

## NSBA RULES FOR RANCH TRAIL

The NSBA Ranch Trail class will follow the Stock Horse of Texas rules modified as shown here.

Ranch Trail should test the horse's ability to cope with situations encountered while being ridden through a pattern of obstacles generally found during the course of everyday ranch work. The horse/ rider team is judged on the correctness, efficiency and pattern accuracy with which the obstacles are negotiated and the attitude and mannerisms exhibited by the horse. Judging emphasis is on identifying the well-broke, responsive and well-mannered horse which can correctly navigate and negotiate the course.

The course will include no less than six and no more than nine obstacles. It is mandatory that the horse be asked to walk, trot and lope during the course. Walk can be part of obstacle score or be scored with the approaching obstacle. Trot must be at least 35 feet and score with approaching obstacle. Lope must be lead-specific, at least 50 feet, and score with approaching obstacle. Care must be exercised to avoid setting up any obstacles that may be hazardous to the horse or rider.

When setting courses, management will be mindful that the idea is not to trap a horse/rider team or eliminate it by making an obstacle too difficult. All courses and obstacles are to be constructed with safety in mind so as to reduce the risk for accidents. Show committees have the option of setting up the trail course to best fit the arena conditions. An outdoor course is recommended if appropriate terrain is available. Each single-performance event can be time consuming, especially with large classes, so it is imperative that time restrictions are placed on this Class. The show committee, either through a pilot run or estimation, shall select a course that has a continuous, positive flow that can be negotiated in four minutes or less.

Judges must walk the course and have the right and duty to alter the course if it is not in keeping with the intent of the class. Judges may remove or change any obstacles they deem unsafe, non-negotiable, or unnecessarily difficult. Any time a trail obstacle becomes unsafe during a class, it shall be repaired or removed from the course. If it cannot be repaired and some horses have completed the course, the score for that obstacle shall be deducted from all previous draws for that class.

The course must be designed using the mandatory obstacles and maneuvers plus optional obstacles. Combining of two or more of the obstacles is acceptable.

### **Mandatory obstacles and/or maneuvers:**

1) Ride over obstacles on the ground – usually logs or poles. Walk, trot, or lope may be used, but only one gait is required.

a) Walk-overs: Walk over no more than five logs or poles no more than 10 inches high. The space between logs or poles should be 26-30 inches. The formation may be straight, curved, zigzagged, or raised.

b) Trot-overs: Trot over no more than five logs or poles no more than 10 inches high. The space between logs or poles should be 36 to 42 inches. The formation can also be straight, curved, zigzagged, or raised.

c) Lope-overs: Lope over no more than five logs or poles no more than 10 inches high. The space between logs or poles should be 6 to 7 feet. The formation can also be straight, curved, zigzagged, or raised.

2) Opening, passing through, and closing gate: Use a gate that will not endanger horse or rider and requires minimum side passing.

3) Ride over wooden bridge: Bridge should be sturdy, safe and negotiated at a walk only. Heavy plywood lying at on the ground is an acceptable simulation of a bridge. Suggested minimum width shall be 36 inches wide and at least 6 feet long

4) Backing obstacles: Backing obstacles are to be spaced at a minimum of 28 inches. If elevated, 30- inch spacing is required. Back through and around at least three markers. Back through L, V, U, straight or similarly shaped course which may be elevated no more than 24 inches.

5) Side pass obstacle: Any object which is safe and of any length may be used to demonstrate responsiveness of the horse to leg signals. Raised side pass obstacles should not exceed 12 inches.

6) Rope drag: For Open, Non Pro, Limited Non Pro. A rope drag is not to be used in Novice or Youth Classes. Drag may be a complete figure eight and may begin in either direction. The exhibitor must have the rope dallyed on the saddle horn (half or full dally) for the duration of the drag.

**Prohibited obstacles:** Tarps, water obstacles with slick bottoms, PVC pipe used as a jump or walk over, tires, rocking or moving bridges, logs or poles elevated in a manner that permits such to roll in a dangerous manner. Only live or stuffed animals which would normally be encountered in an outdoor setting and which are not used in an attempt to “spook” a horse may be used.

**Optional obstacles:** Optional obstacles from which selections can be made include, but are not limited to:

- A jump obstacle whose center height is not less than 14” high or more than 24” high. Holding the saddle horn is permissible for this obstacle.
- Carry object from one part of the arena to another.
- Remove and replace materials from mailbox.
- Trot through cones spaced a minimum of 6 feet apart.
- Cross natural ditches or ride up embankments.
- Swing rope or throw rope at dummy steer head.
- Step in and out of obstacle or trailer.
- Put on slicker or coat.
- Stand to mount with mounting block.
- Walk through water obstacle.
- Open gate on foot.
- Walk through brush.
- Ground tie
- Lead at the trot.

It is up to show management if the competition trail course will be made available to exhibitors or posted prior to the day of competition. It must be posted at least one hour prior to competition. Printed handouts for exhibitors are helpful and encouraged.

Once competition for the specific class/division begins, no extra verbal instructions will be given to exhibitors by the judge

**Credits and Penalties.** All runs begin upon entering the pen; any infractions (such as two hands on the reins, using either hand to instill fear or praise, etc.) are subject to penalty at that time. The rider has the option of eliminating any obstacle however this will result in being “Off Pattern” and the horse/rider team may not place above others who have completed the pattern correctly. A Judge may ask a horse to pass on an obstacle after three refusals or at any time for safety concerns.

Credit is given to horse/rider teams who negotiate the obstacles correctly and efficiently. Horses should receive credit for showing attentiveness to obstacles and ability to pick through the course when the obstacles warrant it while willingly responding to riders’ cues on more difficult obstacles. Quality of movement and cadence should be considered part of the maneuver score for the obstacle.

**Penalties** are assessed as follows:

- 1 Point Penalties: Each hit, bite, or stepping on a log, cone, plant or any component of the obstacle; Incorrect or break of gait at walk or trot for two strides or less; Both front or hind feet in a single-stride slot or space at a walk or trot; Skipping over or failing to step into required space; Split pole in lope-over; Incorrect number of strides, if specified; One step on dismount/ remount or ground tie except shifting to balance.
- 3 Point Penalties: Wrong lead; Draped reins; Break of gait at Lope; Break of gait at Walk or Trot for more than two (2) strides, Two to three steps on dismount/remount or ground tie.
- 5 Point Penalties: Spurring in front of cinch: Four or more steps on dismount or ground tie, Blatant dis- obedience; Use of either hand to instill fear/praise; Use of two hands (except in snaffle bit or hackamore) per maneuver; More than one finger between split reins or any fingers between romal reins (except two rein) per maneuver; Knocking over, stepping out of, or falling off of an obstacle; Dropping an object required to be carried; 1st or 2nd cumulative refusal; Letting go of gate; Four or more steps in dismount/remount or ground tie
- Off-Pattern (OP): Breaking pattern; Repeated disobedience; Leaving working area before pattern is complete; Cannot place above others who complete pattern correctly.
- Disqualification (DQ): Lameness; Abuse; Illegal equipment; Disrespect or misconduct; Fall of horse/ rider, improper western attire. Disqualified entries are counted as an entry in the class but cannot receive points or credits for that class toward the all around.