

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

PLTA Pack Trial Field Notes

version 26.04.01



Pack Llama Trail Association
Supporting the Working Llama



Pack Llama Trail Association, Inc.

Pack Trial Field Notes

Version 26.04.01

In effect March 31, 2026

This booklet is intended for use in the field when designing pack trial courses or administering trials. It is much abridged from the PLTA Pack Trial Handbook 2026 and must be used in conjunction with it. Contents retain the chapter numbers used in the Handbook to facilitate easy cross reference.

Click on any title in the table of contents to jump to that section.



Table of Contents

Section 1. About the PLTA	2
1.1 Introduction -- see Handbook	2
1.2 Management Structure -- see Handbook.....	2
1.3 PLTA Enrollment -- Abridged.....	2
1.4 Vocabulary	2
1.5 Pack Trial on Request.....	3
Section 2. Pack Trial Administration.....	5
2.1 Purpose and Intent	5
2.2 Supporting Information -- see Handbook	6
2.3 Event Sanctioning -- see Handbook.....	6
2.4 Trial Entry -- Abridged.....	6
2.5 Roles and Responsibilities -- Abridged	6
2.6 Conflict of Interest.....	13
2.7 Fees -- Abridged.....	14
2.8 Participant Requirements.....	15
2.9 Standards of Behavior.....	20
2.10 Grounds for Disqualification	22
Section 3. Event Administration.....	23
3.1 Safety.....	23
3.2 Pre-trial Meeting.....	25
3.3 Conflict Resolution.....	26
3.4 The Staging Area.....	26
3.5 Course Design.....	27
Section 4. Trial Requirements	40
4.1 Requirements for Successful Trial Completion	41
4.2 Certification Levels	41
4.3 Manageability Tasks.....	46
4.4 Field Test.....	48
Section 5. Insurance.....	52
Section 6. Accident Management	53
6.1 Document the Accident	53
6.2 Report the Accident.....	54
Section 7. Information Management -- see Handbook	55
Section 8. Recognition of Accomplishments -- see Handbook... 55	55
Section 9: Appendixes -- see Handbook.....	55



SECTION 1. ABOUT THE PLTA

1.1 Introduction -- see Handbook

1.2 Management Structure -- see Handbook

1.3 PLTA Enrollment -- Abridged

For insurance purposes handlers and others wishing to participate in PLTA activities must, at minimum, be associate members. Payment of an Associate fee is required for participation on each *day* of a PLTA Event.

In order for a llama to participate in a sanctioned PLTA sanctioned event the llama must be registered with the PLTA and the llama's owner must be a current member

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. Fees are based on the number of days an event lasts

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 trial consists of Manageability Tasks and a Field Test .Multiple 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 hiking. These include such things as haltering, loading and unloading in a vehicle, saddling and so forth.

Field Tests

Field Tests involve demonstrating llama's fitness level and ability to negotiate obstacles in a realistic packing environment. This includes 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 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 pre-selected 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. To successfully complete a Field Test the llama must negotiate all obstacles on the course.

1.5 Pack Trial on Request

Pack Trial on Request adds open scheduling of pack trials outside of regular events to the options for certifying pack llamas. It facilitates members who have scheduling conflicts that preclude attendance at an officially sanctioned pack trial event and allows a certified field course to be used at their request and at the convenience of a supporting steward or certifier. If an owner is unable to attend a PLTA pack trial event, this option allows them to undertake a personal trial under the scrutiny of a steward or certifier who conducts the trial in the same manner as one held at a regular event.



Trials conducted on request may be held only on field courses that have been pre-certified by an authorized PLTA certifier. They must meet appropriate standards for mileage, elevation gain, and obstacles. PLTA membership, registered llamas, and all paperwork for certification are required. Upon completion, paperwork and fees must be delivered to the appropriate board members.

Paperwork includes:

- Sanctioning form
- Membership form (for new or renewing members and associates)
- llama registration for llamas new to the PLTA
- Liability releases for all participants
- Manageability score sheets
- Field test score sheet
- Trial results
- Financial summary

Specific parameters:

- This option is applicable to all levels, Basic through Elite
- Pack Trial on Request may only be used for 50% of trials required at any trial level. The other trials must be completed at an official public PLTA pack trial event. For example:
 - Basic certification requires two trials, Therefore, only one may be “trial on request”.
 - Advanced certification requires three or four trials, of which only one or two, respectively, can be “trial on request”.
- All filed test courses must be pre-certified by an authorized PLTA certifier,
- Field test courses must have been previously used during official PLTA pack trial events.
- If a course has been set by an organization, that organization assumes responsibility as the trial host.
- The trial host is responsible for providing a map of field course(s) to be used during the requested trial(s) as well as delivering all necessary paperwork to the appropriate board members.
- It is the responsibility of the person requesting the trial to provide for aid in any emergency medical situation.
- If the person requesting the trial chooses to cover miscellaneous expenses of the steward or certifier, such as travel money, or providing meals, that is acceptable.



- If a certifier is not present at the trial, then one must be apprised of the trial and be on call to answer any questions that might arise.
- If a certifier is not present at the trial, then the steward's qualifications will be reviewed and approved by the certifier prior to the trial.
- If a certifier is unable to answer a question or issue, it will be referred to the Pack Trial Governance Committee, for their input.
- Trust is the key phrase. It is the board's expectation that all stewards and certifiers will use best common-sense practices for all trials.

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 should be entered in 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 not competitive events; it is the llama that earns certification, not the handler. Likewise, during pack trials llamas do not compete against each other, rather they are evaluated on an individual basis.

Natural packing conditions are expected to vary in different parts of the country, but by using a written standard and running a trial under the supervision of a PLTA Trial Certifier, the PLTA expects the trial to be set up with a constancy and equivalency between trials regardless of their geographic location.



Pack Trials measure three aspects of a llama's ability: attitude, skill and fitness. A llama successfully earning a PLTA certificate has shown that it has acquired appropriate skill in dealing with packing demands, it has an attitude suitable to the venture, and it has shown that it is properly physically conditioned to handle the demands of packing. Skill is measured by the number and types of obstacles the llama must deal with. Attitude is clearly demonstrated by the llama's willingness to complete the obstacles and the course. Fitness is measured by the llama's ability to complete a specific distance and elevation gain while carrying a load and within a specified amount of time.

2.2 Supporting Information -- see Handbook

2.3 Event Sanctioning -- see Handbook

2.4 Trial Entry -- Abridged

If required by the land manager, or at the option of the PLTA trial sponsoring entity, a numerical limit may be imposed on entrants in any and all levels offered at a particular event. If the number of entrants is to be limited, the numerical limitation must be stated in the advertising information for the event.

2.5 Roles and Responsibilities -- Abridged

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

Maintaining Authorization

The PLTA board recognizes that pack trial standards and requirements may change over time, and that certifying a trial is a skill that requires knowledge and experience, therefore they have determined that in order to retain authorization certifiers must

- Certify a trial at least **once every three years**.
- Successfully repeat the written exam if they haven't certified a trial in three years.
- Repeat field training if they have been out of action for **longer than five years**.

If an Elite certifier hasn't been active for over three years, they will be offered the option of forgoing field training and downgrading their qualification to Basic/Advanced with successful completion of a written test.

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 to see that trial activities are 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.

If someone does not follow the rules as set forth by the PLTA Board of Directors, the Trial Certifier must take whatever action s/he deems appropriate ranging from verbal censure to disqualification. Failure of the Certifier to ensure compliance can be grounds for the PLTA to revoke the Pack Trial Certifier's approval.

The Trial Certifier is also tasked with ensuring that the Trial Committee is familiar with the PLTA policy for dealing with accidents that may generate possible insurance claims and that should an accident occur, the circumstances and actions taken are fully documented and handled in accordance with PLTA policy.

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

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%
- 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 participant 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. 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 participants
- Resolving disputes

Post-Trial Responsibilities

After the trial is completed the Trial Certifier will make sure that the 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). The Trial Committee is then tasked with running the pack trials. Whether or not a committee is established, the various administrative roles must be filled. In many cases hosts will elect to have individuals play multiple roles. This is fully acceptable; however, it must be clear that Stewards are not allowed to lead llamas that are participating in a trial that they are Stewarding.

