, one just below the snap (or stud chain) for ready control and the other holding the remainder of the rope. For the latter, the safe, standard method is with the rope folded in figure eights to ensure that it will not bind the hand if the horse rears or bolts. Holding the lead in coiled loops is discussed later under longeing.

Gripping the halter's cheek strap with the hand that holds the remainder of the rope is acceptable if done in such a way the fingers won't get trapped if the horse jumps.

While checking grooming and tack rubs, the judge should avoid as much as possible any interference with the Veterinary Judge's hands-on examination--for example, by observing on the opposite side and by not touching the horse during the palpation of the back. Conversely, if a nervous horse persists in moving away from the Veterinary Judge, the Horsemanship Judge can assist by gently straight-arming from the other side.

Unless a competitor is obviously the cause for a horse acting up, faulting the horsemanship may be out of the question. The judge can instead evaluate how the handler deals with the problem--if indeed dealing is an option. For misbehavior like biting or kicking, the handler should discipline instantly provided the safety of others would not be jeopardized in that moment. The judge must not fault for not disciplining minutes later since in all probability the horse will not make the mental connection with the misbehavior.

Among the safety standards for the presentation is the handler's position which should be to the side of the horse's head, not directly in front of it. To allow the Veterinary Judge ample space for examining the eyes, nose, and mouth, the competitor may move to the other side. However, for the inspection of the hind legs, the handler needs to be on the same side as the Veterinary Judge in order to observe clearly and to be ready for corrective action if the horse kicks or seriously threatens.

Since each competitor should have the opportunity to trot the horse well, the handler should have the prerogative to lead on whichever side of the horse he or she chooses. If the Horsemanship Judge wants to observe handling skills on both sides of the horse, a time other than for the Veterinary Judge's observation should be used.

For safety and best communication with the horse in the trot-out, the handler should lead at the side of the horse's head. Approximately 18" of line between the halter ring and first hand will allow the horse enough freedom of motion of the head to move freely. More slack could mean excessive freedom, the rope too loose for ready control. From a different standpoint, little or no slack may be essential to control an anxious horse. In that instance, the judge must not fault

the tight lead if the competitor's method is clearly one of practical expediency for control. The situation is typical of a judgment call wherein what is appropriate overrides the customary standard.

For turns involving a change in direction, turning the horse away from oneself, usually to the right, is a safety precaution to minimize the possibility of getting stepped on. For many handlers, however, turning the horse around oneself--usually to the left--is easier and can be safer with some horses, provided the handler stretches the arm to put the horse out to the side and thus avoids being crowded. Nevertheless, if the handler completes the turn with his/her back to the horse, safety is jeopardized and worth faulting regardless of the smoothness of the horse's turn.

Some Veterinary Judges prefer to observe the trot on the longe line, and occasionally the limitations of space require longeing. The rules allow the rider to either longe or trot their horse in-hand for the circling phase. For judging horsemanship, the chief consideration is how well the competitor accomplishes the job to the Veterinary Judge's satisfaction. Most of the safety and smoothness in handling correlate with skills in cueing and controlling the horse rather than to matters such as precisely how the rope is held.

Among the latter is whether or not the handler uses one or two hands on the rope for longeing. There are advantages and disadvantages to either method. Although two hands on the lead will not necessarily stop a horse intent on running off, the method could result in some additional control should the horse shy or momentarily bolt. With a standard 9' or 10' lead rope, however, two hands may be disadvantageous. First, the radius of the horse's circle is further shortened, limiting the freedom of movement and possibly jeopardizing soundness. Also, if distance between the hands is close, the handler's own maneuverability can be compromised by virtue of the arms' being bunched together which lessens upper body strength and affects the handler's balance. It is recommended to use adequate length of lead for the horse which may vary depending of the size of the horse and its stride at the trot. The size of the circle can be enlarged by circling with the horse rather than standing still while the horse circles around the rider.

An overhand knot (single knot) or a stop of some kind at the end of the longe line adds a measure of safety to a short rope, but the knot must not be allowed to dangle lest it swing around to catch on the rope above the hand.

Holding the remainder of a long longe line in coils is a controversial subject. Some professionals use the technique in order to readily play out the loops one at a time and to bring the line back quickly. To judge such a method requires observing the overall skill in handling the horse and--vitaly related--whether or not the rope could impinge on the fingers from a sudden action by the horse.

It is acceptable for the handler to carry a whip during the in-hand presentation. It should be judged on whether or not it is used appropriately, i.e. as an extension of the arm, and that it does not get in the horse's way.

Once again, a priority in judging the handler is to look for the accomplishment of a trot-out that fits the Veterinary Judge's need to observe the horse.

Whether the handler longes or leads the horse in-hand, the cause for a horse not trotting out willingly may be one or a combination of the following: condition, soundness, manners, or poor or inadequate handling. It is up to the judge to determine if horsemanship has played a role in the presentation.

E. GROOMING

Ideally, a rider would present a clean and well-brushed horse at check-in. However, the judge should make some allowances for conditions like dusty trailer travel or the weather in camp and/or at the rider's home base.

Dirt or dried sweat around the eyes and on areas where the tack touches, feet packed with dirt acquired before lining up for the veterinary inspection, and nostrils caked with dirt should be faulted in amounts relative to the degree of neglect.

Taking off points for a little soil in the nostrils, a bit of fresh manure on the hocks, a small splash of recently acquired mud and the like may be unreasonable. Also, a little scurfiness is not unnatural.

If the judge is knowledgeable in farrier science, recommendations for correcting poor shoeing may be made directly to the rider (rather than on the scorecard), but the rider must not be scored down for the quality of the shoeing. The judge is free, however, to assign a negative score for old shoes or overgrown hooves that clearly indicate neglect.

Clipping or shaving any part of the horse is the rider's choice and not to be scored since the practice may be based on the home stable accommodations, weather, and/or horse showing.

The use of insect repellent is the rider's prerogative unless an announcement has been made to the contrary. If the amount is grossly excessive, the judge should advise the rider partly as a courtesy to the Veterinary Judge. If subsequent heavy applications result in gunk, the horse is probably not well served either, and faulting would be justified.

Unless the Veterinary Judge has instructed the riders to present their horses dry at the end of the day's ride, the judge should not fault a rider for presenting a horse with wet legs. Many riders feel that keeping the legs wet diminishes residual heat and helps to minimize later filling. The practice must not be looked upon as a misguided attempt to deceive.

For the final inspection, the quality of grooming should not be emphasized for a number of reasons. First, the time allocated after crossing the finish line does not allow for perfection with many riders. Next, the weather and the horse's condition are factors that might limit the amount of sponging. (See section on Trail Care.) Additionally, some individuals feel that the horse needs rest more than grooming, especially if the ride's timing caused the rider to bring the horse in hot. In the latter case, the horse may need to be cooled down by hand-walking slowly at intervals before the inspection. If the rider deems that necessary, then the time for grooming is further limited. In any case, the rider should attend to minimal grooming such as picking out the feet and cleaning the face, eyes, and between the legs. Generally, faulting for laxity in those areas is reasonable. Praising for a well-groomed horse in good condition is also reasonable when the result is positive in the judge's view.

F. TACK AND EQUIPMENT

Properly fitting, clean, and serviceable tack is the main concern here. As always, deviations from the ideal must be judged with perspective. For example, a very dirty cinch or saddle pad can cause irritation, but a dirty saddle surface cannot. A threadbare tie rope, halter, or cinch has the potential for failure, but an old, worn saddle could be otherwise sturdy. A halter that is so loosely adjusted it

could slip over the ears or one that is excessively tight between the noseband and muzzle is worth faulting at the tie place, but might only be worth an instructive comment during the check-in.

