



# **PLTA Pack Trial Field Notes**

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**Pack Llama Trail Association**  
Supporting the Working Llama



# Pack Trial Field Notes

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Version 23.03.05

The content in this booklet is much abridged from the PLTA Pack Trial Handbook 2023 revision and must be used in conjunction with it. Detailed explanations of all pack trial requirements and procedures are found in there.

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## **SECTION 1. ABOUT THE PLTA**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Staffed by dedicated volunteers, the Pack Llama Trail Association, Inc. hereafter referred to as the “PLTA” is a not for profit charitable and educational organization. The mission of the PLTA is to preserve and promote working llamas, through education of the public, and members of the association as to breeding, raising, training, care, and safe and humane uses of working llamas as companions.

### **1.2 Management Structure**

#### **Board of Directors**

While the PLTA Board of Directors strives to consider and support the desires of the organization membership, all responsibility for determining and maintaining pack trial standards and participation ultimately rests with the Board.

Event planners are advised that all service marks, trademarks, and copyright of the Pack Llama Trail Association, Inc., shall be respected and correctly used. Without hearing, any person, club or association who fails to abide by any of the requirements set forth herein may be suspended from all privileges of the PLTA by the Board of Directors. The Board may also, without hearing, refuse to allow entry of any person or llama in such events, for any failure of a llama’s owner or handler to abide by the requirements established by the PLTA Board of Directors.

#### **Pack Trial Governance Committee**

To assist the Board of Directors a committee composed of knowledgeable and experienced PLTA members sit on the Pack Trial Governance Committee. These individuals review pack trial issues and make recommendations to the Board about how to best manage the trials. See Appendix 3.

#### **Event Host**

While the PLTA has established criteria for testing pack llamas with supportive authorization, information management and standardized testing structure, the Association does not conduct the trials or other



sanctioned events. This responsibility falls to the Event Host who applies to the PLTA to sanction their event. The Event Host bears full responsibility for organizing the event and carrying out its activities in a safe and efficient manner.

### **1.3 PLTA Enrollment**

In order for a llama to participate in a pack trial the llama (or guanaco) owner must be a member of the PLTA and the llama must be registered with the PLTA. For insurance purposes handlers and other participants must be, at a minimum, associate members.

### **1.4 Vocabulary**

In the past, the word “trial” was used for many different portions of the PLTA pack llama evaluations. A broadening of the scope of PLTA programs as well as information management developments require such words to be used with greater discrimination, hence the definitions that follow.

#### **Event**

A PLTA “Event” is the entirety of a PLTA sanctioned gathering. It may include Pack Trials, Packers’ Challenges, Packers Primers, workshops, seminars and more. It may last a single day or many. Events must be sanctioned with the PLTA Secretary. Sanctioning fees are based on the number and type of activities planned. Fees to the participant are based on the activities participated in and, other than the required PLTA membership and llama registration fees, are at the discretion of the host.

#### **Activity**

An “Activity” is a particular type of PLTA pursuit. Activities include challenges, trials, trainings and workshops.

#### **Trial**

A “trial” is a single iteration of evaluating the llama against a written standard. Each pack trial consists of manageability tasks and a field test. A number of trials must be completed to achieve certification at a particular level.

#### **Manageability Tasks**

Manageability Tasks are those activities a llama is expected to participate in while preparing to begin packing. These include such



things as haltering, loading and unloading in a vehicle, saddling and so forth.

## **Field Tests**

Field tests demonstrate the llama's fitness level and ability to negotiate obstacles in a realistic packing environment. This involves two components: hiking a course over a route measured for distance and elevation gain, and negotiating obstacles typical of what a llama and handler may expect to encounter during a pack trip.

## **Course**

The pack trial course is the route taken during the field test. Courses are usually established, mapped and marked by the trial marshal. At all levels above Basic, they must be approved by a pack trial Certifier. Each course must fall within the PLTA distance and elevation gain parameters for a given level.

## **Obstacles**

Pack trial obstacles are impediments or obstructions found along the course that represent typical naturally occurring difficulties encountered during hiking or packing. These obstacles must meet PLTA standards and requirements, and be appropriate to the level of pack trial for which they are being used. At all levels above Basic, they must be approved by a pack trail certifier. Generally obstacles are selected and marked prior to the pack trial by the Trial Marshal. Llamas undertaking a field test must successfully negotiate all obstacles on the course.

## **1.5 Pack Trial on Request**

Members who find it difficult to attend pack trial events may contact an authorized certifier to schedule a pack trial specifically for their needs. Details may be found in the PLTA Pack Trial Handbook.