Trial Chairperson

The Trial Chairperson has overall responsibility for the activities involving pack trails. This person must be very familiar with the current PLTA pack trial regulations and be a current PLTA member. Ultimately the Trial Chairperson is responsible for planning and conducting the trial in compliance with all the general procedures and regulations pertaining to their responsibilities.

The Trial Chairperson also serves as the contact person to the PLTA Secretary and Board of Directors.. Should conduct of an entrant occur during the pack trial event that could or does require disqualification, or should any accident occur during the event, the Trial Chairperson shall submit a complete report to the PLTA.

Trial Secretary

Prior to an event, the Trial Secretary organizes records of who is participating and fills in forms as much as possible in anticipation of their use during trial activities. After the trial, the Trial Secretary shall review all forms for accuracy, legibility, completeness, and signatures. The Secretary manages the trial monies, and reports trial results to the PLTA Secretary.



Trial Marshal

The Trial Marshal is tasked with laying out the course for a trial. This person must be intimately familiar with both the criteria and rationale for designing courses to meet PLTA Standards. The Trial Marshal must also be familiar with 'Leave No Trace' concepts and have a solid understanding of safety issues for the area they are working in.

Prior to the event, the Trial Marshal is expected to walk each trial course with the Trial Certifier. During this time the Trial Marshal will explain the logic behind obstacle selection, route, and allowances for elevation gain and distance. The Marshal shall also review with the Certifier precautions and considerations taken to facilitate and expedient handling of emergency situations.

In the event that the Trial Certifier requests changes to obstacles or the course, the Trial Marshal shall insure that those changes are made and reported to the Trial Chairperson.

The Trial Marshal provides course statistics to the Trial Secretary. Often the Trial Marshal fills out the preliminary information on the Trial Certification Form. The Trial Marshal is not responsible for signing any forms required by the PLTA. Once the trial is complete, the Trial Marshal is responsible for ensuring that all trial signage and flagging is removed restoring the landscape to its pretrial condition.

Trial Steward

The Trial Steward evaluates the performance of each llama as the llama undertakes the tasks required in the trial. Trial Stewards fulfill the role of judge or proctor and in order to do so, must be familiar with what is considered acceptable llama behavior. Stewards will watch for issues of unhealthy or unfit llamas, inappropriate equipment or load, unsafe practices, and any abuse of a llama or intentional interference with another entrant that could require disqualification. These matters will be reported to the Trial Chairperson and the Trial Certifier.

During assessment of Manageability Tasks and Field Tests the Steward shall inform handlers of expected procedure and behavior. During the Field Test, the Steward shall inform handlers of the way obstacles are to be negotiated and help handlers stay on the designated course. The Steward observes each llama as it copes with each obstacle to ensure that they are negotiated appropriately and to determine if any performance deductions need to be made. Stewards will deduct performance points for unsafe and potentially dangerous behavior. The



Steward will notify the handler when a performance point is deducted and make note of the circumstances on the Obstacle Score Sheet.

Stewards may not make changes to any obstacle after the Trial Certifier has completed their walk-through except to repair the obstacle to the condition it was when the Trial Certifier had last seen it. If an obstacle is damaged or modified by the entrant's llamas to the extent that it is no longer similar to that seen by the first entrants, the Steward should immediately call for the assistance of the Trial Certifier and await their instruction before allowing other participating llamas to attempt the obstacle. Notes should be taken of the time when this particular trial is temporarily put on hold and the llamas affected by it so their subsequent completion time may be adjusted.

Stewards *are not* responsible for settling disputes. In the case of a conflict the Stewards should immediately contact the Trial Chairperson or Trial Certifier for direction. Mediation by the Steward shall be limited to calming the situation so that the trial may continue.

The Steward is expected to be fit enough to hike at a rate that allows the course to be completed in the allotted time window. Stewards do not have to complete the entire course. They may be "swapped out" so that a single individual only oversees a portion of the Field Test.

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 penalize them and limits the benefits they receive from participating in PLTA events, the Board has determined that they shall be allowed to lead llamas 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 -- Abridged

Limiting Numbers of Entrants

If required by the land manager, or at the behest of the PLTA trial sponsoring entity, a numerical limit may be imposed on entrants in any and all levels offered at a particular event. If entrants are to be limited, this information must be stated in the advertising information for the event.

Host Fees

Non-PLTA participation fees may vary between events as a function of the activities offered and expenses incurred by the Trial Committee. The fees set by the PLTA and paid to the PLTA are described in this document. All other fees are determined by and are the responsibility of the Trial Host. The PLTA has no input or claim on these fees; they are collected and used at the sole discretion of the trial organizers.

PLTA Fees

Fees are set by the PLTA Board of Directors and are periodically reviewed and revised. This is a volunteer organization that operates on a shoe-string budget. These monies are primarily used to support information management. The Board makes every attempt to keep fees at minimal levels. In recent years PLTA administration has been primarily financed through membership fees. This revenue has proven inadequate to fund needs such as insurance, website support, database support, promotional materials and publishing of PLTA documents. Donations are gratefully accepted. The fee schedule as of March 2026 is as follows:

Fee Schedule

Fee Type	Payment Frequency	Amount
Membership:		
Llama Registration	One-time	\$15.00
Participation:		
Associate (covers insurance only)	Per Day	\$10.00
Individual Member	Annual	\$30.00
Family	Annual	\$45.00



Fee Type	Payment Frequency	Amount
(2 adults and children under 18 living under the same roof)		
Youth Club (2 adults and 10 children under the age of 18)	Annual	\$50.00
Sanctioning:		
Single Day Event:	Per Day	\$50.00
Unlimited Events within the same year	Annual	\$150.00
Certificates:		
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 hiking pace as determined by the time windows. (see Section 3.5 Course Design). The average moving speed over the length of a course is expected to be two (2) to two-and-a-half (2.5) miles per hour. If the llama is unable to maintain this pace, or to reach the time windows within the allotted time they will be dismissed from the Field Test and fail the trail.

Preparation

It is unrealistic to expect a llama to come straight off pasture and tackle a PLTA Field Test. Owners are strongly urged to train and condition their llamas both mentally and physically before the trial. Llamas should be trained to negotiate typical trail obstacles expected at the trial level they are entering. They should be experienced carrying the prescribed weight while hiking the required distance and elevation change in varying terrain. Entering a llama or handler in a trial for which they are unprepared compromises the experience of the llama and of other participants.

Besides mental and physical fitness, it is incumbent upon the llama owner to assure that their animal is appropriately prepared for their trial. Things to consider include:

- Tenderness of the foot pad. Llamas from soft pastures may have difficulty with rocky terrain if their feet are not adequately toughened.
- Length of wool. Long wool can contribute to overheating and can cause difficulties when tangling with obstacle components or trailside vegetation.
- Gender challenges. Breeding males may need to be kept separate from females.

It is strongly recommended that owners consult the Pack Trial Committee so that these types of issues may be resolved well in advance of the trial.



Equipment

Llamas entered in the trials shall use equipment described herein. The llama must be led with a lead rope and halter throughout the trial; collars may only be used during the picketing Manageability Task and during rest/lunch breaks. The picketing task also requires the use of a stake-out line attached to something fixed or that pivots around a stake in the ground. This line shall be no shorter than sixteen (16) feet and a maximum of thirty (30) feet long.

All llamas are required to carry pack systems with the packs filled out in a realistic manner typical of normal packing conditions. In the case of participation in Basic trials of llamas that are too young to carry weight the panniers shall be filled out with relatively weightless objects such as empty milk jugs. All saddles must have detachable panniers and at least two cinches securing the saddle to the animal.

Panniers that droop due to lack of filling are not acceptable. Pack systems, i.e. panniers and saddles, must be appropriate to the trial level. Small training pack panniers may be used only in Basic level trials. Saddles and panniers for Advanced level trials must be adequate to haul overnight gear, while Master and Elite trials require the use of heavy-duty gear adequate for a multi-day pack trip. Chest and rump straps are strongly recommended. Chest straps are *required* for string trials.