Fit and adjustment can be crucial, of course. What the rider finds best for the particular horse, however, occasionally conflicts with the judge's opinion (for example, cinch, breastplate, and crupper adjustment). Therefore, instead of faulting initially, the judge should await the results of the Veterinary Judge's later examinations. Communication with the Veterinary Judge will reveal if rubs or soreness have resulted and to what degree. In that case, points can be justifiably deducted from the horsemanship card under tack and equipment.

Deducting points for apparently poor saddle fit is problematic. The judge should consider that it is unreasonable to expect a rider to purchase a perfect fitting saddle for each horse that he or she rides. Again, therefore, do not fault unless the veterinary examinations reveal unsoundness caused by the saddle itself or by the saddle pad as might be the situation in withers soreness. In the case of a sore-backed horse, be aware that the causes can be multiple and virtually impossible to pinpoint with certainty. The cause might not be related to horsemanship.

If you have noted something in the equitation or tack section of the scorecard that might have contributed to the sore back, an appropriate comment would be "See comments in Equitation/ Tack for possible cause of sore back."

Faulting for extremes such as a bit that hangs very low or pinches the mouth is justified at any time. A flank strap that hangs so low it could catch the horse's foot when striking at a fly is worth a deduction. Unbalanced, poorly secured, or bouncing equipment may be faulted; ordinarily only a slight deduction is appropriate.

Practical trail horsemanship includes carrying at least the following: a hoof pick or some device for cleaning the feet; halter and rope or similar gear for tying a horse quickly, safely, and securely in the event of a trail emergency; map, watch, and time schedule. Other helpful items are a knife for the quick cutting of tack and equipment that gets hung up and other tools that are appropriate to the area in which the horse is being ridden.

Finding an appropriate time for a tack check requires a number of considerations. Although the start of the ride is the most logical, it could mean sacrificing a more meaningful trail equitation observation near camp, especially important if ride management's logistics limit the number of observations to only a few. The same holds true for the second day's ride start. If the judge examines the tack then, the check must be done quickly so as not to interfere with management's plans. Checking the tack on the trail tends to hold up riders and interfere with their timing. However, for a "slow" ride, the exit from a P&R stop or lunch stop can work well.

As with other areas of the horsemanship scorecard, the judge should note excellence in any of the aspects of tack listed on the card's sub-heading. Additionally, the judge should praise rider resourcefulness in dealing with potential tack problems or solving unpredictable ones that arise.

G. TRAIL EQUITATION

The purpose of good trail equitation is to ease the horse's effort in carrying the rider over a long distance and to enable the horse to perform smoothly and

safely, thus conserving energy and preserving soundness as much as possible throughout the day's course.

From that functional definition, the judging of trail equitation is to be based on its relevance to the sport of NATRC distance riding. The competitor should use riding form appropriate to preserving the horse's soundness and conserving the horse's energy as much as conditions permit. Related to that is judging the rider's endeavors to deal with horse manners to accomplish smoothness in horse performance and safety for self and others.

Our judging should help the riders understand the concept of balance and lightness while following the horse's movements. The rider should be light in the saddle by inclining forward at the hips (closing the hip angle) which helps distribute the weight on the forward points of the pelvic bones and down the inside of the thighs. Bending over at the waist is not desired and does not have the same effect. The degree of forward inclination depends on the gait and the terrain. A light and balanced rider requires little muscular effort to maintain riding form and does not interfere with the horse's efforts.

In evaluating the rider position at faster gaits, ascents and descents, we should be looking at a "window" of acceptable position. It is more important that the rider and the horse be flowing as one, the rider not interfering with the horse, rather than the rider being in a particular position. Trying to maintain a "posed" position creates a problem of stiffness. (Donna Snyder-Smith – NATRC Rider's Manual).

The more observations on the trail, the more judicious the placings and the less the effect of luck--particularly bad luck or mischance wherein a rider has a poor showing at a judging site because of circumstances beyond the rider's control.

The Mount

The main concerns in judging the mount are the rider's handling and timing to initiate the mount, smoothness going up, lightness into the saddle, and rein control throughout.

For a judged mount, the rider should have all equipment adjusted and secure prior to advancing in order not to cause delay. Two possible exceptions are lowering English stirrups and affixing a running martingale. If the judge plans on faulting one way or the other, an announcement should be made ahead of time. Alternatives to judging the mount at the morning start include P&R stops, water stops, and departure from lunch.

In addition to the common faults in mounting, the following might be observed: mounting on downhill side of horse; dwelling in stirrup on side of horse; dragging foot over rump; not resetting saddle after mounting; permitting horse to walk off before mount is completed; and so forth.

In faulting, the judge can use the scorecard to offer suggestions for improvement. Example: "Rein hand on horn restricts rein control (-). Recommend using mane instead to aid lift."

For a cantle mount, the judge might write: "Recommend practice using right side of pommel (or swells) for best lift and safety." If the cantle mount is performed smoothly, it should not be faulted since a cantle mount might be necessary for some elderly or disabled riders.

The use of natural aids and terrain (logs, rocks, benches, etc.) makes the mounting process easier on the horse because it produces less torque on the back from pulling the saddle over to the side.

Walk On Level

Despite the simplicity of the walk as a judging observation, good form at the walk is fundamental in terms of the stated purpose of good trail equitation. Look for balance, lightness of body carriage, and body alertness. The latter translates to athletic readiness to react to sudden or unexpected change such as shying or stumbling. Note the lower leg position: a vertical line passing through the rider's center of gravity should pass through the foot. Note the hands: the rein hand(s), carried low above the pommel or horn region, should show tact by acting in proper proportion to need.

Examples of common faults are: off balance to one side; slouching; sitting heavily down in the saddle with an excessive percentage of weight carried in the seat; legs loose/limp; heels up/toes down; legs/feet too far forward or too far back; hands too high or reins too loose for ready control. It would not be appropriate to fault a rider for riding with a deeper seat if it is needed for safety or control.

Trot on Level

The rider should be either sitting lightly, posting lightly, or riding slightly off the saddle in a "half seat" or "two-point" position (slightly folded forward from the hip with the rider's weight redistributed more on the inner thigh). How far off the saddle depends on the speed of the trot, the texture of the ground, the roughness versus smoothness of the horse's gait, and the rider's ability to avoid bouncing or hitting the saddle which is jarring to the horse.

The judge hopes to see the rider "smooth at the trot"--that is, athletically poised but not stiff; quietly supple above the motion of the horse but not loose; and not showing any excess of movement which can be distracting to the horse's attention to the ground and to the horse's pleasurable sensation of movement (kinesthesia).

It is incumbent upon the judge to determine if the horse's trot is inordinately rough, in which case the judge should be lenient in scoring the rider. The judge should also consider that a light hand on the pommel, horn, or swells aids the rider's balance, thus serving the horse.

Examples of faults not referred to previously are: arm(s) flapping; over-posting or posting excessively down into the saddle or excessively high on the rise; being put off balance by action of the horse in change of gait; and leaning over the horse's neck, placing extra weight on the horse's forehead.

Ascents

To ease the horse's effortful push from the hindquarters, the rider should be over the horse's center of gravity (near the withers), light in the saddle, and with the upper body angled forward, folded from the hips, to some degree. How light in the saddle and how far forward depend on the slope. A slight slope, for example, might not require much change in position or forward lean. If the ascent is steep, some calf pressure might be needed to help the rider keep his/her legs

and seat in the most effective position. It is acceptable to use the horse's mane to help stay forward during a steep climb as long as balance and control are not sacrificed.