## **SECTION 2. PACK TRIAL ADMINISTRATION**

### **2.1 Purpose and Intent**

The PLTA set up pack trials to support the organization's purpose by facilitating a social, non-competitive atmosphere where the pack llama is tested against a written standard in a realistic packing environment. One of the main objectives for participants is to experience an enjoyable and safe event with their pack llama and other packing enthusiasts. Other than going packing in the real-life outdoor



environment, we believe that the PLTA provides the only organized, realistic packing events for people and their llamas that are not only social but provide useful testing grounds for their packers. Pack trials also provide wonderful opportunities for packing enthusiasts to observe and learn from all levels of experienced llama packers.

The llamas enter the trial level for which they are fully trained and conditioned. PLTA sanctioned pack trials are formal tests and should not be considered training exercises. They are not a place to teach a llama to pack. Trials are non- competitive events; it is the llama that earns a certification of completion, not the handler. During pack trials llamas do not compete against each other, rather they are evaluated on an individual basis.

## **2.2 Supporting Information**

Besides providing an experienced person to give guidance and support to the Trial Host and Trial Committee, the PLTA also provides helpful written documentation.

### **Website**

The PLTA maintains a website at [www.packllama.org](http://www.packllama.org) that contains all the information included in this document plus much more. It is an excellent source for learning what the PLTA is all about. Descriptions of PLTA Programs, lists of llama registrations and accomplishments, changes to regulations, updates, articles of interest, links, schedules, and contact information are posted here.

### **Pack Trial Handbook**

The pack trial handbook provides history of the trials and comprehensive explanations of requirements. The handbook is available on the PLTA website in both electronic and printable form.

## **2.3 Event Sanctioning**

Events sanctioned by the PLTA may be conducted by individuals, groups, clubs, or associations. Any member is eligible to schedule PLTA activities once their request for sanctioning has been approved. Application must be made using the PLTA Event Sanctioning form and accompanied by appropriate payment. Forms are available at [packllama.org](http://packllama.org) or from the PLTA Secretary. Fees may be paid via the website by using PayPal or by submission to the PLTA Treasurer. Fees must be submitted at the time of application.



Applicants for hosting a trial are encouraged to stage trial levels that are likely to match the capabilities of llama packers in their area. This should encourage a greater attendance and may encourage new people to become involved. If no trials have been run in the area before, the PLTA suggests that the event be staged over the course of a weekend, with a Packer's Primer workshop being held the first day and a Basic trial being held the next. There is no additional fee for the Packer's Primer if it is held in conjunction with a pack trial.

## **2.4 Trial Entry**

In order for a llama to participate in a pack trial the llama owner must be a member of the PLTA and the llama must be registered with the PLTA. For insurance purposes handlers and other participants must be, at a minimum, associate members.

Entry in a pack trial shall be initiated through the presentation of an official PLTA Pack Trial Entry Form for each llama/handler team. The form must be completed in full, and the information given on the form must be accurate. Each form must be signed by the owner who is responsible for all errors, or by the owner's agent duly authorized to make the entry.

## **2.5 Roles and Responsibilities**

For complete descriptions of all pack trial staff refer to section 2.5 of the Pack Trial Handbook.

### **Mentors**

Mentors are experienced and knowledgeable persons available to trial hosts to help insure that successful trials are run. This person is typically a very experienced certifier or member of the board of directors who is fully familiar with all aspects of event planning, trial regulations, and PLTA policy. Mentors work closely with the host and trial committee to answer questions and supply guidance.

Working by phone, email, or in person, with a mentor assigned by the board of directors, a trial chairperson may validate a Basic level pack trial without the oversight of a trial certifier.

### **Trial Certifiers**

#### **Authorization**

Persons authorized as PLTA Certifiers are expected to have a thorough knowledge of pack trial requirements, to be well versed in the history



and mission of the PLTA, and to understand PLTA policies as they apply to pack trials and public interface. Requirements to gain authorization are as follows:

*Basic and Advance Level Certifier Authorization*

The candidate must complete a written test examining knowledge of pack trial standards and requirements at all levels and

- Have overnight llama packing experience
- Completed at least **two** PLTA sanctioned Advanced pack trials
- Apprenticed under an authorized PLTA pack trial certifier at one or more Advanced Trials

OR

- Overnight llama packing experience
- Completion of at least **one** PLTA sanctioned Advanced pack trial
- Attended a PLTA Trial Certifier's Workshop

*Basic through Elite Level Certifier Authorization*

The candidate must complete a written test examining knowledge of pack trial standards and requirements at all levels and have

