



Pack Llama Trail Association, Inc.

Dedicated to Preserving and Promoting the Working Llama

www.packllama.org

A Change to Pack Trial Regulations:

The Certifier Escort Method

What's Changing:

In order to make PLTA Pack Trials as efficient and effective as possible The PLTA Board of Directors constantly reviews the way trials function. In February of 2018 members brought before the Board an idea to make trial administration more efficient, especially at the Master and Elite levels. After intense consideration by the Board, a year of experimentation at several events, and review by the Pack Trial Governance Committee, the Board unanimously voted on 9/12/19 to make the method official. In the new certifier escort method a certifier escorts the trial candidates through a field test that is defined by the certifier as it is undertaken.

At issue was the time and energy it takes to flag the route and mark the obstacles for pack trial field tests. In the case of Master or Elite trials, this can take days. Recognizing that the function of certifiers is to make sure that trials are run appropriately, and given that these people are knowledgeable about the finest details of how a trial is administered, it was decided that if a certifier accompanies a group through their field test, they can identify obstacles, appropriate distance, and elevation gain on-the-go. This eliminates much of the required preplanning and expedites trial administration.

The Board also recognized that the stationary steward method, in which a steward is posted at each obstacle to judge the llamas on that obstacle, while handlers & llamas hike the course unescorted, is seldom used. While it might work well when tens of llamas are on the course, it is unnecessary for small numbers of llamas and it requires a large staff (20 people for 20 obstacles on the Elite). It also allows handlers and llamas to hike the distance without scrutiny. The Board decided to eliminate this method.

How it Works:

In a certifier escort scenario all elevation, distance, and obstacle requirements as well as other pack trial rules and procedures remain unchanged from current standards. In practice, if the event has with multiple trials going on at the same time, the certifier would have to be available by phone or other means to deal with any administrative or emergency issues, or a second certifier would have to be present to handle those matters.

The hallmark of the new method consists of two major adjustments

1. Marking the exact route of the course prior to the trial is not necessary
2. Obstacles are not required to be identified or marked prior to the trial

however, the certifier must be familiar with the area, terrain and potential route. In the best case scenario a general route would have been identified and mapped prior to the trial and a pre-trial walk through by the certifier would have taken place. This allows the certifier to be cognizant of potential obstacles and a route to that meets required distance and elevation gain.

Specific requirements are as follows:

1. The method **applies only to the Elite, Master and Advanced level trials**. It is not to be used for the Basic Trials.

The Pack Llama Trail Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Donations are tax deductible.



Pack Llama Trail Association, Inc.

Dedicated to Preserving and Promoting the Working Llama

www.packllama.org

2. Mileage, elevation gain and obstacles requirements remain the same as with other methods of administration.
3. The certifier keeps a record of the route and obstacles used during the field test.
4. The certifier assumes the steward's function of observing and recording llamas' performance.
5. The certifier determines that all obstacle requirements for the designated level are met and certifies course length and elevation gain.
6. A special set of forms will be provided to allow the certifier to record field test information.
7. If a steward is available to guide the group, the accompanying certifier may lead their own llama through the course and have its performance evaluated and scored. In this case, caution against conflict of interest must be observed.

The Board chose to exclude Basic trials from the certifier escort method because they felt that handlers and llamas at that level benefit from a more structured situation. The Board wanted to provide both handlers and stewards the opportunity to learn the regular structure of trials. It is also the case that Certifiers are not required for Basic trials. The Board did not want to extend the option of running a field test in the escort method to stewards. They felt it could easily devolve into the informal setting of a Challenge, rather than maintaining the more formal standards of an exam, which is what a pack trial is.

For people at the basic level Challenges provide a better opportunity for a more free-form way of dealing with hiking and obstacles. In a Challenge, handlers are able to choose what obstacles they will attempt and kibitz about how to negotiate and train for them. They also can attempt an obstacle multiple times to, in effect, train on the spot. Since the Challenge is designed as a rather free-form, fun event, rather than an exam of the llama's ability.

Going Forward

The Board and Pack Trial Governance Committee very much hope that this change to trial requirements serves you well. While we required the method to be field tested prior to approving it, we welcome feedback from the membership. The Board continues to do their best to respond to your concerns and mold the PLTA into the best organization it can be.

Tom Seifert

PLTA President