To evaluate the rider, the judge's best view is from a location perpendicular to the slope. Here the appropriateness of the uphill position can be clearly seen. Beyond that, as the rider ascends away from the spot, the judge's perspective becomes distorted.

Examples of faults as the judge might write them on scorecards:

"Not light in saddle early on climb."

"Inconsistent balance, thus not helping horse fully on climb."

"Too far out of saddle for best stability, and legs too straight for giving flexion."

"Upper body angled excessively forward (hip angle too closed) for this climb; causes you to be off balance forward; open hip angle for better balance and lightness."

"Legs back in horse's flank, at times interfering with stifle; keep legs under you for best balance and lightness."

"Reins too tight to permit horse's head/neck to work freely enough."

"Reins too loose for ready control."

"Posting uphill causes more stress over horse's back/ loin, use mane to help steady body movement."

"Leaning back; your weight tends to interfere with working of horse's hindquarters."

"Put back by action of horse; need to be alert to trail and ready for horse's action"

Descents

As on any terrain, the rider should be well balanced--neither too forward nor back--and should ride "light in the saddle," using the legs for their muscular effort in maintaining lightness.

For judging the descent, two angles of view work best. The first is directly opposite the slope for viewing body and leg position and the reining hand(s). Note if the feet are planted forward and the rider is leaning back. Both those faults put the rider's seat down hard and back in the saddle, thus interfering with the working of the hindquarters needed for the animal's control on a descent.

Continue the observation of the rider descending away from your spot. Is the rider evenly poised and smooth despite the horse's side to side motion, or is the rider's body swaying? The ill effect of body sway is two-fold: It makes for heaviness first on one side, then on the other, and it can also cause the saddle to rub. However, in observing slight body sway, the judge needs to also look at the horse's motion before faulting the rider. If the horse's hindquarter swing is inordinately strong, leniency would be appropriate in evaluating the rider.

Although holding the cantle may suffice as a psychological aid on a steep descent, the practice tends to twist the rider's body and interfere with balance. In that case, it should be faulted. Oppositely, a light non-reining hand on the pommel, horn, or swell can aid the rider's balance, thereby helping the horse as well. It may serve the rider from a safety standpoint if the horse stumbles. If, however, the hand and arm appear to be jamming down and putting extra force over the withers, faulting would be reasonable.

Down/Up

It is strongly recommended that the judge observe at least one down/up on a ride. A gully with a steep descent into it followed by an immediate sharp rise is ideal for observing trail equitation skills.

For a smooth performance, the rider needs to apply not only all the body and leg principles of the descent and climb positions vital to balance and lightness, but the rider also must rein with tactfulness based on the horse's ability and temperament. Most importantly, the rider needs to make the transition from the descent to the climb position smoothly in order not to interfere with the horse or jeopardize its balance and safety.

The rider who does not move readily into the climb position at the instant the climb-out begins will be put behind the action of the horse. The cause might be inadequate body alertness and/or inadequate rein control, the latter allowing the horse to rush or lunge. To compound the problem, the rider may be forced to use the reins for balance if the body lurches back.

Judging Observations and “Obstacles”

The word obstacle suggests interference with progress such as in a forest where downed timber must either be surmounted or circumvented or where a mounted rider must travel down a creek-bed to pick a safe route between boulders. In NATRC an obstacle situation might be simpler, such as riding into a dead end and backing out or being halted to make an offside dismount/remount in a tight spot on a hillside.

Although good riders on good trail horses should be able to handle the above natural difficulties with relative ease and safety, others might not. The judge, therefore, must be circumspect in selecting an observation--particularly where a section of trail might deteriorate grossly after a number of horses has passed and affect both fair comparison and/or safety.

Another dilemma facing the judge is whether or not an observation's delay will excessively affect the ride's timing. As for the rider's time, the judge must have another person record any lengthy waiting time and have that added to the maximum time for those who are delayed. Aside from that complexity, there are at least two other reasons to avoid a long-delaying observation: some horses will benefit from the rest whereas others will be made overanxious by the delay. Neither extreme is fair. Keep in mind that although special observations may require halting the riders briefly, frequent or lengthy interference detracts from the progress of a true trail ride.

The main purpose of an obstacle/observation is for the judge to observe the rider's skills in cueing the horse, a matter which involves the rider's rating of the horse, timing, reining, leg aids (often properly unnoticeable), possibly voice cues, and so forth, plus the horse's abilities and responsiveness to cues. For the good competitive rider with a well-prepared horse, a complex, challenging situation offers an excellent opportunity to demonstrate skills. Such an observation is also desirable to aid the judge's job, but here again the judge needs to face the dilemmas regarding time and safety.

In any situation where a precise route is important to the judging, the course must be exactly marked with ribbons perhaps as close as every three feet so the course is clear to the rider. If oral instructions are necessary, the wording must be carefully thought out for clarity and simplicity. The exact instructions must then

be stated distinctly to each rider face-to-face, preferably twice for dealing with hearing problems and/or the phenomenon of mind-gone-blank in a moment of anxiety. If a rider starts the route off course, the judge would do well to call out to the rider to begin anew.

For log observations, the judge must indicate whether they are to be gone over or around. Bear in mind that riders too have dilemmas of what is expected of them.

Whatever the situation, the judge needs to hold fast to the observation's purpose--that is, to judge horse and rider skills in maneuvering and handling the situation itself. **Observations deliberately devised to trick riders are unjust and have no place in NATRC.**

Riders in a natural back-up observation where such things as rocks, brush, or limbs need to be avoided should look behind before cueing the horse to back. Therefore, the judge may fault those who do not. In a quite different situation where riders have been directed to trot to the judge along a flat, clear road, then halt and back the horse, the riders most likely do not need to check behind within the mere seconds of trotting the space--especially when they have been started individually.

The application of leg aids in a back-up can be so subtle as to be unobservable with a skilled rider on a well-trained horse. Therefore, if the horse backs perfectly, the judge must not fault for what may appear to be non-use of leg aids. Faulting is justified when a rider incorrectly applies leg aids--such as on the wrong side of the horse--or does not use them at all to correct a crooked back-up. In either case, the judge must be appropriately positioned for observing both legs--that is viewing from straight on, either ahead or behind.

Seeing the whole picture in a judging scene--such as horse/rider interaction and the influence of nearby horses--precludes faulting superficially or too hastily.

Competitors who attempt an obstacle but are unable to complete it should have a smaller point deduction than competitors who do not attempt the obstacle. Or said another way, no matter how badly a competitor does, they do better than one who didn't try it at all.

Both the veterinary and horsemanship judge should agree that the competitor passed or did not complete.

Remember that artificial or unsafe obstacles are prohibited. Ask yourself:

- (1) Is the obstacle safe for horse and rider?
- (2) Is it appropriate for the sport of competitive distance riding?
- (3) Does it adversely affect the flow of the ride?

Give instructions clearly and consistently to each competitor.

In setting up an obstacle, think about "How does this teach, or demonstrate, the best care of the horse?"

General

Deviations from good trail equitation have the potential to affect the horse's carrying ability, soundness, and mental attitude--sometimes grossly, sometimes minutely. In any case, the horse is not well served, and the deviations should be faulted in amounts relative to their importance.

There is, however, far more to judging than noting negatives. A judge must also look for good qualities. With that positive philosophy plus a sensitive eye, a judge will be able to pick out good aspects of a rider's equitation regardless of any imperfections that seem to dominate the picture.