- Overnight llama packing experience
- Completed at least **two** PLTA sanctioned Master level pack trials
- Apprenticed under an approved trial certifier at one additional Advanced or Master level trial

OR

- Overnight llama packing experience
- Completed at least **one** PLTA sanctioned Master level pack trial
- Attended a PLTA Trial Certifier's Workshop

**Authority**

The Pack Trial Certifier is deputized by the PLTA Board of Directors to settle any disputes that occur during the trial. The Trial Certifier represents the Pack Llama Trail Association at PLTA Trials and serves as the Board of Director's and the Pack Trial Governance Committee's eyes and ears at each trial event. The Certifier is responsible for seeing that trial activities must be conducted in compliance with PLTA standards, procedures and regulations. As such, the Certifier is given the power of censure over the trial activities and participants and must take whatever action s/he deems appropriate to ensure that all aspects of the trial activities are conducted appropriately.



## **Pre-Trial Duties**

### *Inspecting the Course*

The trial certifier must walk each trial course with the trial marshal prior to the start of the trial. During this walk-through, the certifier will make note of the simulated packing scenario, the objective of each obstacle, and the expected performance of the llamas so that handlers and stewards can be briefed as to the logic behind the selection of the obstacle and the proper method of negotiating it. The trial certifier will also insure that the course has been appropriately designed for the level of the trial and will verify that standards for the following requirements are met:

- Proper length
- Required elevation gain/course distance
- Proper number and types of obstacles
- Reasonable time window.

### *Modifying the Course*

(Refer to Handbook section 3.5)

If the terrain prevents the exact physical requirements from being met, or if there are other circumstances that affect the difficulty of the course, the Trial Certifier may approve modification to the course in length, elevation gain, or location. These changes will be made only after all other potential routes have been considered. The Certifier also has the right to lengthen time windows as a means of adjusting to course conditions. Factors that could influence the need to adjust the course may include but are not limited to:

- Extended grades of more than 9% (Handbook sect. 3.5.3)
- Extended sections of extremely rough or rocky terrain
- Extreme weather conditions.
- Dangerous trail traffic

The Trial Certifier is given the responsibility of approving the course design because they are in the best position to evaluate the effects of the demands the course makes on participating llamas. Changes must be made in keeping with the requirements and intent of the established standards for the given pack trial level.

### *Modifying Obstacles*

The Trial Certifier is responsible for assessing the safety of obstacles and their appropriateness to the trial level. If string trials are to be run, obstacles must also be evaluated for the safety and appropriateness for strings. If the Trial Certifier finds an obstacle to be unsafe for a string



to negotiate, s/he may require the llamas in the string to be separated so that the llamas navigate the obstacle individually. Alternately, the Trial Certifier may require the selection of a completely different obstacle, or selection of an alternate obstacle to be used only by the llamas working in strings.

### *Llama Fitness*

The Trial Certifier shall determine that all participating llamas are healthy, fit and sound enough to undertake a PLTA pack trial. The Certifier shall not allow any llama to be brought onto the trail grounds if it shows any symptoms of, and/or is known to have been in contact with, any communicable llama disease within the thirty days preceding the first date of the trail.

### *Equipment Inspection*

The Trial Certifier has authority to evaluate and approve or disapprove of the equipment the llama uses during a pack trial. This includes the saddle and pannier system, rigging, load arrangement, and breakaway systems for strings. Decisions are to be made as a matter of safety rather than personal preference.

### *Pre-Trial Meetings*

Before the start of the trials, the Trial Certifier will conduct meetings with participants. These meetings are a critical safety requirement, and the Certifier is responsible to see that they are given adequate time and attention to disseminate appropriate safety and administrative information to trial participants. (See Section 3 of the Pack Trial Handbook: Event Setup)

### **Duties during the Trial**

The Certifier will actively participate in events during the trial. Duties include:

- Providing assistance to the Trial Committee, Stewards and entrant
- Resolving disputes

### **Post-Trial Responsibilities**

After the trial is completed the Trial Certifier will make sure that Trial Marshal has made provisions for all tags and flagging used to mark the course and obstacles to be removed. The Certifier will also make sure that trial paperwork is properly filled out and appropriately signed. This includes:

- Manageability Score sheets
- Field Test Score sheets



- Trial Certification form
- Trial Results form
- Proof of Completion Forms

The Certifier is required to sign the latter three forms listed above.

The Certifier shall also provide feedback to the Board of Directors by completing a **PLTA Course Critique** and a **written report** that includes descriptions of any difficulties and/or particularly positive occurrences during the trial . This report will be sent to the PLTA Secretary for distribution to the Board of Directors and the Pack Trial Governance Committee. Certifier reports are invaluable tools for improving pack trial safety and administration.

