## Appendix G

#### 2012 TRAIL CHALLENGE PROVISIONS

#### **OVERVIEW:**

The purpose of the Trail Challenge Program is to promote good horsemanship skills and provide an educational venue for members of AQHA and AQHYA.

Trail Challenge tests a Horse and rider on their ability to work as a team and navigate obstacles which they might experience on a trail. Trail Challenges can be a lot of fun and improve the relationship by introducing Horse and rider to new experiences.

The Horse and rider will encounter various obstacles and sometimes challenging trail situations, which will better prepare the Horse and rider to negotiate with accuracy. Through education and experience, riding becomes more pleasurable. Each Trail Challenge will encourage education, safety and fun.

#### TERMS:

*Horse* – refers to all equines, including mules and other breeds

Partnership – the same rider and Horse negotiating the same entire Course

Course – designated route a rider with the same Horse will travel from start to finish

*Value* – score given at each obstacle

*TCM* – refers to Trail Challenge Merits

*Merit* – recognition for deserving top placing Partnership – will be noted on Horse's achievement record at AQHA

### **MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS:**

To be eligible for TCM, the person competing must be a current member in good standing of AQHA or AQHYA as per Rule 101 of *AQHA's Official Handbook of Rules and Regulations* and if applicable, a current member of the alliance organization (e.g. National Competitive Trail Horse Association).

#### **RULES:**

Each obstacle is judged on how the Partnership works together. This working team should negotiate each obstacle with calmness and patience, moving safely through the obstacle. Horses should show awareness, be attentive and not spook, shy or spin. The Horse should not stumble, tick or clip obstacle(s).

The Partnership should demonstrate the ability to pick its way through the Course when obstacles warrant it, and the Horse should willingly respond to the rider's cues on more difficult obstacles.

It is important the Horse exhibits manners, responds to the rider and demonstrates quality of movement. Horses should be relaxed and not display resistance. Credit will be given to Partnerships negotiating the obstacle with style and appropriate rate of progress, providing correctness is not sacrificed. Merits are secondary to safety.

The judge has the right to ask the rider to pass an obstacle if he/she feels it will be unsafe. Control of the Horse must be maintained throughout the event.

All general trail rules are listed in AQHA's Trail Ride Program Guidebook. Stallions may compete in adult classes. No youth shall exhibit a stallion in any class. Minimum age of Horse to compete is three (3) years of age. If a Trail Challenge is held in conjunction with an AQHA Trail Ride, stallions cannot attend.

#### **REGISTRATION:**

Each rider must complete an official Registration/Release Form. Registration fee(s) will be determined by the Trail Challenge host. Sign up time, starting and finishing times, and extra activities will be posted on AQHA's Web site. There may be additional rules posted on the Event site.

Once a rider has completed the official Registration/Release Form and paid appropriate fee(s) to compete, he/she will receive a rider packet with name tag/number, rules, maps, score card and any other pertinent information about the event.

#### **OBSTACLES:**

There are generally six (6) – sixteen (16) obstacles in any given Trail Challenge. This will vary depending on land and terrain of the property. In some cases, there may be one (1) obstacle incorporating several obstacles that flow together. Some obstacles should test if the Partnership is able to trust each other. For example, if the obstacle is to rope a steer head, the object is not to judge the ability to rope the steer, but the patience the Partnership gives to one another in completing the task at hand.

Natural obstacles are preferred; however, manmade obstacles can be used and can be permanent places on a designed Course. Caution should be taken to avoid injury. Metal obstacles can cut a Horse and can be slippery. Additionally, consideration should be taken when jumping logs in a western saddle.

Obstacles should be clearly marked and numbered. Course pattern should be posted at least one (1) hour before the event starting time. Riders should complete obstacles in order they are laid out in the Course. If there is a number of Horses and riders at a given obstacle, it is up to the judge to allow Partnerships to move to the next obstacle and return.

The Course should be posted at least one (1) hour before the start of the Trail Challenge. Obstacles should have three (3) different levels of difficulty. All riders are required to attend a pre-ride meeting. All judges must be present at the meeting to identify themselves to participants and answer any questions riders might have before beginning the Course.

