
PLTA CHALLENGE PROGRAM

PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS

PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM:

The Pack Llama Trial Association (PLTA) Challenge is an event in which llamas and handlers participate for experience, entertainment and education. Rather than being an examination of a llama's skill against strict standards, as the pack trial is, this event provides an opportunity to engage with other packers and handlers in a stress-free environment that supports learning and fun. Undertaken in a group setting, it provides PLTA members with an environment for exchange of ideas and training concepts and an opportunity to increase both the llama's and the handler's skill in a natural setting

The Challenge is a less structured event than a pack trial, allowing for greater flexibility, and broader participation. Participants are allowed to undertake as much of the Challenge as they choose and still receive acknowledgement for their effort. No one fails a Challenge. The handler can decide what the appropriate load is for the animal at the time of the event, what obstacles to attempt, and how far to go. Llamas can attempt obstacles they have not experienced before and will not be eliminated from participation or penalized in any way if they do not complete them.

Since there are no required obstacles, elevation, or distance, the event can be staged in a wide selection of venues. The course may be as long or short, as steep or flat, as easy or rugged as planners choose, as long as the basic criterion of a "realistic packing environment while allowing for variations in conditions that are peculiar to different parts of the country" is met.

This event also provides a social outing for llama owners who enjoy packing or want to learn to pack but have no interest in promoting their animals as commercial packers or breeders, as is often assumed in a pack trail. There is no limit to the number of events a llama may participate in.

The Challenge is also an educational opportunity that allows those with little experience to interact with more experienced llama owners. As part of the Challenge experience, participants are encouraged to ask questions, and expect assistance and interaction with more experienced handlers and the Challenge Master. Further, they should expect assistance in learning how to safely negotiate obstacles and teach their llamas to deal with obstacles that are new to them.

GENERAL PROCEDURES AND REGULATIONS

CHALLENGE BASICS

The PLTA Challenge involves trained persons called Challenge Masters leading groups of llamas and their handlers through a course along which they encounter and negotiate obstacles. The Challenge is hosted by an individual, or group of individuals, who are responsible for publicizing, staging and documenting the event according to PLTA procedures and regulations. In order to provide insurance coverage and insure consistency with program requirements, the Challenge must be sanctioned by the PLTA.

Llama/handler teams are not required to attempt any obstacle, nor are they required to carry a specified load or hike a specified distance. Rather, points are acquired for what each llama *does* accomplish. This flexibility allows participation by a wide spectrum of llamas and handlers.

Points can be accrued at events throughout the year. To enhance bragging rights of the handler/owner, and to publicly promote the abilities of working llamas, points will be published on the PLTA web site. Specifics of safety, setting and types of obstacles are the same as for a Pack Trial (see the PLTA Pack Trial Handbook version 1/1/2010).

CHALLENGE SUMMARY

	PLTA Challenge
Award	Points and Bragging Rights
Eligibility	Llama is sound and in good health
Course Design	Open-ended, based on realistic packing environment
Manageability Tasks	Not Required
Obstacles	Open-ended from approved PLTA specifications
Performance	No points given for obstacles completed in an unsafe manner
Safety	Dismissal from event at Challenge Master's discretion
Official	Challenge Master
PLTA Records	Archived Challenge Master's data sheet. Database. Web site publication

PARTICIPATION:

Llamas must be registered with the PLTA in order to participate. Owners must be Members. For insurance reasons, handlers must be at least Associates. All participants must sign a liability waiver.

Llamas must be sound and healthy to participate. They may be of any age. The amount of weight carried (within safety parameters), the distance hiked, and the obstacles attempted are left to the discretion of the handler. Points are accrued only once per obstacle per Challenge. Participating llamas are not required to wear saddles or carry panniers, but this is highly encouraged.

A participant may choose to leave a course at any time. If they elect to do so, the llama will receive all points accrued up to that point. If they remain on the course for their return trip, points will be awarded for distance and elevation accomplished during their return as well as their hike out.