The Certifier will retain a copy of the Certification form and is strongly advised to add a copy of the Trial Results Form and score sheets to her or his files for future reference. The Trial Certifier is **NOT** responsible for submitting paperwork or monies to the PLTA. The Trial Committee is tasked with this job.

### **Accidents**

In the event of an accident the Trial Certifier is called upon by the Board of Directors to be fully supportive to the Trial Committee. While it is the Trial Committee's responsibility to contact the PLTA Board, it is incumbent upon the Certifier to be fully observant of events and record them accurately in a signed and dated written report.

### **Event Host**

The Event Host is the supporting individual, group, organization or other entity who stages the PLTA event. The host is responsible for establishing a Trial Committee or otherwise staffing the roles necessary to successfully support an event and the associated trials. The host is responsible for ensuring that trial results and monies are delivered to the PLTA administration in a timely manner. They are also responsible for safely administering the event and managing accidents as described by PLTA policy.

### **Trial Committee**

To spread out the responsibilities of administering pack trials, any Trial Host may choose to establish a Trial Committee consisting of a Chairperson, Secretary, Trial Marshal and Steward(s).



## **2.6 Conflict of Interest**

The Board of Directors recognizes conflict of interest issues and wishes to limit them, but because of the small size of the pack llama community and the limited number of Certifiers and volunteers, adequate staff is seldom available to fill all needs. Of particular concern is whether Stewards and Certifiers should be allowed to lead llamas, their own or others, that are being evaluated during a trial. In the case of Certifiers, since the Certifier is not evaluating the llama, and since prohibiting Certifiers from doing so would unduly penalizes them and limits the benefits they receive from participating in PLTA events, the Board has determined that they shall be allowed to lead them during Field Tests. In the case of Stewards, since they are responsible for evaluating the llama's performance, the Board has determined that both leading and evaluating puts too great a burden on the Steward. Therefore the Steward, except in emergency circumstances, is not allowed to lead a llama they are evaluating during Field Tests, however a Steward is allowed to evaluate their own llamas that are being led by someone else.

## **2.7 Fees**

Entry in a pack trial shall be initiated through the presentation of an official PLTA Pack Trial Entry Form for each llama/handler team. The form must be completed in full and the information given on the form must be accurate. Each form must be signed by the owner who is responsible for all errors, or by the owner's agent duly authorized to make the entry.

### **Fee Schedule**

<b>Fee Type</b>	<b>Payment Frequency</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>Enrollment:</b>		
Llama Registration	One-time	\$15.00
Associate	Annual	\$10.00
Associate Role-over to Member		\$25.00
Member: Individual Adult	Annual	\$20.00
Member: Individual Youth (under age 18)	Annual	\$10.00
New Member Registering after October 1st	One-time	\$37.50
Family	Annual	\$30.00
Introductory Family (first year)	Annual	\$20.00
Youth Club	Annual	\$50.00



Fee Type	Payment Frequency	Amount
Business	Annual	\$70.00
<b>Sanctioning:</b>		
Challenge (one day event):	Per event	\$35.00
Unlimited number of Challenges held within the same year	Annual	\$50.00
Basic Pack Trial Only- Single Trial (one day event)	Per Event	\$35.00
Basic Pack Trial Only - Double Trial (two day event)	Per Event	\$40.00
All-Level Pack Trial- Single Trial (one day event)	Per Event	\$45.00
Unlimited number of Events (Trials and/or Challenges) held during the same calendar year	Annual	\$100.00
<b>Certificates</b>		
Original copy	Per Certificate	\$0.00
Replacement copy – electronic file (PDF)	Per Certificate	\$5.00
Replacement copy -- hardcopy	Per Certificate	\$25.00

## 2.8 Participant Requirements

The PLTA Board of Directors acknowledges that as in any situation that has specific requirements and in which participants may feel much is at stake, people may become tense and attitudes strained. The Board therefore recommends that everyone take a deep breath, smile, and remember to enjoy the day.

### **Llama**

PLTA Pack Trials are open to all llamas and guanacos including males, females and geldings or altered animals. The PLTA does not evaluate camelids other than llamas and guanacos in PLTA sanctioned pack trials. All llamas entered in a PLTA sanctioned event participate solely at the risk of their owner, and the PLTA assumes no risk or liability whatsoever.

To participate in an event the llama must be registered with the PLTA and at the time of their participation, their owner must also be a member of the organization. The llama must be at least the minimum



age and carry the required weight for a given trial level. Age is calculated on the day of the trial. If the llama's birth date is the day after the trial, the llama is not eligible to participate until that day.