H. TRAIL CARE

In general, the scorecard category of trail care is more suited to noting positive comments rather than scoring negative ones since numerous problems attend the judging in this area. At P&R stops, water stops, and lunch stops, the judge is hard pressed to observe every rider on the same aspects of trail care. Additionally, riders' actions--or inactions--are often based on well-founded knowledge of their own horses. In other ways too, things are not always as they appear at first glance. The judge, therefore, must guard against making hasty, superficial judgments.

Avoid handling a horse during the 10-minute recovery time for the P&R unless the horse is in trouble. Likewise, when judging at the lunch stop, allow the horse and rider a full 45 -minute rest period.

P&R Stops

Given appropriate and safe circumstances in the P&R line-up, the rider should readjust equipment and check the hooves as needed. However, to determine if each and every rider does so is not possible on most rides since riders vary when they choose to accomplish such tasks: some on arrival, some after the recovery reading, some in the interim, and some out on the trail. As for the cinch, many riders have found that riding with a reasonably loose one prevents girth soreness, hence loosening the cinch at a P&R stop may be unnecessary. For a judge to evaluate the adjustment would require either a very keen eye or a hand placement in the cinch. Since the latter could disturb a resting horse, the judge must avoid the practice.

Cleaning the eyes, sponging the neck, and so forth, may be beneficial, but some horses benefit more from being left alone. Although the judge may make positive comments on the additional care, faulting for the lack of can be presumptuous and unjust.

If the P&R line-up is orderly and all the riders easily observable, the judge might elect to look for unsafe practices by scanning continuously up and down the line. An obvious fault is letting the reins or rope loose while adjusting equipment or checking the hooves. Less common faults might also be spotted. For example, if the flank strap is partially loosened, it should not hang so low that a striking hoof could be caught up. Similarly, if a retainer strap is attached, the flank strap should not be unbuckled and left dangling. A serious fault is placing a cover (such as a hood or towel) over the horse's eyes to prevent the animal from seeing departing horses. The risk is high that the now-blinded horse might spook, break away, and run blindly free. Covering the eye with a hand, however, is an acceptable technique for dealing with the instinct to go with the herd.

Riders are required to care for their own mounts except in certain circumstances which include having a horse held during a rest break. A P&R stop can be considered a rest stop. It is generally considered a common courtesy to hold a horse for a rider to saddle or unsaddle. In a P&R lineup situation, it might actually be safer for someone else to hold the horse. However, sponging or bathing a horse involves active care, so a rider should be holding their own horse for that. Try to look at the whole picture so as not to penalize common courtesy and sportsmanship.

The rider's attentiveness to the horse is a major aspect of horsemanship. At a P&R stop under crowded conditions, the rider must maintain alertness to

protect the horse and others from possible harm. An inattentive rider with his or her back to the horse and unaware that the horse might be threatening a neighbor should be faulted.

Water Stops

To all appearances, the simplest item to judge is whether or not the rider pauses long enough to offer the horse a drink. However, the judge usually does not know how far back or how far ahead on the trail water was/will be available. Another possibility might be operating if the rider does not stop for watering--especially on the early morning trail when buddying/herding motivations are high. Consider a rider arriving at a stream just as the horse ahead leaves. The rider, knowing the horse's attitude immediately before the stream, might presume correctly that if the reins are loosened to permit a drink, the horse will lurch off in pursuit of the preceding horse. To fight the horse could do much more harm than good. If the rider makes an attempt to control the horse, the judge should assume that the rider is not oblivious to the principles of trail care. Thus it is more important to judge how the rider handles the horse and the situation rather than if the horse was offered a drink or not.

Faulting for not removing the bit to drink is inappropriate in NATRC judging. Moreover, according to veterinary sources, a small amount of air taken in is not harmful.

Sponging at water stops is usually beneficial for the horse--but not always. Knowledgeable riders have their own criteria based on factors like weather, time to spare or not, the horse's pleasure/displeasure in being sponged, and the horse's attitude when others leave the area. Although a horse in good shape may profit from being sponged well, a lot of cold water on a horse in poor condition can be deleterious. Therefore, all factors considered, the choice to sponge or not is best left to the rider.

Lunch Stop

A quick judge might be able to evaluate trail care at the lunch stop if the number of riders is small and the tie arrangements provided are orderly (for example, a circle of trees or a corral). Observations may include tack adjustment as needed, the tie (perhaps short enough to prevent the saddled horse from lying down), safety (such things as dry branches jeopardizing the horse's eyes, unsafe branches underfoot, location of bridle and other gear), and possibly horse care.

For bridling or unbridling, the horse should not be tied since safety is jeopardized if the horse pulls back. Instead, the lead rope attached to the halter should lie over the handler's arm or shoulder. For the process, the halter may be either left on the horse's head or fastened around the horse's neck. Variations in the exact procedure, including at the trailer in camp, may be acceptable.

When the number of tie places at lunch is inadequate, some riders tie their horses close to one another. An alternative option, sitting on the ground while holding a horse, bears risks. Another, standing to hold a horse for an hour, can amount to only minimal rest for any rider whose energy requires restoration to do best for the horse on the afternoon ride. In this special case, the judge should consider leniency and not fault the safety risk of tying horses closely together unless a problem ensues.

At a stop with ample tie places, the judge may come upon a pair of horses tied too close to each other while the riders are momentarily out of sight. Since the fault may lie with the rider who arrived after the other had left to get lunch, the judge must check the matter out to avoid unjust scoring. Such a situation is not uncommon and illustrates the necessity to guard against faulting too hastily or superficially.

Removing the saddle or leaving it on should be the rider's prerogative. The belief that pulling the saddle too soon causes heat bumps because of the sudden release of pressure has not been proven.

The initial method for watering the horse on arrival at the lunch stop should be at the rider's discretion. If the horse is not in good condition, perhaps overstressed or overheated, the initial water intake should be limited to a few sips (for example, ten swallows, then ten more in ten minutes). Later on, free choice of water can be considered. An unstressed horse, in top condition, however, might profit by drinking fully on arrival when it is thirsty, thus re-hydrating well. In view of these variations, the judge should not score the rider's initial watering method. However, if the judge is concerned that offering too little or too much water will seriously affect an individual horse's well-being, the judge must alert the rider on the spot.

Minimal care involves cleaning sweat from around the horse's eyes on arrival and picking out the horse's feet before leaving. Other care depends on the weather, the horse's condition, water availability, and whether or not the rider feels the horse would benefit. Some riders prefer to let their horses rest quietly for the full time, whereas others feel that sponging quickly after the horse is cooled out is more beneficial. Although sponging the body on a cold day justifies faulting if the horse becomes chilled, the judge must realize that wetting the lower legs will not chill a horse. Many riders, including riding Veterinary Judges, consider the latter care especially helpful and good therapy. Feed offered to the horse must be done so in a safe manner. Allowing a horse to graze with a bit in its mouth is acceptable as long the rider holds the reins in a safe manner so the horse won't step on them.

Some of the above situations might also apply to judging in camp.

Miscellaneous

When stopping on a hill to rest, the rider should turn the horse crosswise to the hill if the terrain is safe. As other riders approach, the rider should either move the horse aside on the trail to permit passage or press on.

Faulting riders for not resting their horses on a hill--or contrarily, praising for stopping--is poor judging unless the judge knows with certainty that their horses require rest. A new rider praised for stopping a horse that has no need to rest or faulted for not stopping such a horse would thereby be misguided in the techniques of pacing.

Stopping is not allowed within the last 2 miles unless dictated by good horsemanship and/or sportsmanship. This means, for example, if a horse crossing a water obstacle or passing other water stops to drink on its own initiative, the rider shall not be faulted.