Judges will be happy to answer any questions or demonstrate each obstacle. Because this is considered an educational experience, each Partnership should have the opportunity to understand what is being asked of them.

Each obstacle will receive an obstacle score. Riders are limited to three (3) refusals at each obstacle, or a maximum of three (3) minutes to successfully navigate the obstacle. Judges have the right to ask the Partnership to move on to the next obstacle. Riders are encouraged to attempt an obstacle, as no attempt will equal zero (0) score.

#### **SUGGESTED OBSTACLES:**

The Course is at the discretion of the Trail Challenge Ride Coordinator, AQHA Recreational Advisor and/or AQHA management. Obstacles should be constructed of safe material, consider safety of the various levels of Partnerships and test Horse and rider skills. When possible, utilize the topography of the property to design the Course.

# These are suggested obstacles to include, but not be limited to, and other obstacles used are allowed:

Obstacle 1: The Gate

Requires mounted rider to open and close a gate. Credit can be given for positioning of Horse, opening gate and closing gate. More value can be earned by keeping hand on gate at all times.

## Obstacle 2: The Junk yard

Requires rider to instruct Horse to step over a series of marked logs on the "road" while ducking under branches. Credits can be given for each log stepped over. Additional values can be given for staying on the "road" and Horse lifting feet or feet position to clear logs.

#### Obstacle 3: Cache Your Food

Requires rider to ride Horse up to a tarp lying on the ground, take rope from the judge, walk Horse away to lift tarp off the ground, and walk back to gently lower tarp back to ground. Extra credit can be given for facing tarp while lifting and for lifting tarp at least 3 inches.

#### *Obstacle 4: Move the Slicker*

Requires mounted rider to enter grove of trees, pick up slicker in left hand, carry slicker around trees, and into a "chute". Rider then backs up and around trees and hangs slicker on new tree using right hand. Credit is given for touching, lifting, carrying slicker in hand or across saddle, backing, and hanging it back up. Additional credit may be given for backing around trees into position and pulling slicker over Horse to hang with right hand.

#### Obstacle 5: Take a Shower

Requires rider to ride Horse across two painted lines and calmly walk through shredded shower curtain strung between two trees. A value is given for stepping over

each line, three values for calm walk-through, two values for bolting through or one value for dismounting and leading through.

# Obstacle 6: The Mail Dragon

Requires mounted rider to pick up saddlebag hanging on a dead tree, carry the bag to the mailbox, extract a piece of paper and place a new paper in the bag, and return bag to branch. Extra value can be given for laying the saddlebag over saddle.

#### Obstacle 7: The Lemonade Stand

Requires rider to dismount, lead Horse to a table for a drink, a type of snack and return to Horse to remount. Credits are based on dismount, leading the Horse to the table and remounting. Additional difficulty to this obstacle could include: having to dismount and mount on off side, using a mounting block, or the Horse's reaction to being tied to a post while rider is at table.

## **Obstacle guidelines:**

*Leading:* Horse is to follow willingly, not lagging or crowding. Horse must be led by a lead rope or unclipped reins.

*Mounting:* Rider must always check cinch before mounting; stirrup does not need to be laid over the saddle. Horse is to stand quietly and not move out when mounted. A smooth mount does not unbalance the Horse.

*Dismounting:* Horse is to stand quietly and not move off. Style of dismount by the rider is a smooth dismount that does not unbalance the Horse. Reins should remain in hand.

*Hoof Check:* Horse is to stand quietly. There is a penalty if the rider lets go of the reins or lead rope unless the Horse is tied to a stationary object.

*Water Crossing:* The Horse should walk through the water quietly in a continued forward movement. The Horse shall not be penalized for stopping for a drink or checking out the water before crossing.

*Uphill:* Rider should be positioned appropriately to maintain the center of balance. Rider and Horse are to negotiate slope in safe manner. No penalty is given for holding on the mane.

*Downhill:* Rider should be positioned appropriately to maintain center of balance. Rider and Horse are to negotiate slope in a safe manner. Rider may use a hand to support himself on the mane or saddle.

Stepover: Horse may hesitate and check out obstacle before proceeding over without striking the obstacle. Smaller Horses are not penalized for hopping over very tall obstacles as long as the action is done in a calm manner. If a rider declares to the judge that it is safer for them to jump the obstacle, no penalty will be given. However, when choosing to jump, it needs to be done in a safe manner for both Horse and rider.