The saddle and pack must be secured in a safe manner. This will be determined by the Steward and/or Certifier during the required Manageability Task evaluation of each trial and periodically throughout the Field Test.

Llamas participating in String Trials are required to use a chest strap. All connections or tie-ins between llamas will be done with a quick release knot or breakaway system. The Certifier shall evaluate and have the final say as to whether the method of attachment between the llamas is safe and therefore acceptable. Evaluation will include the length of the lead between the animals and the location and manner of attachment. The Certifier is to evaluate based on safety consideration only and not personal preferences.

Load

The load each llama will be required to carry is determined as a factor of the llama's body weight at the time of the trial. To accurately establish an appropriate factor, the llama must be weighed within



fifteen (15) days prior to, or at the trail. To facilitate this, the Trial Committee must either make arrangements to have an appropriate animal scale available at the trial or must make available to the llama participants the PLTA Pack Trial Entry Form to be filled out by the llama's owner prior to arrival. The use of llama weight tapes is not allowed. Scales, handheld or otherwise, must be available at the event to determine pannier weights.

In past practice the maximum load of any llama was not to exceed ninety (90) pounds. This limit was established to protect overweight llamas from carrying excessive weight for their stature and ability. However, recent breeding developments are producing large llamas that can appropriately carry a greater load. Therefore, *the ninety-pound limit is no longer appropriate*. Rather, considerations for obese llamas must be made on a case-by-case basis. In general, they should not participate in pack trials. Determinations of whether a llama is adequately fit and can carry the load created by the required weight factor should be reviewed by the Trial Certifier who has the final say. A wise owner will keep their llamas at an appropriate body weight so that there is no question of overloading.

The total load includes the saddle system and panniers plus the pannier's contents. These contents are to be supplied by the participant. The panniers must be adequately stuffed to simulate the typical distention of panniers during a normal pack trip. Appropriateness of the pack weight and distention will be evaluated by the Steward during the Manageability Tasks with any disputes being resolved by the Trial Certifier.

Pannier contents used to achieve the appropriate load for the llama can include such items as clay, kitty litter or sand. Rocks may be used, but to ensure comfort of the llama, care should be taken when positioning them in the panniers. Water may be used and works best if the containers are properly sized to be filled to the maximum rather than allowing the water to slosh as the llama walks. Solid barbell weights can even be used but have the disadvantage of coming in set weights, needing to be specifically fastened or positioned within the panniers for the comfort of the llama, and cannot be casually discarded on the trail if the llama experiences problems. The use of hay in lighter loads is discouraged since it can carry noxious weed seed and its use is often prohibited by land use managers. Towels and newspaper are often used to fully distend the packs.



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 Trial Completion documents will be awarded to the llama at each trial the animal successfully finishes. These will be accepted by the PLTA as verifiable proof should there be confusion about the llama's accomplishments. Pack Trial Certificates will only be issued upon request. See Section 8.2 for details about acquiring certificates.

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 and be chaperoned by an adult during the trial.

It is not incumbent upon a handler to hike an entire course. If opportunities exist on the course to do so without delaying or otherwise interfering with the trial, handlers may "swap out" so that only a portion of the course distance is covered by each person. Since the llamas are expected to move at a pace that mimics realistic trail conditions and meet time windows established for the Field Test, the handlers must also be capable of maintaining this pace or risk being dismissed from the course and having their llama fail the trial.

Handlers are expected to be able to capably manage their llama and not cause disruption to other llamas, handlers or trial personnel. Failure to do so will incur assessment of performance/safety deductions and /or dismissal from the pack trial grounds. The handler can also be required to leave the Field Test course if there is intentional interference with the progress of any participant enough to cause them to not complete the trail.

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 in close enough proximity to assist the youth if needed. The chaperone must be either a PLTA member or an associate and must sign an Acknowledgement of Risk and Release of Liability Waiver. Chaperones are expected to meet the same llama handling and hiking skills as a handler.

Non-Trial Participants

All persons present at a PLTA event must sign an Acknowledgement of Risk and Waiver of Liability form. Depending on the number of llamas entered in the trial and possible course restrictions, people not participating in a pack trail may be allowed to take their llamas on the course if the Trail Certifier and the Trial Committee agree to it, however, these llamas will be evaluated by a Steward only if the Trial Committee chooses to provide the necessary support. No records will be kept regarding the evaluation of these llamas' performances. The handlers for these llamas must meet the PLTA's insurance requirements by being either a members or an associate.

At the discretion of the Trial Certifier and the Trial Committee the non-participants may co-mingle with trail participants or be required to travel separately. Non-trial participants must not interfere in any way with the trial entries. To prevent the possibility of obstacles being accidentally modified before all trial participants can be evaluated, all obstacles should be negotiated by the trial participants before the non-participants. It is recommended that the non-participants follow behind the trial participants and negotiate the obstacles separately.

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 a Manageability Task, hiking the Field Test 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. The llama's performance on each task or obstacles is evaluated on a pass/fail basis.

Field Tests



As long as the llama negotiates the obstacle in a safe manner, they are judged successful. For example, on an Up/Down/Across obstacle if the llama is ‘pulled over’ the jump, it counts. If the llama nicks the top of the jump with a foot, it counts. If the llama jumps over the log but lands on the handler, it counts but a performance point is deducted. If the llama jumps over the log in the same way, but the handler is aware and moves out of the way, it counts with no performance deductions.

Llamas are allowed at least three attempts per obstacle. When on the fourth attempt the llama still refuses to move through the obstacle, the llama is disqualified and need not finish the course. Physically forcing a llama to negotiate an obstacle is not acceptable, but Stewards and handlers should be aware that llamas sometimes need time to assess an obstacle before committing to moving through it.

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.

Performance deductions are made on an overall basis during when undertaking the Manageability Tasks. For example, if a llama spits once or multiple times during the course of completing all Manageability tasks, one point is deducted. However, performance deductions are made on a per obstacle basis during the Field Test. In this case, a llama may spit once or multiple times when negotiating a brush obstacle and lose one point. If the llama then spits once or multiple times when negotiating a mud obstacle it will lose one more point.

Courteous and sportsman-like behavior is expected of all handlers, owners, and other participants. The goal is to achieve an enjoyable 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 or another person



- 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
- Complete refusal to attempt an obstacle
- Trying to pass its handler on the trail or during an obstacle

The Steward will notify the handler whenever a performance point is deducted and mark the deduction on the Obstacle Score Sheet and include a brief explanation of the circumstances. It is advisable for handlers to keep track of deductions as they are made. A llama will not successfully complete a trial if they incur more deductions than are allowed for the trial they are participating in.

Handbook Appendix 2: Guide to Performance Objectives and Point Deductions explains actions that often result in performance deductions during Manageability Tasks, during obstacle negotiation, or on the course. This handout is one of the documents provided to the Trial Committee and is to be provided to the Stewards and handlers prior to the trial. No amount of regulations or descriptions can fully define what is acceptable behavior. This presents a situation that relies on subjective assessment, however, at the core of the evaluation is the concept of safety. Acceptable behavior is synonymous with safe behavior. Once a llama exceeds the allowed deductions for a level, they are disqualified.

PLTA Pack trials are designed to reflect actual packing conditions. Trials can be likened to a real-world pass/fail test rather than a show ring graded exam. When negotiating an obstacle in a pack trial, the llama is being asked the question ‘Can you do this and do it in a safe manner?’ Llamas often have to assess a situation before acting on it. Therefore, at least three attempts are allowed for each obstacle. Attempts beyond that may be assessed by the steward as to whether or not the llama absolutely refuses the obstacle. A llama that refuses to negotiate an obstacle fails the Field Test.

2.10 Grounds for Disqualification

Disqualification usually involves llama behavior, but it can also be a result of handler actions. Any disputes will be resolved by the PLTA Certifier. Disqualification will be required if the llama:

- accumulates more than the allowable performance deductions



- refuses to attempt an obstacle on the fourth try
- cannot meet the time windows
- refuses to continue hiking
- is injured
- attacks or dangerously threatens another llama or person

Disqualification will also be required if the handler:

- is unable to complete the hike and has no one to continue leading their llama
- interferes with another handler or a llama not their own
- cannot control their llama if it becomes unruly
- abuses a llama

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. The Course Certifier should ensure that all points listed below be included in those briefings. The following steps should be followed.