In general, trotting fast or galloping on moderate ascents, descents, and exceedingly rough ground is poor trail care. However, the judge should take into consideration possible redeeming factors. For example, if the ride time is inordinately fast and the rider has endeavored to maintain the appropriate pace -

without dawdling at stops or on the trail--the judge may elect to be lenient by not scoring negatively. Similarly, if the map, trail markings, briefing or other announcements were erroneous and led the rider off course or clearly misled the rider, the judge should realize the rider's need for urgency. In either case, the judge must check matters out for verification.

Gaited horses can gait fairly quickly up and down moderate slopes and have been bred to do so. The running walk can even be maintained in fairly rough terrain.

On well-managed rides, riders who are keenly attentive to the ribbons, schedule, and instructions and who rate and pace their horses will merit praise.

I. TRAIL SAFETY AND COURTESY

Safety and courtesy tend to be interwoven in this category in that courtesy is practical from a safety standpoint--and vice versa. In general, an attentive competitor who understands the safety aspects of horsemanship and who respects the rights of others will ride accordingly. Some of the following comments illustrate the connection.

A long established standard dictates that a rider should keep at least one horse-length behind another except when overtaking to pass. A minimum of two horse-lengths, however, might be necessary on uneven terrain to allow for better visibility and reaction time. For a fault, the judge can note on the scorecard, "following too closely" or--more seriously scored --"following nose-to-tail."

When planning to pass, the rider should approach with caution and indicate, "Passing on the left" or "...on your right." Passing at an excessive speed warrants a point deduction.

On a narrow trail, a rider on a slow horse must give way to others asking to pass as soon as a safe spot appears available.

When being passed by a vehicle on a narrow, precipitous road, the rider should move to the inside against the rise of the hill or bank. However, before faulting for the opposite, the judge must take into account any contingencies such as the vehicle's speed, the time factor for the rider to maneuver to what is often rougher ground, and the terrain overall.

Contaminating a common water source by dipping a sponge into a trough, for example, demands a scorecard deduction. A rider who instead fills a plastic bag with water and steps well aside for sponging merits praise on the scorecard. In like regard, a rider who hoses down the horse at the most appropriate distance from a faucet might reasonably be praised by comparison to less thoughtful competitors. The latter, or anyone who creates a mud hole for others at the water source, or who unduly monopolizes a water source, should be faulted.

Riders with stallions should keep their horses at a safe distance from other horses when necessary. Stallions must have a yellow ribbon attached to their tail at all times. All riders, however, share some responsibility in making themselves alert to potential behavior problems of any horse.

By code, gates opened by the rider must be closed by the rider. However, the following is permissible: with the approach of a group of riders, the individual who opened the gate may leave after giving clear instructions to close the gate.

Although ordinarily one rider must remain until the gate closer remounts, often the rider handling the gate will tell those passing through to proceed on rather than stand by. In that special case, *none* of the riders should be marked down for not waiting. If the judge is in doubt regarding instructions to riders in this

situation or the one in the preceding paragraph, the judge needs to seek verification.

A rider's inattention to instructions by judges or management mandates faulting if the judge deems it relevant to the competition and not trivial. Information on the entry form or in riders' packets, briefing announcements, and the rules of NATRC fall in this category under the scorecard's subheading "Response to Directions." Often the judge is unable to read a rider's bib number on the trail because it is untied, twisted, covered by long hair or a parka hood, or otherwise partially obscured. The inconvenience justifies a small deduction if the rider cannot otherwise be easily identified. In camp, however, rider's number problems are easily resolved and not worth scoring in most cases.

Wearing apparel (footwear, headgear, shorts, and so forth) per se shall not be scored. Judges are free, however, to make notations on scorecards about the safety aspects of apparel so long as the notations do not include plus or minus signs (which many judges use to break ties). What might be considered an exception to the policy actually relates to tack.

In checking tack with the rider mounted, the judge can elect to evaluate the size relationship between stirrup and shoe. If the stirrup is so large in proportion to the shoe that the foot could extend through the stirrup, the jeopardy to safety could warrant faulting in the horsemanship category of tack. By the same token, a stirrup that is disproportionately small for a shoe that could become jammed could also be worth a tack fault.

On the matter of protective headgear, judges need to be aware that not all helmets are considered safe for trail riding--for example, an ordinary hard hat is not. Just as there are safety standards for football helmets, so are there standards for equestrian use. Therefore, judges who speak to the subject should emphasize the importance of safety-approved, equestrian headgear that is properly fitted. Approved safety headgear is required for all juniors while mounted whether on the trail or in camp.

At briefings, judges can make recommendations on safe apparel such as footwear and headgear, meanwhile adding that the absence of protective headgear or the wearing of specific types of footwear will not influence scores. If such an announcement is made, the judge should also add that the tack might be faulted if the stirrup is an unsafe size relative to that of the shoe.

The judge needs to look for contingencies when observing "crowding" at a particular location. Thus, a judge's shortsightedness and unfair deductions can be avoided. At water stops, for example, crowding situations often occur that should not necessarily be faulted. The main considerations are the limitations of space and the ride's timing. For a judge to expect riders to wait courteously in line at a trough or small stream may be out of proportion to the needs of concerned riders with thirsty horses and little time to spare.

Often the scorecard notation of "crowding" is misapplied. The word itself implies push-and-shove. Hence, for a rider who is simply inattentive, the judge would do well to phrase the fault more appropriately or specifically--for example, "Placed horse unsafely close to another," "Inattentive to the risks of crowding," or the like.

Faulting for "bunching" on the trail is sometimes necessary in order to be fair to non-bunched competitors whose equitation is readily evaluated. Thus, riders who pass an observation site in packs so tight that they cannot be judged individually can be appropriately marked down under "Trail Safety and Courtesy." For the first rider in a bunch, the judge may elect to give the benefit of the doubt

by not taking off points. Certainly that should be the case if the rider's equitation was easily scored.

Bunching normally occurs in three situations in which the judge must be wary of faulting the pack: in the morning close out of camp, inside the two-mile point, and on a ride where the timing is unusually fast. In such cases, the riders have little opportunity for staying free of bunches. Here then, the judge needs to have a firm plan for judging both bunched and non-bunched riders equally. For example, the judge could limit attention to only one aspect of equitation such as leg position. Or the judge might simply watch for any glaring faults in horsemanship.

Positive scorecard comments for the category of "Trail Safety and Courtesy" might include exemplary sportsmanship, consideration of other competitors, ride personnel, and property owners, helpfulness to riders in need, and the like.

J. STABLING

The chief factors in judging stabling revolve around the horse's safety and comfort and the rider's care of the horse. Various stabling options, including tying to the trailer, to overhead stationary trailer-mounted tethers, to an overhead picket line, or to an overhead sliding tether, or the use corrals are at the discretion or requirements of the ride management or ride facility. There is no real competitive advantage to any of these options, and the rider should choose what they feel is best for their horse within the limitations specified by ride management. The Horsemanship Judge thus has the responsibility for evaluating the safety and appropriateness of each rider's choice.

The most common option is tying to the trailer. A good height for tying, whether at a trailer, tree, or fence post, would be that of the horse's withers. In evaluating variations from the ideal height, the judge should consider allowances based on what is best available for the rider's use. In any case, the tie spot should be sturdy and one where the tie will not slide down.

The rope should be tied with a quick-release knot with the loose end brought back through the loop to secure the tie. The loop should not be so large that the horse is apt to fiddle the loose end free, especially likely if the rope itself is a short one. There are several alternatives to tying a quick-release knot. If you see one used that you don't understand, ask the rider to explain or demonstrate it.

In lieu of a tie knot, a mechanical quick-release snap (the device commonly used inside trailers for hauling) is acceptable so long as the tie length is appropriate.