### **Fitness**

No llama shall be entered or participate in any trial, nor be brought onto the trial grounds, if it shows any symptoms of, and/or is known to have been in contact with, any communicable disease within the thirty (30) days preceding the first date of the trial. No llama that shows obvious signs of being lame or injured or that otherwise is not fit enough to complete the required course shall participate in a trial. The PLTA Trial Certifier will make this determination.

During the trial the llama will be required to maintain a realistic pace as established by the time window. If the llama is unable to maintain this pace, they will be dismissed from the Field Test and fail the trail.

### **Preparation, Equipment and Load**

Specifics for preparing a llama for a trial and equipment and load requirements are detailed in the Pack Trial Handbook.

### **Owner**

The llama's owner must be a current member of the PLTA at the time of the trial. The owner *is not* required to be present at the trial, nor is the owner required to be the llama's handler during the event. The owner *is* expected to maintain personal records of the llama's trial history. Proof of Completion documents will be awarded to the llama at each trial the animal successfully finishes.

### **Handler**

The handler of the llama entered in a PLTA pack trial does not have to be the owner of the llama nor a member of the PLTA. However, if they are not a member, for insurance purposes, they must be a PLTA Associate. Additionally for insurance purposes, an Acknowledgement of Risk and Waiver of Liability form must be filled out and signed for all handlers. Handlers under eighteen (18) years of age must have their Event Entry form and waiver of liability signed by the legal guardian or parent with custody.

### **Chaperones**

Handlers under eighteen (18) years of age must be accompanied by an adult as a chaperone. This chaperone may also be a participant; however, they must hike within the same group as the youth they are chaperoning and maintain close enough proximity to assist the youth if



needed. The chaperone must be either a PLTA member or associate and must sign an Acknowledgement of Risk and Release of Liability Waiver.

## **2.9 Standards of Behavior**

### **Performance Standards**

To evaluate the llama, the PLTA has created criteria that allow for individual differences in training techniques but that are appropriate for assessing acceptable behavior and performance. A PLTA pack trial is not a show ring. Llamas do not compete against each other, nor are their performances graded for perfection. Instead, llamas are expected to accomplish what is asked of them, whether it is completing a Manageability Task, hiking the course, or negotiating obstacles, in a safe and calm manner while demonstrating a degree of training appropriate to the trial level in which they are entered.

### **Performance Deductions**

Safe and appropriate behavior is paramount when working with animals, including pack llamas. That packing activities often take place in remote locations only heightens the need for caution. The PLTA emphasizes the importance of safety by deducting points for improper behavior during a pack trial.

Courteous and sportsman-like behavior is expected of all handlers, owners, and other participants. The goal is to achieve a social, non-competitive atmosphere. Deductions are made for each unacceptable or potentially dangerous act that is committed by the llama *or its handler*. Deductions can be made for acts observed by the Steward or the Trial Certifier anywhere on the course. Acts generating performance deductions may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Lunging through obstacles
- Running into or intentionally bumping or throwing its body against the handler
- Negotiating an obstacle unsafely
- Kicking or spitting at the handler during saddling, pack attachment, foot inspection
- Kicking or spitting at another llama or person while on the course
- Lying down and refusing to get up again
- Refusing to attempt an obstacle
- Trying to pass its handler on the trail or during an obstacle



## **SECTION 3. EVENT ADMINISTRATION**

### **3.1 Safety**

Understanding that working with animals and hiking in rough country always carries the potential for accidents, the PLTA Board of Directors requires Trial Hosts to carefully consider all safety issues. Location of event facilities, selection of course routes and obstacles and practices of the Trial Committee must all be undertaken with safety in mind.

**During a Pack Trial, the Certifier, Trial Host, and Trial Committee personnel adequate to handle a life-threatening emergency, shall remain on site, on the course and/or at the trailhead until all participants have completed and/or cleared their appropriate trial level area.**

Safety topics are a critical part of the pre-trial meetings. Please refer to the Pack Trial Handbook for details. The Course Certifier should ensure that all points listed in the Handbook are included in briefings.

### **Establishing a Safe Environment**

Environments differ with each event but many difficulties may be averted ahead of time by following a few important guidelines. Trial committees should enhance the safe functioning of the event by doing the following:

- Contact local emergency services or law enforcement so they are aware of the event, and they may advise you on concerns they might have. Communicate with these officials about safety and the best way to stay in contact.
- Have a veterinarian on call.
- Post emergency phone numbers.
- Advise participants of environmental dangers that may exist such as extreme weather, water hazards, poisonous plants and dangerous animals.
- Warn participants about trail hazards including such things as crossing a busy roadway, potential slide areas, hunters, dogs, horses, ATVs, bicycles.
- Set up communication check-ins with the Steward on each trial level, whether it is with the use of cell phones, walkie-talkies, or other supplementary form of communication. Make sure every Steward is aware of check-in points.