LAND MANAGEMENT RULES AND REGULATIONS, LEAVE NO TRACE

It is of utmost concern to the PLTA that the PLTA Challenge causes no environmental damage. To this end, all regulations defined by land management agencies with authority over the location where the Challenge is held, must be followed. For example, land management regulations may prohibit off-trail travel, or regulate group size.

SANCTIONING, INSURANCE, AND FEES

Due to insurance requirements, PLTA Challenges require pre-approval and sanctioning by the PLTA. Approval must be requested from the PLTA Challenge Program Coordinator event at least two weeks prior to the Challenge event. Sanctioning allows PLTA administration to be aware of the event, help publicize it,

provide mentoring as necessary, and inform the insurance company that it will occur. The PLTA Event Sanctioning Form (available on the PLTA website at <http://packllama.org> or from the Program Coordinator) must be used for this purpose and accompanied by the appropriate fee. Challenges fees include options for individual events, and for an unlimited number of events during a calendar year. The process of sanctioning an event follows these steps:

1. Person(s) wishing to host a Challenge submits request using the PLTA Event Sanctioning Form with the appropriate fee to the Challenge Program Coordinator. The form includes the following information.
 - a. Host Name and contact information
 - b. Challenge Master name and contact information (Host and Challenge Master may be the same person)
 - c. Event date
 - d. Event location
2. Program Manager reviews request and makes certain
 - a. The Sanctioning Form is accurately and appropriately filled out.
 - b. The Host and/or Challenge Master is/are PLTA Member(s) with dues paid.
 - c. Challenge Master is qualified and authorized by the PLTA.
 - d. The appropriate fee has been paid.
 - e. The course has been identified and is appropriate.
 - f. The date is free from conflict with other llama activities in the area.
 - g. The Host and/or Challenge Master is provided with a mentor if needed
 - h. The Host and/or Challenge Master remains in good standing after previous events.
3. The Program Manager signs the Sanctioning form and returns a copy to the Host or Challenge Master.
4. The Program Coordinator notifies the PLTA Board of Directors and the website administrator of the event, its location, Host, Challenge Master and location.
5. The Host publicizes the event.
6. The Challenge Master ensures that the Sanctioning form is present during the event. (This is an insurance requirement.)

Mentorship, if required, may be provided by phone, email, or in person. After the Program Coordinator has reviewed the Host's request and positively resolved any issues, the trial can be officially sanctioned. In order to accommodate insurance needs, all participants must be either Members or Associates, be current on their dues, and have signed liability releases. All llamas must be registered with the PLTA and owned by a PLTA Member.

PERSONNEL:

PLTA CHALLENGE PROGRAM COORDINATOR:

This person is a PLTA member assigned by the PLTA Board of Directors to interface with Challenge hosts. Protocol for scheduling a Challenge shall be the same as for a Pack Trial. Program Coordinator duties include:

- Updating the PLTA Board of Directors regarding the scheduling and completion of Challenges events.
- Updating the PLTA website administrator regarding the scheduling and completion of Challenges events.
- Insuring that documentation for the Challenge is appropriately submitted, recorded and archived.
- Insuring that web site records are accurate and promptly updated.
- Providing mentoring to Challenge hosts and Challenge Masters as needed.

CHALLENGE HOST:

The Host of a Challenge event is the person who is in charge of organizing the event and communicating with the Program Coordinator. The host can be one in the same as the Challenge Master. A Challenge event may be supported by however many persons are necessary to accomplish the necessary tasks. This may consist of only the Challenge Master, or of a large crew. At a minimum a PLTA authorized Challenge Master is required. *The PLTA Manual: How To Put On A PLTA Pack Llama Trial* is an excellent source of information for event management. Its use is strongly recommended.