*Bridge:* The Horse should step up, walk across, and step off quietly. No penalty is given for hesitating to acknowledge the obstacle.

*Gate:* Depending upon the type and position of gate, rider will decide whether gate should be a push/pull or left/right hand gate.

*Drag:* Rider may hold rope or dally once. There is to be no tying hard and fast. At no time should the rider or Horse get tangled in the rope. Horse should stand quietly during preparation and then pull or drag in control.

Stationary Obstacles: These are such things as slickers, balloons, map, trash, etc. Horse may acknowledge obstacle, and rider is to maintain control.

#### **JUDGES:**

Judges for judging the Trail Challenge Course must be a knowledgeable horseman/horsewoman. Under the Trail Challenge Program, a judge must have the ability to evaluate horsemanship skills, such as a rider's skill of controlling and maintaining the Horse. Additionally, the judge should be familiar with the natural movement of a Horse. Holding any special judging card from AQHA or any other organization is not required, but these credentials should be taken into consideration.

The number of judges needed depends on the Course, the number of obstacles and the availability in the area for qualified judges. Depending on the Course, usually one (1) to three (3) judges are needed. Most Courses tend to dictate the need for more than one (1) judge, due to time constraints and topography. The designation of a senior judge will apply to the appropriate judge, if there is more than one (1) judge.

A Rider meeting must be held before each Trail Challenge starts: (1) to introduce the judge(s); (2) to give a description of the Course; (3) to describe how the Course will be judged; and (4) to answer any questions riders might have before beginning the Course.

### ATTIRE & TACK:

Attire should be presentable, clean and free from torn or frayed items. Boots with a closed toe and heel are required. Splint boots are allowed in the Trail Challenge Program unless the judge determines it is unsafe because of terrain or obstacle.

The senior judge or Ride management shall have the authority to require the removal or alteration of any piece of equipment or accoutrement which is unsafe, or in his/her opinion, would tend to give a Horse an unfair advantage or which he/she believes to be inhumane.

Please refer to AQHA's Official Handbook Rule 443 for western equipment and Rule 444 for English equipment for a list of legal bits.

No rider will be allowed to ride double or bareback.

#### **DIVISIONS:**

The following divisions will be recognized by AQHA:

## **All Breed Challenge Class** – (applies to all breeds of Horse and mule)

No official merits will be given to any Horse in this class. There will still be a first through tenth placing at each Trail Challenge Program event. Additionally, the Trail Challenge Coordinator will have to report the Placing on an official TCP Reporting Sheet. All Breed Challenge Class will include a youth and adult division along with the different levels of competition listed below.

For any consideration of merits in the next divisions, rider must present official registration certificate for each American Quarter Horse competing in any class(s). Additionally, the rider must show proof of current membership for American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) or American Quarter Horse Youth Association (AQHYA) and alliance organization, if applicable. A rider may sign up for AQHA or AQHYA membership at the registration desk. Any rider, who falsifies registration certificate or membership requirement will be disqualified and may be subject to suspension under AQHA rules.

**Youth Quarter Horse Class** – (applies to participants (6-18) – minimum age to compete will be 6 years of age). Helmets are necessary when required by state and/or local ordinance. A youth cannot exhibit a stallion.

# Adult Quarter Horse Class – (applies to participants 18 and older)

Level 1 –Training Level: this is considered a new Partnership. The rider and Horse may not have established trust or are unsure about each team member's ability to negotiate simple obstacles. Obstacles should be easy to explain to the team: basic maneuver or technique needed to complete the obstacle.

Level 2 –Intermediate Level: this is considered an established Partnership. The rider and Horse are familiar with one another, exhibit trust when negotiating obstacles and are conditioned to ride a longer Course.

Level 3 –Master Level: this is considered a Partnership where Horse and rider have established trust, can negotiate difficult obstacles and are conditioned to travel a longer Course.

## **Equestrians with Disabilities**

Allowances for riders with permanent physical or mental disabilities are permissible. Example: A rider with cancer cannot pull him/herself up to mount, and therefore can be allowed to use a mounting block without penalty. A rider with a temporary or permanent disability must advise the senior judge during the riders' meeting.