- Equip each Steward with a basic medical kit for minor injuries. Make clear where medical kits, either for the group or personal, are located.
- Identify persons on each course who have emergency medical training.
- Identify persons who may have specific medical needs or concerns.

### **3.2 Pre-trial Meeting**

The pretrial meetings are critical to the safe function and efficient administration of a pack trial. Adequate time must be allotted to address all issues. All participants must participate in appropriate briefings. Training and/or briefings especially for stewards are required. The Trial Certifier has primary responsibility for conducting the meetings. See Section 3.2 of the Pack Trial Handbook for a description of necessary meetings and their content.

### **3.3 Conflict Resolution**

During a pack trial it is the Certifier's responsibility to resolve questions and disputes, however, PLTA members who are not satisfied with the resolution the Certifier approves, have the right to appeal their case to the Pack Trial Governance Committee and/or the PLTA Board of Directors. The final decision on all appeals rests with the Board of Directors.

### **3.4 Staging Area**

See the Pack Trial Handbook

### **3.5 Course Design**

The Field Test course is set up to meet the specifications listed in the Pack Trial Handbook. A brief description is included here. Courses and obstacles are inspected by the Trial Certifier to ensure standards are met.

### **Mileage and Elevation Requirements**

Standard requirements are listed in the following table. If terrain does not allow standards to be met, distance and elevation may be adjusted. At a ratio of 250 feet per mile applied in quarter mile increments.



Trial	Recommended		
	Miles	Elevation Gain (ft)	Percent Grade (%)
Basic	3	250 - 500	0.95 - 2.2
Advanced	5	750 - 1000	2.8 - 3.8
Master	8	1500 - 2000	3.5 - 4.7
Elite	10	3000	5.7

### **Measuring Elevation**

The required elevation gain can be measured with an altimeter, a GPS receiver that has a built in altimeter, or using detailed (7.5 minute) topographical maps. Elevation gain is cumulative over the entire length of the course. Percent grade is also measured over the entire course.

### **Time Window**

The time window is the amount of time in which an appropriately conditioned and trained llama should be able to complete the Field Test. A minimum time is set to discourage the trial from becoming a race, while a maximum is set to preclude unwilling or unfit llamas from successfully completing the course.

### **Obstacle Selection and Complexity**

Obstacles are grouped into seven categories based on the skill a llama is required to demonstrate when negotiating them. Complexity of obstacles increases from Basic through Elite trials.

### **Comparative Example of Obstacle Complexity**

Using an obstacle from Category 3: Up/Down/Across, the following table demonstrates the increasing challenge that can be designed into an obstacle of the same type and category. This example is provided strictly as a comparison, not as a version of any requirement.

Trial Level	Component(s)	Complexity
Basic	Single	Step/jump over a 16" high, 9" diameter log laying across a smooth, level trail surface
Advanced	Single	Step/jump over an 18" high, 12" diameter log laying across an uneven trail surface
Master	Multiple	Step/jump over an 18" high, 12" diameter log laying across a slope with slash on the ground.



Trial Level	Component(s)	Complexity
Elite	Multiple	Step/jump over a 16” high, 10” diameter log and 20” high, 14” diameter log laying across a slope with slash on the ground, and brush that must be pushed through

### **Obstacle Categories**

Specific descriptions of obstacles that are required at various levels are available in the Pack Trial Handbook. The information below describes purpose of the obstacle and gives examples.

#### **Category 1: Picking One's Way**

The llama is required to move carefully through material that obscures and complicates footing.

- Deadfall, Slash
- Dense deep grass
- Rock rubble

#### **Category 2: Foot Fears**

The llama must walk through a medium into which the feet sink.

- Water
- Deep, loose sand, cinder, or gravel
- Mud
- Soft snow eight to twelve inches deep

#### **Category 3: Up/Down/Across**

The llama must negotiate an obstacle that requires extending its stride to climb or stretch. The range of height for an upward or downward step or jump is sixteen to twenty-four inches (16” – 24”). No standard has been set for stepping across an obstacle. Jumps must be controlled.