CHALLENGE MASTER REQUIREMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

A PLTA Challenge Master is expected to have llama packing experience adequate to allow a full understanding of safety issues regarding the negotiation of obstacles, and of fitness and health concerns expected during the packing experience. Further, a Challenge Master must be endorsed by the PLTA Board of Directors via apprenticeship with a PLTA Certifier or participation in a regional training workshop and a written test.

Once qualified, the Challenge Master has the right and responsibility to select an appropriate venue, identify obstacles and assign a point value to them, and record and report event results. The Challenge Master is also responsible for evaluating safety concerns and settling on-site disputes. Challenge Master are not allowed to judge their own animals.

Challenge Master Written Exam: The written exam required for becoming a Challenge Master is to be administered in an open-book, non-proctored setting. While a score of 100% correct is required, incorrect answers may be revisited until accuracy is achieved. The purpose of the exam is to assure sound familiarity with the rules and procedures required for a PLTA Challenge event. Answers may be found in the PLTA Handbook. The exam questions are:

1. Give six ways the Challenge is different from a Pack trial?
2. What are three responsibilities of Challenge Masters?
3. What documentation must be sent to PLTA for participants to receive their points?
4. What 15 types of obstacles are allowable?
5. Explain the ways points are earned in a Challenge.
6. What are the maximum weight restrictions, as related to age, for the load the llama is carrying?
7. What six llama behaviors are considered safety hazards?
8. What might be the possible consequences of these behaviors?
9. What are three examples of human behaviors that might result in the handler and llama being asked to leave?
10. What are the three requirements for participation in a PLTA event with a llama?

THE CHALLENGE COURSE:

Course design will match the PLTA handbook requirement of a “realistic packing environment while allowing for variations in conditions that are peculiar to different parts of the country” (*PLTA Handbook: General Procedures and Regulations for PLTA Sanctioned Events*. 1/1/2010, page 17). The course’s general location will be identified at the time the event is scheduled. Prior to PLTA sanctioning, it will be reviewed for appropriateness by the Challenge Program Manager.

During the event the Challenge Master will carry a GPS receiver capable of showing cumulative elevation loss and gain and programmed to record distance measurements at smallest increments possible for that unit.

The Challenge Master will determine the device or means by which measurements in distance and elevation are made. The use of a GPS receiver is not required, but is encouraged.

OBSTACLES:

MANAGEABILITY:

Manageability tasks such as are part of PLTA Pack Trials will not be included as part of the Challenge.

OBSTACLE SELECTION:

Obstacles will be selected in accordance with PLTA Pack Trial standards and from an approved list. No specific type or number of obstacles is required. Each obstacle will be assigned a point value based on complexity. The number of obstacles shall be limited to no more than ten per mile and will be located throughout the course rather than concentrated at the beginning or end, or done separately from the course itself.

Multiple types of obstacles and levels of complexity will be available at each event to encourage participation by all skill levels. Obstacles will be selected, marked and identified as either 'simple' or 'complex' by the Challenge Master. Examples of appropriate obstacles include, but are not limited to:

Bridges	Foot inspection	Rock rubble
Brush	Gates	Step down consecutive steps
Bug spray	Logs	Back out
Deadfall	Mud	Trail traffic (dogs, horses, atvs)
Duck under	Pack manipulation	Water

Trail obstacles should include elements from the following categories see the PLTA website at <http://packllama.org> for more details):

- **Picking One's Way:** The llama is required to move carefully through material that obscures and complicates footing
- **Foot Fears:** The llama must walk through a medium into which the feet sink.
- **Up/Over/Across:** The llama must negotiate an obstacle that requires extending its stride to climb or stretch.
- **Tight Places:** The llama is required to negotiate a space that allows limited room to maneuver and that impinges on the llama's personal space.
- **Slippery Slope:** The llama is required to negotiate a slope of greater than 45 degrees that has loose footing and which may cause load shift.
- **Load Management:** The llama must tolerate adjustments or handling of tack or llama's body, exclusive of head and halter.
- **Trail Hazards:** The llama must tolerate unexpected trail conditions including structures, debris, livestock, people, pets, or machines

OBSTACLE NEGOTIATION:

Llamas are expected to calmly, willingly and safely negotiate the obstacles. Llamas being led individually shall negotiate obstacles on their own, without having to have another llama to lead them through. With approval of the llama's handler, another person may lead the llama through an obstacle.