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

Emergency Planning

The challenge of an emergency can be significantly reduced if it is planned for. The PLTA Board of Directors expects trial committees to take must take their responsibility is this regard seriously by doing the following.

- Clearly identify assigned roles and chain of command in case of an emergency.
- Locate, prepare, and inform participants of extraction routes, in case of an injury. Post maps of extraction routes in prominent locations and inform staff and participants of where they are.
- Ensure that Stewards and Certifiers carry emergency information including maps of area with emergency routes identified and phone numbers of trial organizers, vets and any other people identified to deal with an emergency.
- Ensure that all participants know that the Trial Host must be informed of the time and circumstances of the accident and the nature and extent of injuries. The Steward or any PLTA official present at the time (such as the course Steward or Trial Certifier) should be informed as quickly as possible.



3.2 Pre-trial Meeting

The pretrial meeting(s) are critical to the safe function and efficient administration of a pack trial. They must be conducted in a location and at a time when all participants can fully focus on the issues at hand. The Pack Trial Committee must ensure that adequate time is allotted to address all issues and that all participants participate in appropriate briefings. The Trial Certifier has primary responsibility for conducting the meetings.

It is advisable to conduct two meetings, one with the Stewards and one with the entrants and Trial Committee. These meetings may be combined into a single session if necessary. Because of the dynamic activity that usually precedes a trial, these meetings should be scheduled for a time in advance when participants are calm and receptive to the information being presented.

Review of the [Guide to Performance Objectives and Point Deductions](#) (Handbook Appendix 2) and the [Pre-Trial Briefing for Participants and Handlers](#) (Handbook Appendix 3) are a must at these meetings.

Steward's Briefing

The focus of the meeting with the Steward(s) is to brief them regarding their responsibilities during Manageability Tasks and Field Tests and provide clarity regarding the responsibilities of other staff and participants. The Stewards must be instructed as to what is appropriate behavior during the trial and what is, or is not, grounds for making performance deductions. The Certifier will review the list provided to the Stewards by the Trial Committee that describes typical behaviors requiring deductions.

The Certifier will also instruct the Stewards as to the object of each type of Field Test obstacle and the expected performance of llamas while they negotiate the obstacle and answer any questions the Stewards may have. Also at this time, the Certifier will identify for the Stewards any obstacle for which strings are to be separated so that the llamas can negotiate them individually in a safe manner. An option or alternative format for the Steward's meeting is to conduct a Challenge prior to the trials and use it as a training forum for both Stewards and handlers.

Entrant (and Trial Committee) Meeting

Prior to the start of the trials, the Certifier will gather all entrants and, if possible, the Trial Committee for an explanation of how the trials will



be conducted and what to expect. Considering that some entrants may not be experienced llama handlers or may not have previously participated in a trial, the Certifier will address the following:

- the packing scenario
- the purpose of each obstacle
- the expected performance of the llama
- the responsibilities of chaperones
- the location of the first aid kit
- medically trained personnel
- planned procedures in case of emergency
- the presence of poisonous plants along the course
- protocol for encounters with horsemen, dogs and other trail users

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. If the Certifier is a party involved in a conflict that cannot be satisfactorily resolved at the time, it is strongly recommended that they contact the Board of Directors for a resolution as soon as possible.

3.4 The Staging Area

The Trial Committee is responsible for acquiring the location(s) where all aspects of the trial are held. There are five basic areas to consider besides the trial course(s)

- Parking area for participant's and staff's trailers and vehicles
- Registration and Check-in area
- Area and facilities to assess trial Manageability Tasks
- Location suitable for pre-trial meetings
- Area near the course trailhead for last minute briefings
- Area for participant camping if event exceeds one day

Ideally all of these areas will be in close proximity. Trials can be held under less-than-ideal conditions. The trial Mentor or any PLTA Board member may be consulted for suggestions.



3.5 Course Design

Leave No Trace

All trial activities shall be conducted in accordance with Leave No Trace ethics and environmental considerations. Flagging and trail markers added by the Trial Marshal to designate trails may be used but must be removed at the end of the trial.

The Trial Marshal shall see that, whenever possible, the trials are conducted on existing trails and only leave such trails to accomplish specific obstacles as necessary. Existing trails include those normally used for hiking, backpacking, pack stock, mountain biking, motorcycles, or other off-road vehicles. This is done to discourage the starting of new trails and to promote good packing ethics.

Basic Concepts

The trial course shall be set up within the prescribed guidelines set forth in this document. The Trial Committee and especially, the Trial Marshal, shall give paramount consideration to the simulation of situations found in a realistic packing environment while allowing for variations in conditions that are peculiar to the terrain in which they are working. It is incumbent upon both the Trail Marshall and the Certifier to select obstacles that can be safely negotiated by the llama.

The Trial Marshal shall set up all courses within the prescribed standards of distance, elevation gain, number and type of obstacles, and specified time window for each particular trial level.

A key aspect of PLTA trials is that the llama is to be tested against a realistic packing environment. To that end the course should be set up within the constraints of the criteria, but simulate in as close a manner as possible, both conditions and obstacles found on a real pack trip. The different levels reflect the progressive degrees of difficulty expected by the serious llama packer on an actual llama pack trip including the level of work effort the llama must expend to successfully handle the distance, elevation gain, and load they carry, within the designated time window.

Course Inspection and Certification

The Trial Certifier shall conduct a pre-trial walk-through with the Trial Marshal to confirm that the course meets PLTA requirements. At this time, and at the discretion of the Trial Certifier, adjustments in



obstacles, distance, elevation gain and time window may be made. The Trial Certifier will also indicate any obstacles or other areas on the course where llamas working in a string will be separated and required to negotiate the obstacle individually.

Once the Trial Certifier is satisfied that all requirements have been met, the Trial Certification Form will be inspected for accuracy. When the trial is over the Trial Certifier will further inspect the form for completion, add any pertinent comments and sign the form.

Basic trials in which llamas are participating individually do not require certification by a Trial Certifier. At this level, Trial Chairperson may choose instead, to work closely with a PLTA assigned Mentor. Working with the Mentor by phone, email, or in person, the Trial Chairperson may validate a Basic level pack trial without the oversight or presence of a Trial Certifier.

Mileage and Elevation Requirements

Requirements for mileage and elevation gain are specified under that trial's section in this handbook under section 4.2 Certification Levels. The target requirements of mileage and elevation gain are selected to maintain a sense of continuity with previously sanctioned trials and those of future trials regardless of geographic locations. Deviations from specifications identified in this document must be approved by the Trail Certifier.

Measuring Distance

For each trial level specific distances must be covered and elevation gain accomplished. Mileage distance can be measured with a pedometer, bike odometer, measuring wheel, Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) receiver, or an accurate site or topographical map. Continuing developments in the GPS system and receivers result in considerable variation in readings between different devices. A given device may also deliver different result on different days and under different weather condition. Therefore, when using these devices, it is advised that the Trial Marshal fully understand the limitations and proper use of their unit. It is advisable when using a GPS receiver to measure the course more than once and use an average of the results as the official course distance.

Measuring Elevation

The required elevation gain can be measured with a GPS receiver that has an altimeter, function, an independent altimeter, or a detailed (7.5 minute) topographical map. This elevation gain is cumulative over the



entire length of the course. For example, if you climbed up a 50-foot hill (+50) and down the other side (0), then climbed a 100-foot hill (+100) and down the other side (0), then re-climbed both hills (+50, +100) on your way back, the total elevation gain would be 300 feet. The table below shows the recommended standards for course design. It should be noted that the grade is calculated over the entire distance of the course. It is expected that shorter inclines may be much steeper.

Trial	Recommended		
	Miles	Elevation Gain (ft)	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	2500 - 3000	4.75 - 5.7

Elevation/Distance Adjustments

Pack Trial standards were originally designed from the perspective of people packing in the Rocky Mountains and similar terrain. Over the years it has become clear that llamas pack in all sorts of environments and in all kinds of terrain.