- High step up
- Jump / step over high obstacle such as a log
- High step down
- Jump / step over a low obstacle such as a ditch

#### **Category 4: 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.

- Brush
- Tunnel
- Duck under
- Back & turn
- Weave
- Squeeze

#### **Category 5: 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.

- Steep slope up
- Steep side-hill with narrow



- Steep slope down (8 inch) tread

### **Category 6: Load Management:**

The llama must tolerate adjustments or handling of tack or llama's body, exclusive of head and halter.

- Top-loading  
(Secure an item to, or remove an item from the top of the saddle)
- Accessing panniers  
(Insert an item into, or remove an item from a pannier)
- Putting on a rain cover
- Adjusting cinches
- Applying bug spray
- Foot inspection

### **Category 7: Trail Hazards:**

The llama must tolerate unexpected trail conditions including trail traffic, structures, debris, livestock, people, pets, or machines

- Dogs, horses, cows, backpacker
- Bicycle, motorbike, ATV, trail runner
- Bridge, gate, puncheon
- Garbage or plastic sheet piled up or flapping

## **SECTION 4. TRIAL REQUIREMENTS**

Each PLTA pack trial level requires successful completion of multiple iterations of a trial. Elite candidates are not required to undertake the Management Test. However, they *must* have earned their Master certification before attempting an Elite trial. No llama at any level is allowed to undertake more than one trial on a given day.

### **4.1 Requirements for Successful Trial Completion**

In order to successfully complete a trial both the Manageability Tasks and Field Test must be completed. Any of the following disqualifies the llama from successfully completing the trial.

- Failure to complete an obstacle.
- Acquiring more than the allowed limit of deductions
- Failure to complete the Field Test within the time window.

### **4.2 Certification Levels**

There are four levels of PLTA pack llama certification, Basic, Advanced, Master, and Elite. Each is available for a llama working individually or in a string of two llamas. Field Test requirements become increasingly demanding through the progression of levels.



### Basic Pack Trials

The Basic pack trial tests early stages of training and conditioning against minimal packing requirements.

Basic Level General Requirements	
Age	At least 2 years old 2 to 2.5 years (30 months) carries no load
Load (percent of body weight)	0 - 10% of body weight
Distance	Three miles
Elevation Gain	250 to 500 feet
Total Number of Obstacles Required	Five
Performance Deductions Allowed	Five
Successful Trials Required	Two, including one carrying weight

### Advanced Pack Trial

Advanced trials are designed to test a llama's ability to deal with a moderately demanding packing environment.

Advanced Level General Requirements	
Age	At least 3 years old
Load (percent of body weight)	15% of body weight
Distance	Five miles
Elevation Gain	750 to 1000 feet
Total Number of Obstacles Required	Ten
Performance Deductions Allowed	Three
Successful Trials Required	Four, or three if the llama has a Basic Certificate

### Master Pack Trial

The Master trial tests a pack llama against stringent standards that reflect the demands placed on an experienced packer.

Master Level General Requirements	
Age	At least 4 years old
Load (percent of body weight)	25% of body weight, up to 90 lbs maximum.
Distance	Eight miles
Elevation Gain	1500 to 2000 feet
Total Number of Obstacles Required	Fifteen
Performance Deductions Allowed	Two
Successful Trials Required	Four, or three if the llama has



<b>Master Level General Requirements</b>	
	an Advanced Certificate

### **Elite Pack Trial**

The Elite trial tests a llama's packing performance at a stage of training and conditioning that ensures a llama is fit for long distance travel in extreme terrain.

<b>Elite Level General Requirements</b>	
Age	At least 4 years old
Load (percent of body weight)	25% of body weight, up to 90 lbs. maximum
Distance	Ten miles
Elevation Gain	2500 to 3000 feet
Total Number of Obstacles Required	Twenty
Performance Deductions Allowed	Two
Successful Trials Required	Two, Llama must already have a Master Certificate

### **String Pack Trials**

All PLTA String Pack Trials require a PLTA Certifier to be present at the time of the trial.

<b>String Level General Requirements</b>	
General Requirements	The same as for the level attempted
Llama per String	Two
Obstacle Negotiation	Done while in string (singly if required by trail marshal for safety)
Performance Deductions Allowed	Applied to the string rather than the individual llama.
Successful Trials Required	Two for each llama

### **4.3 Manageability Tasks**

Five tasks are evaluated for llamas participating individually:

- Haltering
- Loading and unloading
- Pack Attachment
- Picketing
- Saddling

Only three tasks are required for llamas participating in strings,

- Saddling
- Pack Attachment
- Sting tie-in



Llamas surpassing the limit of allowable performance deductions for their trial level during Manageability Tasks are disqualified and need not complete the course and obstacles for the trial.