This rule does not apply to person(s) with a temporary cast, etc. which is not considered a disability and will be up to the property owner, Trail Challenge coordinator, senior judge

and/or AQHA management as to whether this person can compete. Final say will be based on the senior judge, and that decision will be final without recourse of any nature.

#### **SCORING:**

Scoring is based on the Partnership's ability to navigate the Course. Each Partnership starts with a value of 70 and earns values in a (+) or (-) system throughout the Course. First through tenth place ribbons are given in each class in each division. Additional awards will be at the discretion of the event coordinator. The Partnership with the highest overall value is named 1<sup>st</sup>. All scored classes score sheets are to be posted at the end of the event. The original score sheets are to be sent into AQHA immediately following the event.

Each obstacle should have different degrees of difficulty and have an overall value for completion of the obstacle. Riders are encouraged to attempt an obstacle.

The classes are judged on how the Partnership works together. This working unit should negotiate obstacles with calmness and patience, moving safely through each obstacle. Horses should be aware, attentive and not spook, shy or spin as well as not be unaware and clip, stumble or tick obstacles. The Partnership should demonstrate the capability of picking its way through the Course when obstacles warrant it and should willingly respond to the rider's cues on more difficult obstacles.

Emphasis is on manners, response to the rider and quality of movement. Horses should be relaxed and not display resistance. When completing the Course, the Horse should not be overly exhausted. Credit will be considered when a Partnership negotiates the obstacle with style and rate of progress, providing correctness is not sacrificed.

Obstacle Scores:  $-1\frac{1}{2}$  Extremely Poor, -1 Very Poor, -1/2 Poor, 0 Correct, +1/2 Good, +1 Very Good,  $+1\frac{1}{2}$  Excellent

- **Penalty 1/2:** Each tick of log, pole, cone plant or any component of the obstacle
- Penalty 1: Hit or step on Incorrect or break of gait at walk or jog for 2 strides or less Both feet in space Skipping space or failing to step into required space Split pole in lopeover 1 step on dismount or ground-tie (except shifting to balance)
- Penalty 3: Incorrect or break of gait at walk or jog for 2 strides or more Out of lead or break of gait at lope Knockdown Stepping outside of the confines of, jumping off or out of obstacle with one foot, once the foot had entered obstacle Including missing one element of obstacle on line of travel with one foot 2-3 steps on dismount or ground-tie
- Penalty 5: Dropping slicker or object First or second cumulative refusal, balk or evade Letting go of gate Use of hand to instill fear or praise Stepping outside the confines of, jumping off or out of obstacle with more than one foot, once the foot has entered obstacle Including missing one element of obstacle on line of travel with more than one foot ●

Blatant disobedience • 4 or more steps on dismount or ground-tie • Holding onto saddle, except to mount and dismount

Penalty Score 0: Use of 2 hands • Use of romal other than outlined • Performing obstacles incorrectly or other than in specified order • No attempt to perform an obstacle • Equipment failure • Excessively touching Horse • Entering or exiting obstacle from incorrect side or direction • Working obstacle the incorrect direction • Riding outside boundary marker of arena or Course area • Failure to ever show correct gait between obstacles as designated • Failure to follow the correct line of travel between obstacles • Head consistently carried too low or over flexed, except in training level

Tie breaker: If more than one (1) judge, the senior judge will designate an obstacle as the "tie breaker obstacle". A second and third "tie breaker obstacle" will be chosen and used only if the first tie breaker obstacle does not break the participants' tied score. These will be designated before the competition commences. The participants will not know which obstacles are designated tie breakers. If timing obstacles, use common sense. Do not sacrifice the correctness or the solidarity of the Partnership for speed. However, the Partnership should also work in a timely manner.

Once AQHA receives the placing results, AQHA will post TCM on the Horse's permanent record at AQHA. The following TCM will be given as follows: First place  $(1^{st}) - 3$  merits Second place  $(2^{nd}) - 2.5$  merits Third place  $(3^{rd}) - 2$  merits Fourth place  $(4^{th}) - 1.5$  merits Fifth place  $(5^{th}) - 1$  merit