A pack llama's fitness must be adequate for the environment in which they pack. To say that all pack llamas must be able to handle the type of conditions presented by rugged mountainous terrain in order to be considered pack llamas is inappropriate, yet requiring PLTA certified llamas to demonstrate a high level of fitness *is* appropriate. To address this situation, the PLTA Board of Directors has adjusted the distance and elevation requirements so that **mileage can be increased to replace elevation gain by a factor of 250 feet per mile and allowed that this increase may be accumulated in quarter mile increments.** For example, the distances may be increased while the elevation is decreased in the following way:



Trial	Adjusted Requirements (Miles/Elevation Gain)
Basic	3/250, 3.5/125, 4/0
Advanced	5/750, 6/500, 7/250, 8/0
Master	8/ 1500, 9/1250, 10/750, 11/500, 12/250, 13/0
Elite ¹	10/2500, 11/2250, 12/2000, 13/1750, 14/1500, 15/1250, 16/1000, 17/750, 18/500, 19/250, 20/0

¹Elite courses of less than 8 miles are not allowed because the necessary grade becomes too steep.

Conversely, the elevation gain may be increased while the distance is decreased as shown in the following table. Notice that the percent grade can increase dramatically to the point where it presents unreasonable expectations. *Decreasing mileage while increasing elevation gain should be carefully evaluated against the recommendations listed above.*

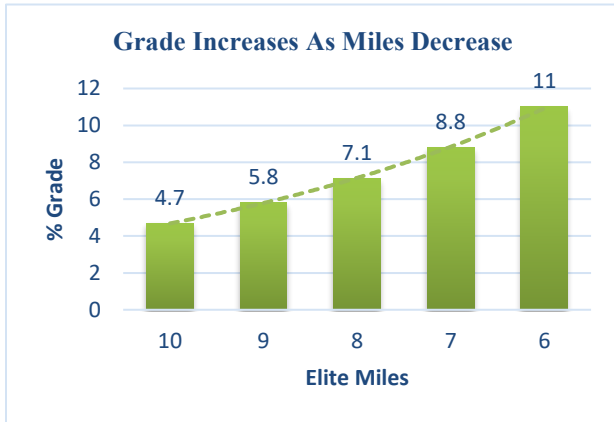
For sake of comparison, the maximum grade allowed on an interstate highway is six percent. Optimum trail construction standards generally fall between five and ten percent. At ten percent construction standards recommend building steps. This is normally allowed for only very short sections of trail. Use of a Field Test course with a **continuous grade of over 8% for a pack trial is strongly discouraged**. A convenient calculator for determining percent grade is available at <http://www.csgnetwork.com/inclinedeclinegradecal.html>.

The Board of Directors instituted the revised requirements on December 16th, 2014. The ratios shown below are for full miles, however, adjustments can be implemented in quarter mile increments, thus the ratios are 250 feet per mile, 188 feet per three-quarters mile, 125 feet per half mile, and 63 feet per quarter mile. In practical application this means that if a Basic trial course is found to have only 100 feet of

Incremental Ratios for Mileage Adjustments	
Miles	Elevation Equivalent (Feet)
1	250
0.75	188
0.5	125
0.25	64



elevation gain, the missing 150 feet can be compensated for by adding three-quarters of a mile. The total course length then becomes three and three-quarters miles.



Trial	Adjusted Requirements		
	Miles	Minimum Elevation Gain	Percent Grade
Basic	3	250	1.6
	2	500	4.7
	1	750	12.2
Advanced	5	750	2.8
	4	1000	4.7
	3	1500	9.5
Master	8	1500	3.6
	7	1750	4.7
	6	2000	6.3
	5	2250	8.5
	4	2500	11.8
Elite	10	2500	4.7
	9	2750	5.8
	8	3000	7.1
	7	3250	8.8
	6	3500	11.0



In essence nothing has changed in terms of required exertion or fitness. This adjustment simply makes it possible for llamas living in flat or rolling landscapes to demonstrate their competence as clearly as those who pack in rugged mountains. The Board found this to be a fair and reasonable solution to a problem that has excluded many llamas and their owners from participating in PLTA Pack Trials

A Useful Tool for Calculating Distance/Elevation Gain

Comparing distance and elevation gain is like juggling apples and cantaloupes. It is much easier to just juggle apples. To convert distance and elevation gain to the same kind of units (call these “units of effort”), consider that 1 mile of distance is equal to 250 feet of elevation gain. Therefore, the following holds true:

The units corresponding to mileage

Trial	Distance Conversion	
	Miles	Units
Basic	3	3
Advanced	5	5
Master	8	8
Elite	10	10

Plus the units corresponding to elevation gain

Trial	Elevation Conversion	
	Feet	Units
Basic	250 -500	1 – 2
Advanced	750 - 1000	3 – 4
Master	1500 - 2000	6 - 8
Elite	2500 - 3000	10 - 12

Equals the total Units of Effort

Trial	Total Units of Effort
Basic	4 - 5
Advanced	8 - 9
Master	14 - 16
Elite	20 - 22



So, if elevation gain for a Master course is 1800 feet, dividing that by 250 yields 7.2 units. Subtracting this from the minimum 14 units required for a Master course leaves at least 6.8 units to be accounted for. Since the ratio of miles to units is one to one, the distance must equal at least 6.8 miles.

Or

If elevation gain for a Master course is 1215 feet, dividing that by 250 yields 4.9 units. Subtract that from the minimum 14 units required for a Master course and you have 9.1. Therefore, the course must be at least 9.1 miles long.

Conversely

If the distance of a Master course measures 10.5 miles, it equals 10.5 units. Subtracting this from the minimum 14 units required for a Master course leaves at least 3.5 units to be accounted for. Since the ratio of elevation gain to units is one to 250, multiplying 3.5 units by 250 yields a necessary elevation gain of at least 875 feet.

In Conclusion

$$\text{Miles} + (\text{Elevation} \div 250) = \text{Units of Effort}$$

Determination of Official Measurements

With the approval of the Trial Certifier, the distance and elevation gain established for a course by the Trial Marshal and Trial Committee shall be used as the official statistics for the course.

Time Window

The time window is the amount of time an appropriately conditioned and trained llama should be able to complete the field test at a pace typical of a pack trip. This window must be established for each trial's 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.

Throughout the course, a series of checkpoints should be established with a designated time allotment for completion of each section of the course. These checkpoints also provide a known location from which the steward and contact the trial chairperson or other designated person to report the group's location. This is a useful safety measure. If a llama-handler team does not reach the gate within the allotted time it indicates they will likely be unable to finish the course within the time window and they may be required to leave. This allows the rest of the



llamas to travel unimpeded by slowpokes and risk their own opportunity to complete the course as required.

Determining the time window and the time allotment for pace is somewhat of an art. The PLTA recognizes that hiking speeds vary, but speeds during a trial should reflect a realistic expectation, keeping in mind the goal of demonstrating the llama's fitness, while preventing the field test from becoming a race. Setting a time window requires that staff understand the expectations for llamas at a given trial level and how that fits with the requirements of a Field Test set up on local terrain and in expected local weather conditions. Considerations include distance, elevation gain or loss, steepness of the climbs, altitude, rough terrain or difficult water crossings, and weather-related factors such as temperature and humidity. This may require experimentation by having llamas practice on the course well before the pack trail to determine what a realistic expectation is. On longer courses adequate time for a lunch break should be built in to the time window or otherwise accommodated.

Obstacle Selection and Complexity

PLTA pack trials are designed to become increasingly challenging at progressively higher levels. To this end, not only do the required distance and elevation-gain increase, but the obstacles also become more difficult. All obstacles must be selected with safety in mind and should reflect realistic trail conditions.

Obstacles are grouped into seven categories. Listed below are their definitions and recommended obstacles that fit each definition. Depending on the location of the trial, there may be other obstacles that fit a category well. Each trial level includes certain required obstacles. If conditions require, the Trial Marshal, with the Certifier's approval, is permitted to select alternates that reflect the same or similar challenge to the llama.

There are two main considerations when selecting an obstacle for a trial; the complexity and the difficulty the llama faces when negotiating it. Complexity is a matter of the number of components the llama is asked to consider at once. Difficulty refers to the effort the llama must put forth. Each obstacle with its various components poses a single question to the llama "Can you do this?" The llama answers the question with a "yes" or "no" by either negotiating the obstacle or refusing to do so.