Obstacle safety is an important responsibility of the Challenge Masters. Besides insuring that general obstacles are safe, the Challenge Master shall also identify obstacles that are unsafe for strings to attempt. These obstacles will be undertaken individually by llamas otherwise working in a string. For all other obstacles the decision to allow the entire string to negotiate the obstacle as a unit, or to separate the llamas and have them to negotiate the obstacle independently, lies with the handler. Points awarded are the same whether the llama completes the obstacle in a string or on its own. Llamas do not acquire extra points for working in a string.

Points shall only be awarded for obstacles accomplished under the observation of the Challenge Master. Points may only be awarded once per obstacle, per Challenge event. Obstacles must be completed safely. Points will not be awarded for obstacles that are not completed in an appropriate manner per the Challenge Master's determination.

PACE:

The Challenge is not a race. Nor is there a required time window for completion as in a Pack Trial. Nor are there any points awarded for a faster pace or deducted for a slower one. In the case of groups with highly varied pace requirements, Challenge Masters and Hosts are encouraged to divide participants into faster or slower groups for purposes of convenience and greater enjoyment, bearing in mind that each group requires the accompaniment of a Challenge Master. Event organizers are also required to understand the complications that heat, elevation, rough terrain and low levels of fitness can cause. There are no pace requirements beyond providing for the safety of both llamas and handlers.

WEIGHT CARRIED:

Llamas are not required to carry weight, however, if they do so, the amount carried is left to the discretion of the handler within the parameters of the safety standards established by the PLTA for Pack Trials (see PLTA Handbook 2010) with the exception of the 90 pound limit, which does not apply.

The llama's load is based on a percentage of the body weight of a *physically fit* llama. If there is dispute about fitness, the Challenge Master has the right to limit a llama's load. If no scale is available to weigh llamas and loads, no points for weight will be awarded at the event. Load is defined as the saddle and rigging, panniers and contents of the panniers.

For reasons of safety for the animal, weight restrictions based on age of the llama are as follows: llamas under thirty months-old will carry no weight, while llamas thirty to thirty six months-old will carry no more than ten percent of their body weight. Llamas from thirty-six to forty-eight months are limited to fifteen percent of their body weight. Llamas over the age of forty-eight months may carry a maximum of twenty five percent of their body weight. No llama shall be permitted to carry more than twenty five percent of its body weight.

Age Group		Weight Restriction
Months	Years	
Less than 30	< 2½	No weight allowed other than light saddle and panniers filled with stuffing
30 -36	2½ - 3	10% of body weight or less
36 - 48	3-4	15% of body weight or less

Age Group		Weight Restriction
48+	4+	25% of body weight or less

LLAMA STRINGS:

Llamas may be led on the course in strings of up to four animals. Each llama in a string will receive points for accomplishments in the same manner as llamas not participating in a string. Llamas do not receive extra points for working in a string. If the Challenge Master determines that an obstacle is unsafe for a string, the handler shall be required to separate the llamas from the string and have them negotiate the obstacle independently. There is no penalty for this.

POINT ACQUISITION:

During the event the Challenge Master will record the distance and cumulative elevation gain accomplished by each llama on the Challenge Master's score sheet. Points awarded will be calculated from this data using the schedule listed in the table below. The score sheet shall be provided in a format that allows electronic data entry. It shall include the following information:

- Event Name
- Event Date
- Event Contact Person Name
- Event Contact Person Phone
- Event Contact Person Email
- Llama Registered Name
- Llama Elevation Gain Achieved
- Llama Mileage Achieved
- Llama Obstacles Accomplished
- Llama Weight Carried
- Llama Points Earned

Points will be accounted in whole numbers. Distance points shall be acquired at the rate of two points per mile. Elevation points are awarded at the rate of one point per every 125 feet gained. Carrying a saddle through the course will be awarded 1 point. Carrying filled out panniers through the course will be awarded 2 points. Saddle and panniers must be worn throughout the course and removed no more than three times, and then only for safety concerns in order to earn points.