The tie's length must not be so long that the horse could catch a foot over the rope while pawing or nibbling at ground level. For a standard length, the snap would be even with the halter ring when the horse's nose is touching the ground." This is a few inches above the ground. If there is any sag in the rope when the horse's head is down, it can get a foot over the rope. Also acceptable is a length a few inches shorter if there is the possibility of the halter catching on a fender.

Although horses can sleep standing up, they get their best rest lying down. A rope that is so short at bedtime as to restrict the horse's movement inordinately should be faulted. However, during the period when riders are in attendance of their horses, a tie length shorter than for lying down or grazing should not be faulted.

When tie conditions exist, stallions must be double-tied at all times. The primary rope is snapped (or tied) to the halter ring and tied as described in the

above paragraphs. The additional rope is secured around the neck, run through the halter ring, and tied in the usual way. If the rope around the neck is secured with a knot, the knot should be a bowline. The judge may find other secondary methods acceptable. The secondary restraint needs to be strong and impossible to rub off, such as the bowline-tied loop around the neck (snug enough to not slip over the ears). An acceptable method is to use a double-thick nylon dog collar around the neck (the largest size is just right for horses). The rope should be strong and in good shape (not frayed), and the snaps need to be heavy-duty; no snaps are preferable. The rope is tied directly to the ring or around the collar. Another method is to use a snap at the neck-end of the rope snapped to a ring that is tied into the neck rope. The primary and the secondary rope must be tied to different tie spots.

Containers on the ground must be safely secured or avoided entirely. Reasonable exceptions might be grain-type, flexible no-handle tubs on the ground when the rider is nearby or the large muck bucket type tubs used for water. Some judges feel the bail on a bucket on the ground, even though secured, is hazardous. If used, it's a good idea to wrap (with duct tape) the "U" where the bail attaches to the bucket to prevent the halter from getting caught in it.

Rakes, grooming tools, tack, spare buckets, camp chairs, and the like within the horse's range of movement jeopardize the animal's safety and bear faulting.

If a hay net is used, it must be tied high enough to prevent the horse from pawing into it especially when empty. Placing hay on the ground for feeding is acceptable and should not be faulted.

Latches that could catch the rope or halter should be covered or blocked. If the danger is not great, the judge may merely note a precaution on the scorecard. Sharp projections present a far clearer hazard and should be faulted. Examples include a torn fender, a protruding license plate, dry twigs at face level, wire ends not pinched back, gimcrack bucket ties, loose branches underfoot, etc. in general, if the horse is tied to the trailer, the wheels should be blocked when the trailer is disconnected. Unlatched doors on the trailer within the horse's range of movement may present a slight hazard when the rider is not attending to the horse.

An adequate supply of free-choice water should be available except perhaps during the initial cooling-out period when the rider may choose not to have water in front of the horse.

To blanket the horse or not depends mainly on the weather, the horse's coat, and the horse's condition. The absence of a blanket should not be faulted unless the animal appears chilled or the weather obviously threatening. If a blanket is used, both belly straps should be moderately snug to the belly initially since they tend to loosen as the horse repeatedly lies down and gets up.

In removing the blanket, the rider should undo the straps and buckles from the rear toward the front or undo the front, then rear, then the girth strap and remove the blanket with the lay of the hair if possible. The matter of folding or not folding is not usually important.

Minimal horse care consists of cleaning trail dirt and sweat from the head, especially eyes and nostrils, the girth, and between the legs. In warm weather, the horse that is in good condition should be suitably well cleaned. If the weather is cold or the horse's condition marginal, currying and brushing can accomplish the job adequately. Regardless of the weather, keeping the legs wet from the knees and hocks down likely aids in removing residual heat and limiting swelling.

A praise comment on the scorecard for such additional care is worthwhile, whereas faulting for the lack of may be unreasonable.

Although water splashed in the horse's bedding area is undesirable, the judge should not take points off unless a ready alternative exists for the rider such as tying elsewhere for sponging or raking dry dirt over the wetness. Urine also creates puddles, but the judge must not expect riders to use bedding straw or shavings since they are forbidden in many ride camps.

If the rider has neglected to attach an identifying halter tag and stable card, it is usually fairly easy to figure out who it is. Try to be lenient in deducting points here.

Judging stabling during daylight hours has advantages. However, for riders to care properly for their horses, the judge should allow at least 1 to 1 1/2 hours after they cross the finish line.

K. JUDGING RIDERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Refer to the current Rule Book. Riders needing assistance may be so permitted at the judge's discretion. For example, a judge could allow the rider to use assistance in hauling water buckets and for placing the saddle on the horse or removing it.

Further assistance becomes problematic in judging but should be considered at the judge's discretion. Using a substitute handler for the trotting-in-hand phase of examination is a prime example. A rider with a leg or foot injury might not be able to trot the horse in hand. In such a case, the judge may permit the use of a substitute handler. For that, the judge could have the competitor stand at the judge's side and express what is good or bad in the substitute's handling. The judge then scores the rider's judgment on all aspects of the trot-out. Additionally, the judge may have the competitor walk through the trot-out routine for the trot and score accordingly.

Granted that NATRC is a competitive sport which includes human athletic performance, a judge can deal with riders with special needs on a basis that is reasonably fair to all competitors.

SECTION 9. PENALTY POINTS

- A. If there is a rule infraction that does not specifically call for disqualification, the judges may evaluate that infraction and assess penalty points. The Ride Chairman shall inform riders of any penalty points assessed by judges as soon as possible at the end of each day's ride. The judges shall score as if no penalties were involved, and the assessed penalty shall be deducted from the subtotal score prior to placing. (See current Rule Book),
- B. Timers must inform the Ride Chairman who must in turn inform riders and all judges of any time penalty points. If possible, this should be done within two hours of the completion of each day's ride and must be done prior to final placings. (See current Rule Book). These penalty points shall be deducted from the subtotal score of the horse just prior to placing. The rider's horsemanship must be faulted but does not have to be faulted at the same rate as the horse. The choice of how many points is at the discretion of the Horsemanship Judge. Note: in some cases where the horse is lame or fatigued, good horsemanship would demand slowing down and possibly being late. The Horsemanship Judge might choose to make a positive comment on the scorecard for using good judgment.
- C. Off-Trail Penalty Points
1. Penalty points may be assessed against a horse and rider for being off trail, but it must first be determined that a competitive advantage was gained by traveling the off-trail route.
 2. Don't give penalty points for slight off-trail infractions. You may, however, use slight off-trail infractions in consideration of horsemanship since it is considered poor horsemanship to be unable to follow a well-marked trail.
 3. Considerations prior to assessment of penalties:
 - a. Did the rider retrace his/her steps and come back on course at the point of leaving the trail?
 - b. Was it rider error or poor marking by management?
 - c. Did the rider have to be told of being off-trail by judges or management?
 - d. Did the horse take a longer or shorter route by being off-trail or was a particular stress point in the trail (climb, descent, slide, etc.) missed or avoided?
 - e. If a shortcut occurred, to what extent did it give a distinct competitive advantage?
 - f. Was the act intentional or unintentional?
 - g. Was the rider exercising good judgment in avoiding a dangerous obstacle? (Bog, wire down, etc.)
 - h. Trail "make-up" is not an acceptable alternative to adjudicate missed trail or observations."
 - i. We are dealing with reality and not minutia.