Determining Complexity

To understand the challenge an obstacle poses to a llama we look at the situation from a llama's point of view and ask ourselves, 'what question does this ask of the llama?'. Llamas will consider the obstacle from the perspective of the

- lateral space (width) available
- vertical space (height) available
- threats to personal space

Obstacles are designed to test the llama's capacity to answer the question, "can you do this?" at increasing levels of complexity by both the way the question is asked, and by how many of the above issues are incorporated into it. All obstacles at the Basic or Advanced level are limited to asking the llama to confront one question at a time. At the Master level the llama begins to be asked to consider two questions at the same time. At the Elite level three or more questions may be added to a single obstacle occurrence.

For example:

A Basic obstacle asks the llama one question:

Can you move through a tight vertical space by ducking under a low branch?

An Advanced obstacle asks the llama one question but makes the question more difficult:

Can you move through a tight vertical space by ducking under multiple branches?

A Master obstacle asks two questions:

Can you move through a tight vertical space by ducking under multiple branches?

While going down a steep hill?

An Elite obstacle asks two or more questions:

Can you move through a tight vertical space

While going down a steep hill?

And while dealing with the difficult footing of rock rubble?

Determining Difficulty

All trial levels include obstacles that ask only one question, however, as noted above, as the trial levels increase, so does the difficulty of single-question obstacles, yet determining the level of difficulty an obstacle poses is somewhat subjective. Maintaining consistent application of



PLTA standards is one of the reasons why intense training is required for certifiers. Certifiers and Trail Marshals must also keep in mind that even as the challenge to the llama increases, obstacles must always be selected with safety in mind.

Comparative Example of Obstacle Difficulty

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. The llama is being asked to step or jump over a log.

Trial Level	Difficulty
Basic	16" high, 9" diameter log
Advanced	18" high, 12" diameter log
Master	18" high, 20" diameter log
Elite	18" high, 20" diameter log immediately followed by a 16" high, 10" diameter log

The challenge each obstacle presents to the llama increases at each level in three ways: the total number of obstacles, the number of questions the llama has to consider per obstacle, and the difficulty that each obstacle presents.

Trial Level	Number of Obstacles	Questions Asked per Obstacle	Complexity of the Obstacle
Basic	5	One	Easy
Advanced	10	One	Moderate
Master	6	One	Difficult
	8 (15 total)	Two or more	
Elite	7	One	Demanding
	13 (20 total)	Two or more	



Obstacle Categories

Category 1: Picking One's Way

Question to the llama: Can you negotiate compromised vertical space?

Requirement: The llama must move carefully through material that obscures and complicates footing.

Examples:

- Deadfall
- Logging slash
- Rock rubble
- Dense deep grass

Category 2: Foot Fears

Question to the llama: Can you negotiate this threat to your personal space?

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

Examples:

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

Category 3: Up/Down/Across

Question to the llama: Can you negotiate this vertical space?

Requirement: 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.

Examples:

- High step up
- High step down
- Wide step across
- Jump / step over high obstacle such as a log
- Step down from a higher level such as a rock ledge
- Jump / step over a low obstacle such as a ditch

Category 4: Tight Places

Question to the llama: Can you move through this horizontal space?

Requirement: The llama is required to negotiate a narrow space that allows limited room to maneuver.

Examples:

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



Category 5: Steep Slope

Question to the llama: Can you negotiate this vertical space?

Requirement: The llama is required to maneuver up, down, or across a slope of greater than 45 degrees that may cause load shift.

Examples:

- Steep slope up
- Steep slope down
- Steep side-hill with narrow (8 inch) tread

Category 6: Load Management

Question to the llama: Can you tolerate a threat to your personal space?

Requirement: The llama must tolerate adjustments or handling of tack or llama's body, exclusive of head and halter. During this obstacle the llama may be tied to a stationary object or held by another person. In the case of strings, only the lead llama in the string may be restrained unless safety issues caused by an unruly llama requires otherwise.

Examples:

- 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
- Bug spray
- Foot inspection

Category 7: Trail Hazards

Question to the llama: Can you tolerate a threat to your personal space?

Requirement: The llama must tolerate unexpected trail conditions or surprising objects.

Examples:

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



Definitions of Typical Obstacles

Barrier

Obstacles that must be stepped through carefully such as a fallen stone wall, or one that the handler must evaluate and negotiate the llama through safely such as an obstructive fallen tree or branch that could be repositioned to go over, under or past.

Bridges

Any bridge or ramp set above or through an area such as over a stream, or through a swampy, muddy, or rocky area.

Brush

Thick bushes, dense low tree branches, or thick and tall grass or reeds which will rub against the llama's pack system.

Bug Spray

This obstacle mimics the application of applying bug repellent to the llama. Water should be used in this obstacle to prevent possible allergic reactions of llamas to a selected repellent. The handler should be allowed to use either a spray or wipe-on method of application. The body section of the llama to be treated may vary with the trial level.

Deadfall

Debris on the ground, or very low, that the llama and handler must pick their way through, such as downed trees or branches.

Duck Under

Low hanging branches, leaning trees or rock outcroppings, or similar natural obstructions that cause the handler and llama to duck their heads and possibly their bodies in order to pass under.

Foot Inspection

Much debate has gone on as to whether or not this obstacle should be included in the Manageability Tasks. The decision to include it as a field test obstacle reflects the fact that, in practice, the need to inspect a foot often occurs on the trail rather than at the trailhead. The obstacle consists of picking up the llama's foot to inspect for possible injury to the leg, foot or pad. This will be done without the panniers attached to the llama, possibly before the start of the course, during a rest stop, at an obstacle that requires the removal of panniers in order to be safely negotiated, or after the course is completed. The foot to be picked up will be designated prior to the start of the trial by the Trial Committee and/or the Trial Marshal in agreement with the Trial Certifier.



Gates

The handler and the llama must open, pass through, and close a gate.

Jump/Step-Over Obstacles 16 to 24 inches high or wide that must be jumped or stepped over such as a rock, log, small ditch, or other low barrier. All jumps must be controlled

Pack Manipulation

An obstacle that requires the handler to open a pannier and put something in or take something out (or both). This might also include checking cinches, top loading, putting a rain cover on the llama, or a rain slicker on the handler.

Rock Rubble

Scree or small talus-sized rocks that require the llama to pick its way through and over them.

Tight Places

An obstacle (often a grove of small saplings or young evergreens) that presents passageways that are narrower than the main trail requiring the llama to either brush against the sides or to manipulate their body and panniers through a narrow space.

Trail Traffic

The llama is required to pass calmly by hikers with or without dogs, people on horseback, trail bikers, or other trail users.

Water

A water obstacle consists of moving through a body of water that can be moving, such as a creek or shallow river, or still such as the area along the edge of a lake or pond. It can also be wet mud, or a swamp. A llama must be in this obstacle for a minimum of ten feet. Water depth must be no deeper than two feet. It is acceptable to artificially add water to a usually adequate water obstacle.

SECTION 4. TRIAL REQUIREMENTS

Each PLTA pack trial level requires successful completion of multiple variations of a trial. This rule was established as part of the original concept of pack trials for PLTA llamas. It is intended to ensure that the llama is capable of demonstrating the necessary skill to perform at that level in varying circumstances and on multiple occasions. To provide for this at a pack trial event, organizers should consider using different obstacle for each trial or running the course and obstacles in opposite directions to provide a varied experience for the llamas.



Originally llamas were required to complete two Basic trials, four Advanced trials or four Master trials. Elite trials had not yet been established. In deference to member's wishes and recognizing that llamas that had successfully gained certification at a lower level had demonstrated significant skill, the Board of Directors chose to reduce the requirements for llamas already holding certification. Thus, a llama that is certified at the Basic level will achieve certification at the Advanced level when it has successfully completed three rather than four trials. Likewise, llamas that hold an Advanced certificate are only required to successfully complete three trials to earn Master certification.

In recognition of the high level of training and experience of Elite candidates, they are not required to undertake the Management Test. However, they *must* have earned their Master certification before attempting an Elite trial, and they must successfully complete two trials.