Obstacles safely and willingly completed earn one point for simple obstacles and 2 points for complex obstacles. The relative value of obstacles is determined by the Challenge Master and addressed during the Challenge Master's training. Weight carried is awarded points based on the percentage of the animals fit body weight as follows: 10% = 1 point, 15% = 2 points, 20% = 3 points, 25% = 4 points.

Accomplishment	Points Awarded
Saddle carried	One point per event
Panniers carried	Two points per event
Distance	one point per half mile
Elevation gained	one point per 125 feet
Simple obstacle	one point per obstacle
Complex obstacle	two points per obstacle
Weight carried	10%=1 point, 15% = 2 points, 20% = 3 points, 25% = 4 points

Points awarded for mileage will be calculated based on the reading of the Challenge Master's GPS receiver at the most distant point the llama reached. Points are calculated based on half mile intervals, thus a total distance of 1.35 miles would earn two points, while 1.65 miles would earn three points.

SAFETY:

Safety on the Course: Standards of safety are the same as for a Pack Trial and are based on both the llama and the handler's performance. Llamas and/or handlers may be asked to leave the course for safety reasons. Disqualification from the Challenge based on safety issues is at the discretion of the Challenge Master. No points will be accrued by disqualified llamas. Unsafe acts are defined as unacceptable or potentially dangerous acts that are committed by the llama or the handler. These acts may affect the llama and its handler or other llamas, handlers, or bystanders. Unsafe llama behaviors include but are not limited to:

- Lunging through obstacles
- Charging forward uncontrollably
- Kicking or rearing
- Intentionally throwing its body around
- Attacking a person or llama
- Running into other participants

Unacceptable handler behavior includes cruelty to their or other animals, lack of sportsmanship, bad trail etiquette, etc.

Event Safety: Hosts and Challenge Masters are advised to ensure a safe setting for their event. This includes but is not limited to providing a first aid kit, identifying medically trained participants, advising participants on weather related risks and trail hazards, providing emergency contact phone numbers, and discussing emergency procedures.

DOCUMENTATION, DATA MANAGEMENT AND AWARDS

DOCUMENTATION:

During the Challenge, the Challenge Master shall keep track of points using score sheets provided by the PLTA for this purpose. Required follow-up documentation includes release of liability forms for all participants, and the Challenge Master's score sheet(s). Official forms provided by the PLTA must be used. Documentation must be supplied to the Program Coordinator within two weeks after the event. These will be used for data entry and retained as archives as determined by the PLTA Board of Directors.

Data must be provided to the Program Coordinator and any disputes settled prior to the end of the calendar year in order for points to be awarded.

DATA MANAGEMENT:

It is intended that, eventually, data will be kept in a relational database designed for the purpose. It is further intended that this database will be available on the PLTA web site in an interactive format so that Challenge organizers may enter their own data in a way that can be proofed by the program manager before being finalized and made available to the public in a searchable format. In the interim, LibreOffice will be used to contain the data. Tables and fields will include:

- ❖ Event
 - Event Name
 - Event Date
 - Event Challenge Master
 - Event Host Contact Phone
 - Event Host Contact Email
- ❖ Llama
 - Llama's PLTA Number
 - Llama's Registered Name
 - Llama's Points Earned
 - Llama's Owner
 - Owner's PLTA Number

AWARDS:

At the end of each calendar year, the PLTA will display the points earned for that year, as well as the total number of points a llama has during all the years of its participation for public viewing on its web site. The Challenge Program Coordinator will be responsible for seeing that this is accomplished.

CHALLENGE INFORMATION FLOW AND ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