SECTION 10. SCORECARDS AND SCORING - GENERAL

- A. Sign or name stamp all copies of your respective scorecards unless computer-generated labels are used in which case it is at the judge's discretion to initial his/her name. It is not necessary to sign or initial scorecards other than one's own.
- B. Carefully read over the cards at the end of each day to ensure the accuracy of scorecard comments and consistent scoring.
- C. Look for quality in performance. The use of positive scorecard comments affirms the judge's awareness and also reinforces the learning process for riders.
- D. Pulls. Write "PULL" clearly and largely across the front of the scorecard and indicate the pull code as indicated on the back of the scorecard:
 - L = Lameness
 - M = Metabolic
 - DQ = Disqualified
 - RO = Rider Option (rider sick, didn't want to ride in the rain...)

For this to work be sure to be true to the codes. For instance, if the horse is judged to be Grade 1 or 2 lame, the rider may wish to opt out of the ride. That is fine, but put down the pull code as lameness. This information helps us understand what is happening to horses at our rides.

- E. If less than a full class starts a ride, and it is the judge's decision that the entrants are not deserving of placings starting with first place (i.e. if there is no horse and rider deserving of a first place award), it is recommended that the judge tactfully inform the rider(s) privately, before the awards ceremony, of his/her decision
- F. Confirmation of a tie-break must be indicated for NATRC's official purposes. If a tie is eliminated by the use of plus marks, place a plus mark next to the total score of the prevailing rider. In the case of a 3-way tie or more, add more pluses by the scores. For example, indicate a tie-break between three riders each with a score of 95 by 95++ for the highest, 95+ for the next highest, and simply 95 for the lowest placing. A 3-way tie could also be differentiated by using 95+, 95, and 95-.
- G. Disqualification. If a horse/rider is disqualified after awards, the places will automatically be moved up. Judges should break ties in 7th place to avoid later problems if horses/riders do move up.
- H. All scorecards shall be complete with judging notations before the cards are presented to the competitors. Simply placing a score on a card is not acceptable. When appropriate, comments should be followed by a plus or minus to indicate whether it is a positive or negative statement. (See sample scorecards and notes on pages 57-59)

- I. Scorecard errors. The NATRC Executive Administrator will send copies of the cards of the class involved in a dispute to the judge aiding the judge in making any corrections in placings. The EA will then notify the riders involved.

- J. Judges secretaries. Judges are encouraged to make efficient use of their secretaries. Start right off by giving instructions as to what you expect and tell how the data will be recorded. Give notes you have taken to the secretary as soon as possible in order that he/she may record them promptly. Thus, when the ride is over all notes will then be in their proper place on the scorecards and you may proceed with your evaluations. On a two-day ride one of your secretaries may stay in camp for the last afternoon and see to it that all the data is recorded in advance of your return. Efficient use of your secretary will make your final judging easier, faster awards for management, and happy riders when they get a completed scorecard at the end of the ride. Remember to keep your notes, labeled and in order in case there is a need to refer to them later to resolve any questions, complaints, or protests after the ride.

- K. Cross Judging. It can be helpful for veterinary and horsemanship judges to swap notes on the trail. For example, a veterinary judge might give comments to the horsemanship judge on a rider that exhibited poor sportsmanship on the trail. Likewise, a horsemanship judge might give comments to the veterinary judge on horses who exhibited serious vices on the trail. Or if a ride has two sets of judges, one horsemanship judge might take notes for the other at some point on the trail. In any case, the time to establish the judging plan is at the check-in with both judges conferring. The pair can then decide on a plan--general or specific. Their concurrence is a form of team judging which can add to the thoroughness of judging horses and riders. The plan needs to be discussed with the riders.

Neither judge is obligated by NATRC rules to use the information submitted by the other. That aside, if either judge encounters a horse exhibiting dangerous behavior toward ride personnel, the information on the safety risk must be passed on to the other.

SAMPLE HORSEMANSHIP SCORECARD

NATRC HORSEMANSHIP CARD			TOP 2 COPIES TO NATRC OFFICE	HARD COPY TO COMPETITOR	SCORES
<p>GROOMING: Brushing, Dirt, Sweat Marks, External Parasites, Feet & Shoeing</p> <p>Check-in Some dirt in girth area and between legs (-1)</p> <p>TACK & EQUIPMENT: Cleanliness, Proper Fit, Adjustment, Repair, Trail Gear Placement & Security</p> <p>Tack-ck: No halter/ rope arrangement for emergency tie (-1)</p> <p>TRAIL EQUIPMENT: Aids, Leads, Tension, Balance & Lightness of Seat, Cues, Body & Leg Position, Control, Hands & Aids to Horse; Mounting & Dismounting; Obstacles: Control, Cues, Timing, Form; Teamwork (TW)</p> <p>AM Climb Back in saddle (-2): your weight interferes with action of horse. Need to distribute weight flexibly through legs for lighter seat.</p> <p>Creak Crossing Dropping reins on horse's neck leaves you with no control, unsate (-3)</p> <p>TRAIL SAFETY & COURTESY: Crowding; Riding in a Bunch; Response to Directions; Being Danger to Horse, Self & Others; Consideration of Others</p> <p>Creak Crossing: Very considerate to wait for #10</p>	<p>IN-HAND PRESENTATION(S): Safety, Turning, Lead Rope, Response to Directions, Consideration of Others, Teamwork (TW)</p> <p>Check-in Safer to stand on same side as vet during inspection of hind legs (-2)</p> <p>Looking back at horse (-1), causes horse to hesitate. Pick a spot in front of you, keep your eye on it and move toward it with brisk pace to encourage horse to trot.</p> <p>Descent to Bridge: Excellent, downhill light and balanced form (+)</p> <p>Wooded Trail: Heels up slightly (-1), too much weight on toes diminishes lightness/ability to react with best balance</p> <p>Leading slightly with (L) shoulder (-1), causes you to be off balance, overweighting (L) side.</p> <p>STABLING: Horse Care, Safety, Feed & Water Container, Tie (Height, Length, Placement, Security), Blanket, Tack & Gear Storage, Choice of Parking Location</p> <p>Friday PM Tie, water, feed, blanket, trailer set-up all safe and secure</p>	<p>IN-HAND PRESENTATION(S): Final Need to trot straight back to judge for best evaluation (-1)</p> <p>Rider attentive to horse, keeping attention on task at hand (+)</p> <p>Mount: Excellent use of terrain for positioning horse (+) Excellent control of anxious horse (+) Smooth, athletic mount</p> <p>Back-Up: Steady rein pressure without release (-2) causes horse to brace against bit pressure. Smooth pulsations from fingers to reins (ask, release) is more effective.</p> <p>TRAIL CARE: Chinch, Saddle, Blanket, Pad, Feet, Water Stops, Tie & Safety, Feeding & Timing, Cooling Out</p> <p>Sat Lunch: Unsafe to tie horse with reins (-3), should carry a halter/ rope for emergency/ trail tie situation</p> <p>SAT_pm P&R: Good use of rump rug in cold windy con-</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">20 Points</p> <p style="text-align: center;">14</p> <p style="text-align: center;">50 Points</p> <p style="text-align: center;">41</p> <p style="text-align: center;">30 Points</p> <p style="text-align: center;">27</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Subtotal 82</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Penalty Points 0</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SCORE 82</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PLACE 4</p>		
<p>Rider #</p> <p>Horse Name</p> <p>Rider Name</p> <p>Division & Class</p>	<p>Breed</p> <p>Age</p> <p>Ride Name</p> <p>Vet Judge(s)</p> <p>Hip Judge(s)</p>	<p>Date</p> <p>Region</p> <p>Penalty Point Explanation</p>	<p>Labels 1 X 2 5/6 or larger —Judges may initial labels</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Attn Competitors: REVIEW ADDITION AND REPORT ERRORS TO MANAGEMENT</p>		