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 qualify as having successfully completed a trial, all obstacles set up on the course for that trial must be satisfactorily completed and the Field Test must be completed within the time window. Any of the following disqualifies the llama from successfully completing the trial.

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

4.2 Certification Levels

There are four levels of PLTA pack llama certification. Each is available for a llama working individually or in a string of two llamas. Thus, a llama could potentially earn eight different certifications. The four levels are Basic, Advanced, Master, and Elite. These are designed to measure increasing packing skill and physical conditioning.

The requirements for each level of certification are designed to provide a consistent progression of difficulty and to accommodate the changes in the way obstacles are selected. Simple obstacles require attention to



a single easy item or issue while complex obstacles include dealing with multiple more challenging concerns.

The standards listed in the tables below show the recommended mileage and elevation requirements. In circumstances where these standards cannot be met, distances and elevation gain may be adjusted at the ratio of one mile = 250 feet of elevation gain (see Section 3.5 Course Design) As a result the course for the Field Test portion of a trial may be longer and flatter or steeper and shorter than indicated here.

Basic Pack Trials

The Basic pack trial tests **early stages** of training and conditioning against **minimal packing** requirements. The llama's natural ability and trust in their handler are being evaluated. This level is designed to encourage maximum participation by new and aspiring llama packers and pack llamas. Basic trials are designed to reflect this philosophy as well as being a fun and educational event. A llama certified at the Basic level is beginning to learn to pack. It is expected to be willing to hike short distances with a light load. It is expected to be well-behaved and responsive to its handler, as well as being able to negotiate simple obstacles composed of single components. The certified Basic Pack Llama is a competent day hiker on easy trails.

Basic Pack Trial General Requirements

Five simple obstacles demonstrating the llama's willingness to follow the handler

Criterion	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 fit body weight
Distance	Three miles
Elevation Gain	250 to 500 feet
Total Number of Obstacles Required	Five
Performance Deductions Allowed	Five
Successful Trials Required for Certificate	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**. The requirements are more stringent than at the Basic level. They are based on the expectation that the llama will be moderately fit and be able to negotiate more complex obstacles than at the Basic level. This is reflected in the longer distance, greater elevation gain and more numerous and more challenging obstacles that make up the standard the llama is tested against. A llama certified at the Advanced level is still learning to pack. This llama has attained mental and physical skill adequate to pack moderate distances and negotiate obstacles that are more demanding than a Basic llama would face but are still composed of a single component. A certified Advanced Pack Llama is a competent overnight packer on gentle **journeys**.

Advanced Pack Trial General Requirements

Ten obstacles demonstrating the llama's ability to negotiate typical trail conditions.

Criterion	Requirements
Age	At least 3 years old
Load (percent of body weight)	15% of fit body weight
Distance	Five miles
Elevation Gain	750 to 1000 feet
Total Number of Obstacles Required	Ten
Performance Deductions Allowed	Three
Successful Trials Required for Certificate	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**. Training and conditioning a llama to this level is a serious responsibility. The requirements are designed to demonstrate the candidate's superior capabilities. A certified Master Pack Llama is a fully proficient trail packer who is capable of dealing with complicated off-trail situations of short duration. Master packers cooperate closely with their handlers to competently negotiate obstacles composed of multiple components. These are the hardy "bring it on" trail packers.



Master Pack Trial General Requirements

Fifteen complex obstacles requiring skill, agility and responsiveness. All categories must be represented

Criterion	Requirements
Age	At least 4 years old
Load (percent of body weight)	20% of fit body weight
Distance	Eight miles
Elevation Gain	1500 to 2000 feet
Total Number of Obstacles Required	Fifteen
Performance Deductions Allowed	Two
Successful Trials Required for Certificate	Four, or three if the llama has 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**. This llama has earned a special place in the llama community and is dominant in the field of packing. This trial is a level above Master and in order to participate, a llama must already have earned a Master Pack Llama certificate. The most significant difference between the Master and Elite levels is the higher degree of fitness, both mental and physical, the Elite llama demonstrates. The certified Elite Pack Llama works in partnership with its handler to adjust to very complex or unfamiliar obstacles and think through how to negotiate them without detailed cues, while remaining responsive to the handler's communications. The Elite packer is mentally and physically fit for work in extreme terrain under demanding conditions. These llamas are the "go anywhere, do anything" superstars of the llama packing world. Certification as an Elite Pack Llama (EPL) is the PLTA's highest level of recognition of pack llama achievement.

Elite Pack Trial General Requirements

Twenty obstacles demonstrating the llama's skill at thinking through a complex situation and negotiating it successfully.

Criterion	Requirements
Age	At least 5 years old
Load (percent of body weight)	25% of body weight
Distance	Ten miles
Elevation Gain	2500 to 3000 feet



Criterion	Requirements
Total Number of Obstacles Required	Twenty
Performance Deductions Allowed	Two
Successful Trials Required for Certificate	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. String trials test the packing scenario of a single handler leading multiple pack llamas in single file on the trail with each animal connected to the one in front of it. Llamas participating in this test are expected to have been trained and experienced in the activity. Trials consist of the same courses as for individual llamas with the corresponding weight requirements, obstacles and time windows and may be conducted concurrently with trials in which the llamas participate individually.

In a String Trial the llamas are required to work in teams of two and, with the exception of obstacles that require pannier removal, remain in the string while negotiating obstacles, although the Trial Certifier may determine possible obstacles, where the llamas may be separated for safety reasons. This determination is made prior to the trial. Preferably an alternate obstacle will be located.

Llamas may participate in string trials lower than the individual trial for which they are certified. For example, a llama that has earned an individual Advanced Pack Llama (APL) certification may undertake certification as a Basic String Pack Llama (BSPL) even if they have not earned a Basic individual certificate (BPL).

Performance deductions are accrued independently by each llama. The allowed performance deductions are the same as for an individual trial. In other words, if the total deductions for one llama exceed the deductions allowed for the trial only that llama is disqualified.

Two successful completions of the same level of String Trial are required for certification at a given level. Llamas are not required to complete their string trials while working in the same team. Thus, if llama A and llama B successfully complete a String Trial as a team, and llama B and llama C successfully complete a String Trial at the same level, llama B will have successfully earned String Certification.



Llamas A and C will have both earned one of the two completions required for certification.

String Level Requirements

Numbers and types of obstacles appropriate to the trial level

Trial Component	Requirement
General Requirements	The same as for the level attempted
Llamas per String	Two
Obstacle Negotiation	Done while in string
Performance Deductions Allowed	Applied to the individual llama.
Successful Trials Required	Two for each llama

The PLTA recognizes that many people string their llamas of groups of more than two llamas thus creating three different skills needed by the llamas involved: lead, middle, and tail llama. The middle llama has to contend with having other llamas both in front and behind which creates greater challenges. As of 2026 the Board of Directors has chosen to retain the option of requiring more llamas in the string, or creating a separate certification for longer strings, for future consideration.

4.3 Manageability Tasks

Manageability Tasks and the Field test are considered two separate components of examining the llama’s fitness as a dependable pack llama. Llamas participating in Elite trials are not required to perform Manageability tasks, all other llamas are required to complete Manageability Tasks as part of *each* trial.

Purpose

Manageability Tasks are an elemental requirement for a pack llama. These tasks are typically encountered at the camp or trailhead rather than on the trail, therefore, examination of the llama’s ability to complete them is done separately from the Field Test. Equipment required for the tasks include a trailer for the llama to load into, and possibly a pen in which to do the haltering task, although the confines of a trailer may be used for this. This equipment is to be provided by the Trial Committee.



Procedure

Five (5) tasks are evaluated for llamas participating individually. These are:

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

Because a llama is required to have earned individual certification at any given level prior to undertaking string certification, only three (3) tasks are required for llamas participating in strings. These are:

- Saddling
- Pack Attachment
- String tie-in

At most trials the Manageability Tasks are evaluated prior to undertaking the Field Test, although this is not required. These evaluations may be conducted at the staging area or even in camp the night before the trial. Manageability Tasks will be evaluated by a Steward or a Trial Certifier. It must be remembered that the standards for success are different from what is expected in a show arena. What is being evaluated is the behavior expected in a realistic packing environment. During Manageability Tasks the llama is expected to remain calm, behave in a safe manner, and be cooperative. They are not expected to behave in a precise or stylized manner.