### 4.4 Field Test

Field Tests can be run either with a Roving Steward in which courses and obstacles are marked before the trial and the steward accompanies and evaluates groups of llamas and handlers, or using the Certifier Escort method, in which courses and obstacles are determined by a certifier as the field test is run.

### Obstacles

Each trial level has specific obstacle requirements that must be addressed on the course.

#### Basic Field Test Obstacles 5 Obstacles

Category	Required Obstacle
1 Picking One's Way	any obstacle from category
2 Foot Fear	any obstacle from category
3 Up/Down/Across:	any obstacle from category
4 Tight Places	any obstacle from category
Any Category:	any obstacle appropriate to trial level

#### Advanced Field Test Obstacles 10 Obstacles

Category	Required Obstacle
1 Picking One's Way	Deadfall
1 Picking One's Way	Rubble
2 Foot Fear	water (if possible)
3 Up/Down/Across:	any obstacle from category
4 Tight Places	any obstacle from category
5 Slippery Slope	any obstacle from category
6 Load Management	any obstacle from category
Category a*	any obstacle from category
Category b*	any obstacle from category
Category c*	any obstacle from category
* Obstacles are chosen by the Trial Marshal from three different categories	

#### Master Pack Trial Obstacle Requirements 15 Obstacles

Category	Required Obstacle
1 Picking One's Way	deadfall
1 Picking One's Way	rubble



Category	Required Obstacle
2 Foot Fear	water (if possible)
3 Up/Over/Across:	any obstacle from category
4 Tight Places	brush
5 Slippery Slope	any obstacle from category
6 Load Management	panniers off and foot inspection
Eight complex obstacles, each created from combinations of obstacles from two or more categories	Any obstacles appropriate to the trial level

### Elite Pack Trial Obstacle Requirements

Category	Required Obstacle
Twenty complex obstacles, each created from combinations of obstacles from two or more categories	Any obstacles appropriate to the trial level

## SECTION 5. INSURANCE

PLTA insurance coverage requires that all PLTA event participants sign the “Acknowledgement of Risk and Waiver of Liability” form. All participants must be members or associate members of the PLTA. Llamas are entered in PLTA sanctioned events solely at the risk of the owner.

## SECTION 6. ACCIDENT MANAGEMENT

If an accident occurs during the event, the Trial Host will immediately contact the PLTA Board of Directors and explain the situation so that the Board may contact the insurance company. The Certifier, Steward and, to the extent possible, other individuals involved will each supply a detailed written report that thoroughly explains what happened. The process for reporting what happened is as follows:

### 6.1 Document the Accident

Step 1. Document, Document, Document,

- Take pictures of the injury, of the people involved, of the llama involved and of the site.
- Write a description of what happened, sign it and date it. Include
- Information about the individuals involved, including llamas.



- Full name
- PLTA number
- Contact information
- Details about how the incident occurred; who, what, when, where, and why.
- Details about how the incident was managed
- Images of the site, of injuries, of rescue activities, and anything else that might be pertinent.
- Have the injured party provide a signed and dated description of what happened.
- Have the Trial Certifier and the Steward provide signed and dated descriptions of their experiences.

## **6.2 Report the Accident**

Step 2. Contact the PLTA Board of Directors.

Chain of command is extremely important during an emotionally packed incident. Without clear direction as to who is responsible for what, confusion can develop very quickly. To prevent this, the PLTA Board of Directors has determined that one person has the responsibility for contacting the Board of Directors; this is the Event Host. The order of precedence for contacting a PLTA officer is as follows:

- PLTA Secretary
- PLTA Treasurer
- PLTA President

Contact information for each of these people is available on the PLTA website at [packllama.org](http://packllama.org). The PLTA officer is responsible for contacting the insurance company. It is important that trial participants do not attempt to contact the insurance people themselves.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Section 7. Information Management, Section 8. Recognition of Accomplishments, and Section 9. Appendixes are found in the PLTA Handbook.



## Who we are

The Pack Llama Trail Association is all about supporting the working llama and supporting you as you work with your llama. We don't care if the llama is male or female, short or tall, woolly or not. We believe all llamas have the potential to be great companions. To that end we provide

**Mentors** to help you with training, packing, herd management, and all things llama.

Our **Mileage Club** promotes fitness for both you and your llama.

The **Challenge Program** is great way to enjoy working with and training your llama in a supportive social environment.

Our **Pack Trials** give you the opportunity to demonstrate the skill and fitness of your pack llama.



Certified PLTA Pack Llamas have proven themselves to be well-behaved, fully manageable expert trail companions.

**Contact Us At [www.packllama.org](http://www.packllama.org)**