SAMPLE HORSE SCORECARD

Hard Copy to Competitor

Top 2 Copies to NATRC Office

NATRC — HORSE SCORE CARD



P & R Scores		SAT #1		SAT #2		SAT #3		SUN #1		SUN #2		SUN #3		SUN #4		SUN #5		P & R Scores		
		In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
P		10	11	14	7	11	15	18	16											
R		4	6			6			10											
		(-2)				(-2)		(-2)		(-2)		(-1)		(-1)		(-1)		(-15)		
Condition 40 Points		Check In		SAT P&R #2		IN CAMP		SUN P&R #2		Final Check		Condition incl P&R 40 Points								
Mucous Membranes	MM	0		MM	0	MM	0	MM	1 sit in	(-1/2)	MM	0								
Capillary Refill Time	CRT	1		CRT	2 (-1/2)	CRT	1	CRT	2	(-1/2)	CRT	1								
Jugular Refill	JR	0		JR	0	JR	0	JR	0		JR	0								
Hydration	HYD	3	(-1)	HYD	3	HYD	3	HYD	2		HYD	3 (-1)								
Gut Sounds	GS	0		GS	1 (-1/2)	GS	0	GS	2	(-1)	GS	1								
Anal/Muscle Tone	AMT	0		AMT	0	AMT	0	AMT	1s trmrs	(-1/2)	AMT	0								
Mucous/Acidic Vaginitis	MAW		4+	MAW		MAW	4	MAW			MAW	3 (-1)								
Soundness 45 Points	Check In		Sound		WBLG		WBLG		WBLG		WBLG		28		Soundness 40 Points					
Lameness	L			L		L	Uneven in circles (-1)	L			L	Gd. 2 RF (-1/2)								
Way of Going	WoG			WoG		WoG		WoG			WoG	Wsg flogging (-1)								
Mitels, Back, Loins & Girth	WBLG			WBLG		WBLG	Edema R girth (-1)	WBLG			WBLG	Sensitive back (-2)								
Sores, Plaques, Rubs	SPR			SPR		SPR		SPR			SPR									
Legs	LF			LF		LF	Sit fill	LF			LF	Sit fill								
Withers	RF			RF		RF	OK	RF			RF	OK								
Wings	LH			LH		LH	Sit fill	LH			LH	Wob-Fill-Heel (-1)								
Pen.	RH			RH		RH	Sit fill	RH			RH	Sit fill								
Legs	LF			LF		LF		LF			LF									
Wings	RH			RH		RH		RH			RH									
Pen.	LF			LF		LF		LF			LF									
Legs	RH			RH		RH		RH			RH									
Trail Ability & Manners 15 Points	Check In		Buddying, impatient (-1)		SLEEP/DITCH		WATER/CROSSING		LUNCH/MOUNT		Final Check		Subtotal 59		Trail AM 15 Points					
					Refused initially (-1)		Very good (+)		Moved slightly (-1/2)		Much improved for exam		Penalty Points 3		Score 56					
Rider #	Horse Name	Breed	Age	Ride Name	Date	Region	Penalty Point Explanation 3 minutes late Sun. (-3)		Place 6		Score 56		Place 6							
	Rider Name	Ver Judge(s)	Hsp Judge(s)																	
	Division & Class																			

Labels: 1 x 2.5lbs or larger - Judges may initial names on labels. All: COMPETITORS: REVIEW/ADDITION AND REPORT ERRORS TO MANAGEMENT SWEEPSTAKES

SAMPLE HORSE SCORECARD



Scoring Guidelines

Point assignment is at the discretion of the veterinary judge.

SOUNDNESS 45 Points

Lameness Grades

- Questionable Soundness:** (Use sparingly) -1 to -2
 -3 to -5
- Grade 1:** Lameness is difficult to observe and is not consistently apparent regardless of circumstance (e.g. under saddle, circling, inclines, hard surfaces, etc.)
- Grade 2:** Lameness is difficult to observe at a walk or when trotting in a straight line, but consistently apparent under any circumstances of weight carrying, circling, inclines, hard surfaces, etc.)
- Grade 3:** Lameness is consistently observable at a trot under all circumstances. Do not allow to start a day! A horse observed during race should be pulled.
- Grade 4:** Lameness is consistently observable at the canter. The horse should be pulled and should be granted at the discretion of the judge with card scored.
- Grade 5:** Lameness is obvious at a walk.

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
 Fractious, Unruly, Dangerous (Bites, Kicks, Threatens, Consistently Dangerous) **DISQUALIFY**
- Stands quietly for exam, mount -0
 Moves 1 to 2 steps or turns -0
 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

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

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

Breaking Ties: Refer to current Judge's Manual

CONDITION 40 Points

- MM (LOA) 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 (if other factors corroborate) -4 or Pull
- MT (Muscle Tone)**
 Normal -0
 Cool / Clammy -2
 Cold / Trembling -4
 Rigid / Spastic
- During ride: Pull**
 End of ride: -5
- MAM (Mounting Attitude, Willingness)**
 1. Bold, unhesitant, attentive
 2. Attentive, good mover, no animation
 3. Slow mover, but willing & attentive
 4. Showing a great deal of fatigue, not very willing to trot out
 5. Refuses to trot out on own
- MAM: -1 per degree the horse deteriorates**

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

- JR (Jaw, Refill)**
 0 to 1 Normal
 2 Mild
 3 to 6 Severe
 7 and up Pull

- CRT (Cap refill)**
 0 to 1 Normal
 2 Mild
 3 to 6 Severe
 7 and up Pull

- Scoring Hydration, Jugular Refill, CRT**
 Slight Change (1 degree) -0 to -1
 Moderate Change (2 degrees) -1 to -2
 Severe Change (3 degrees) -2 to -5

- Respiration: Base = 12 (48 bpm)**
 Point deduction:
 1 to 9 -0
 10, 11, 12, 13 -1
 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 -2
 15 -3
 16 -4
 17 -5

- Hold criteria is at the discretion of the veterinary judge**

Colic, Tie-Ups, Thumps: Pull—Recommend Medical Attention Immediately

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

NOTES ON HORSE SCORING

Metabolic Parameters

Two methods are currently being used to score metabolic parameters. For example, if the reading/score on capillary refill at the preliminary check-in is 1, then on the trail the next day it is 1, 2, 3, 3, and 1 back in camp:

- 1) Each **increase** in reading is scored. Thus 1 to 1 is (-0); 1 to 2 is (-1); 2 to 3 is (-1); 3 to 3 is (-0); 3 to 1 is (-0). Total score would be (-2). This method is shown on the previous horse scorecard.
- 2) Each **increase from baseline** is scored. Thus 1 to 1 would be (-0); 1 to 2 would be (-1); 1 to 3 would be (-2); 1 to 3 would be (-2); 1 to 1 would be (-0). Total score would be a (-5) OR (-2½) if each change is scored (-½) since there are several observations.

In addition, some veterinary judges prefer to use notations of A, B, and C instead of 1, 2, and 3.

Use the system that works best for you, but be consistent within a ride.

Lameness

Lameness that is observed several times during the ride is judged differently by different veterinarians. For example, a horse looks a little off at the preliminary check-in, then is Grade 1 at a P&R stop on the trail, and is Grade 2 at the end of the ride.

Those who score lightly would call it Questionable Soundness (-2) at the beginning, deduct (-3) on the trail, then at the end of the ride, deduct (-5). Thus the total for the Grade 2 lameness would be (-10).

Those who score more boldly would deduct (-2) at the initial check-in, (-5) for the Grade 1 on the trail, and (-8) at the end for a total deduction of (-15).

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