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

Tasks

Haltering

The halter is removed from the llama while confined in a small pen or trailer. The animal is allowed to be completely free within the confines of the enclosure; often the handler is asked to away from the llama and move to the opposite end of the enclosure so the llama recognizes it is loose. After a short time, or when it is obvious that the llama realizes it is free, the handler is asked to put the halter back on. The interaction between the llama and handler is evaluated for calmness. During halter removal and re-haltering, the llama is expected to remain calm, allow approach without becoming anxious and accept the halter without becoming unruly.



Picketing

The llama is tied by a line to something fixed or that pivots around a stake in the ground for a minimum of five minutes. The line shall be between sixteen (16) and thirty (30) feet long. The llama must remain calm even if they become entangled in the line. If the llama becomes 'hog-tied' where the rope encircles the llama's feet so it can't move, or becomes tangled and panics, performance deductions are made. If the event is held at a location where llamas participating in trials have been staked out for long periods with no problems occurring, the picketing Manageability Task requirement can be waived.

Loading/Unloading

The llama shall be loaded and unloaded from a trailer or vehicle. While loading and unloading the llama should willingly enter and exit the trailer or vehicle. Performance/safety deductions are made if it balks, refuses, or leaps out of or into the trailer in an unsafe manner.

Saddling

The llama must be saddled properly. The llama should stand calmly while the handler attaches all parts of the saddle system except for the panniers or packs. The handler may have assistance with this task.

Pack Attachment

The panniers must be attached to the saddled llama properly while the llama stands calmly. The handler may have assistance with this task.

String Tie-in

In String Trials, tie-in is the act of connecting the lead and trailing llamas to each other in a string formation. The initial position of each llama is at the discretion of the handler. A chest strap must be worn by the lead llama. All connections or tie-ins between llamas must be done with a quick release knot or breakaway system. The certifier has the final say as to whether or not the method of attachment is safe and acceptable. Tie-in is required for String Trials only.

4.4 Field Test

Purpose

The Field Test represents a test of the core of a packing experience. The tasks involved, negotiating obstacles and completing a course, test the llama's performance in a natural packing environment. The llama is required to demonstrate both its fitness level and its packing skill. This is not a test of handler's fitness or skill.



Procedure

Two methods of administering a pack trial are available, roving steward or certifier escort.

Hiking Requirements

PLTA pack trials are tests for the llama, not for the handler, or the steward, or the certifier. None of these people is required to hike the entire course. All persons are allowed to swap out with other individuals to complete the task. The only requirement is that llamas are always accompanied by an appropriate handler, and candidates are always in the company of either a steward or certifier.

Roving Steward

The roving steward method is most commonly used and is strongly recommended. In this method, groups of llamas and their handlers walk a marked course with obstacles that are clearly identified. They are accompanied by stewards who hike with them overseeing the test and watching for appropriate behavior. When the group reaches an obstacle, the steward explains how it is to be negotiated. The llamas are then led one at a time through the obstacle while the steward evaluates and scores them. When all the llamas have finished, the group moves on as a unit. A group of five or so llamas and their handlers is optimum. Stewards can be switched out so that it is not incumbent on a single steward to hike the entire course. Because the course and obstacles for the field test are designed by the trial marshal and certified by the trial certifier, the steward bears no responsibility for determining the route or identifying obstacles. That is all done ahead of time.

Certifier Escort

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 multiple trials going on at the same time, the certifier will have to be available by phone or other means to deal with any administrative or emergency issues. The best practice is to have a second certifier available to handle those matters.

The hallmark of the certifier escort method consists of two major changes compared to the roving steward method:

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



In order to facilitate this, the certifier must be familiar with the terrain, general area, potential routes, and available obstacles. 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:

- The method **applies only to the Elite, Master and Advanced level trials**. It is not to be used for the Basic Trials.
- Mileage, elevation gain and obstacles requirements remain the same as with other methods of administration.
- The certifier keeps a record of the route and obstacles used during the field test.
 - (GPS receivers and cameras are excellent documentary tools.)
- The certifier assumes the steward's function of observing, evaluating, and recording llamas' performance.
- The certifier determines that all obstacle requirements for the designated level are met and certifies course length and elevation gain.
- A special set of forms is used to allow the certifier to record field test information.
- 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 carefully observed.

Basic trials are excluded from the certifier escort method because the Board has determined that handlers and llamas at that level benefit from a more structured situation. The Board wants to provide both handlers and stewards with the opportunity to learn the regular structure of trials. It is also the case that certifiers are not required to be present for Basic trials and bringing one in poses an unnecessary burden on organizers.

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 the obstacles their llamas 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 free-form, fun event, rather than an examination of the llama's ability.

Background

On 9/12/19 the PLTA Board of Directors made changes to the procedures for field tests. Up until that time two methods of administering the test were available: the stationary steward and the roving steward. In the stationary method, stewards were posted at each obstacle while the handlers and llamas hiked the course on their own. Stewards stayed at their assigned obstacles and scored llamas as they passed through. This method may work well when there are many llamas to be tested on a short course. On longer courses it requires a large staff (20 people for 20 obstacles on the Elite) which was rarely available. It also has the disadvantage that, except for time spent at an obstacle, the llamas are not under the scrutiny of a Steward. Misbehavior can go unobserved, support may not be close by in the event of an emergency, and participants can get lost on the course. The method was seldom used. The board dropped the stationary steward option while retaining the roving steward and adding the certifier escort method.

Obstacles

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

Basic Pack Trial Obstacle Requirements: 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 Pack Trial Obstacle Requirements: 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



Category	Required Obstacle
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
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 obstacles created from two components	Any obstacles appropriate to the trial level

Elite Pack Trial Obstacle Requirements 20 Obstacles

Category	Required Obstacle
Seven (7) obstacles composed of a single component	Any obstacle appropriate to the trial level
Thirteen (13) obstacles, each created from two or more components from different categories.	Any obstacles appropriate to the trial level

SECTION 5. INSURANCE

The PLTA does not require Trial Hosts to supply liability insurance. Instead, PLTA maintains a general liability policy. Some land use managers require a Certificate of Insurance and possibly proof that their group be listed on an “also insured named” form. This latter requirement may incur a small additional fee. If a copy of a Certificate of Insurance or any other proof of insurance is required, the Trial Host must contact the PLTA as soon as possible and no later than two (2) weeks prior to the event, since these documents take time to process.

The current insurer of the PLTA requires that all PLTA event participants, including committee members, sign the



“Acknowledgement of Risk and Waiver of Liability” form. All participants must be members or associate members of the PLTA. For all non-owner handlers of llamas entered in a trial that are *not* PLTA members the PLTA specifically created the Associate membership to fulfill this insurance requirement.

All llamas are entered in any PLTA sanctioned event solely at the risk of the owner, and the PLTA assumes no risk or liability whatsoever for them.

The PLTA has established a protocol for dealing with accidents that may result in insurance claims. This protocol will be made available to all Trial Hosts. They are expected to likewise make it available to the Trial Committee. In addition, during a pack trial, a PLTA board member will be made available by phone to assist as necessary with insurance needs.

SECTION 6. ACCIDENT MANAGEMENT

The PLTA Board of Directors has created a document titled ‘Safety First! But What If PLTA Insurance Is Needed?’ that describes procedures to be followed in case of emergency. This document should be thoroughly reviewed by all event staff. A copy of the document should be in the possession of the Trial Chairperson, Trial Secretary, Trial Stewards, and Trial Certifier during the event.

Prior to the trial the Trial Host will be supplied with the name and contact information of a Board member who will be available by phone during the trail and who will provide support in case of an accident. This person will be responsible for contacting the insurance company. Typically, this will be the PLTA Secretary.

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. 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.

Section 7. Information

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



**SECTION 7. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT --
SEE HANDBOOK**

**SECTION 8. RECOGNITION OF
ACCOMPLISHMENTS -- SEE HANDBOOK**

SECTION 9: APPENDIXES -- SEE HANDBOOK

