



College of
Agricultural Sciences

Cooperative Extension
Dairy and Animal Science



February 2008

Guidelines for Pennsylvania 4-H Obstacle Trail Therapeutic Riding Division

Obstacle trail is one class in the Therapeutic Riding Division intended for riders with special needs. The Therapeutic Riding Division is intended primarily for riders with disabilities who are unable to participate in other divisions with or without reasonable accommodations.

Penn State encourages persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact your county extension educator in advance of your participation or visit. Requests for accommodations should be made to the county extension educator at least three weeks in advance of the event.

Classes included in the Therapeutic Riding Division are divided into two subdivisions: maximum assistance and minimum assistance. The parent or guardian is responsible to consult with their child's health care professional to determine the appropriate level of assistance. Riders should be placed in the class that is most appropriate for their ability.

Maximum assistance – riders in this division are those riders who require two or more aides (leader or side walker).

Minimum assistance – riders in this division are those riders who only require one aide (leader or side walker).

Course designers must consider safety first at all times and are encouraged to design courses that will demonstrate proper horse handling techniques and horsemanship skills for riders with disabilities. Courses should be designed that are appropriate for the skill level of participants, yet provide a safe and fair evaluation of riders' abilities. Experienced therapeutic riding professionals should be consulted as needed for assistance and guidance when planning courses, as well as when conducting therapeutic classes at 4-H shows.

Courses must be posted at the beginning of the show and a copy should be made available to all entrants. Riders will be allowed to "walk" the course (without their mounts) if needed prior to the start of the class.

Refer to current *Pennsylvania 4-H Horse Show Rule Book* for specific rules and additional details.

Acknowledgment for assistance in preparing and revising these guidelines:

Pat Comerford, Patty Kelly, Donna Zang, Andrea Graeff, Tammy Eichstadt, Dave Gallaher, Ben Nolt, Richard Ely, Kathy Brown, and Brian Egan.

Obstacle Trail

Exhibitors must be accompanied by at least one and no more than three aides. (If one aide is used he or she must remain in close proximity to the horse.) Rider must guide mount through a pre-posted course. Riders may “walk” the course if needed. Riders will be asked to trot or jog.

Each time a rider receives unauthorized assistance from a side-walker, horse leader or spotter, a penalty will be incurred. Lead ropes are required and may be attached or unattached to the horse. If the lead line is attached, the rider will not be penalized *unless* the aide provides undue assistance. If the lead line is unattached, the aide should hold the lead line and keep it available to assist as appropriate.

Horses will be shown at a walk and sitting or posting trot or jog or alternate gait at the appropriate and indicated parts of the course. Riders must execute the course as posted. Each obstacle not negotiated properly will result in penalty points.

Course distances and recommendations:

1. 20-36 feet from starting/ending point to first/last obstacle.
2. At least 20-30 feet of jog/trot area between obstacles when jog/trot is used.
3. Minimum of 10 feet between cones.
4. Minimum of 14 feet between barrels. Plastic safety barrels are recommended.
5. Minimum distance between ground poles (when used as a four in a row obstacle) is 24 inches.
6. Distance between obstacles used to form “dog-leg” or zig-zag must be at least 6 feet.
7. If figure of eight's are utilized all edges must be clearly defined (middle and each outer edge - clearly visible line or cone may be used.)
8. The handling or dragging of obstacles and mounting and dismounting must not be a requirement in this class.
9. Management is encouraged to design elements that can be negotiated with in 90 seconds.
10. A minimum of five and maximum of seven obstacles will be used.

The following obstacles are permitted:

- Figure of eight with two 25' diameter circles; to be done at the walk, sitting trot, jog trot, posting trot or alternate gait; must circle right then left.
- Riding over, at a walk, 4 natural or white ground poles (10') long placed at no less than 24" from center to center.
- Guide the horse through a "Z" of ground poles.
Specifications required for the "Z" are:
 1. The top of the "Z" is to be approximately 10' long
 2. The middle of the "Z" is to have approximately 5' long sides
 3. The bottom of the "Z" is to be 10' long
 4. All components should be 6' apart
- Pass between two bales of hay 6' apart at the center.
- To include a jog or trot or alternate gait between specific points and of suitable duration to determine the way of going
- Riding in and out of at least 5 clearly visible cones or barrels.
- Figure of eight around two barrels.
- Turning the mount around in a prescribed circle or box (may be combined with stepping over poles if poles are used to "make the box" - this would count as two obstacles.)
- Halting at any prescribed location on the course.

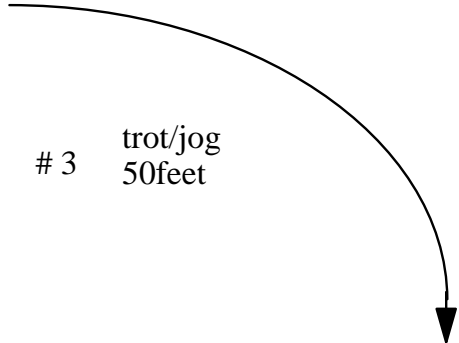
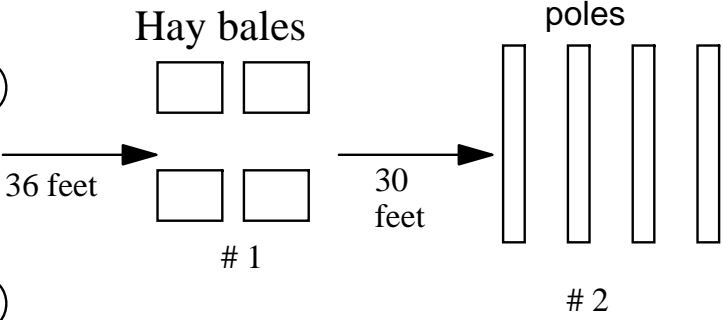
The following two obstacles are permitted for minimum assistance classes but are not permitted for maximum assistance classes:

- Backing the mount into a "3-sided box" of ground poles and riding out of the "box". Interior spacing of the "box" must be at least 6 feet apart.
- Ride into a "3-sided box" of ground poles and back out. Interior spacing of the "box" must be at least 6' apart.

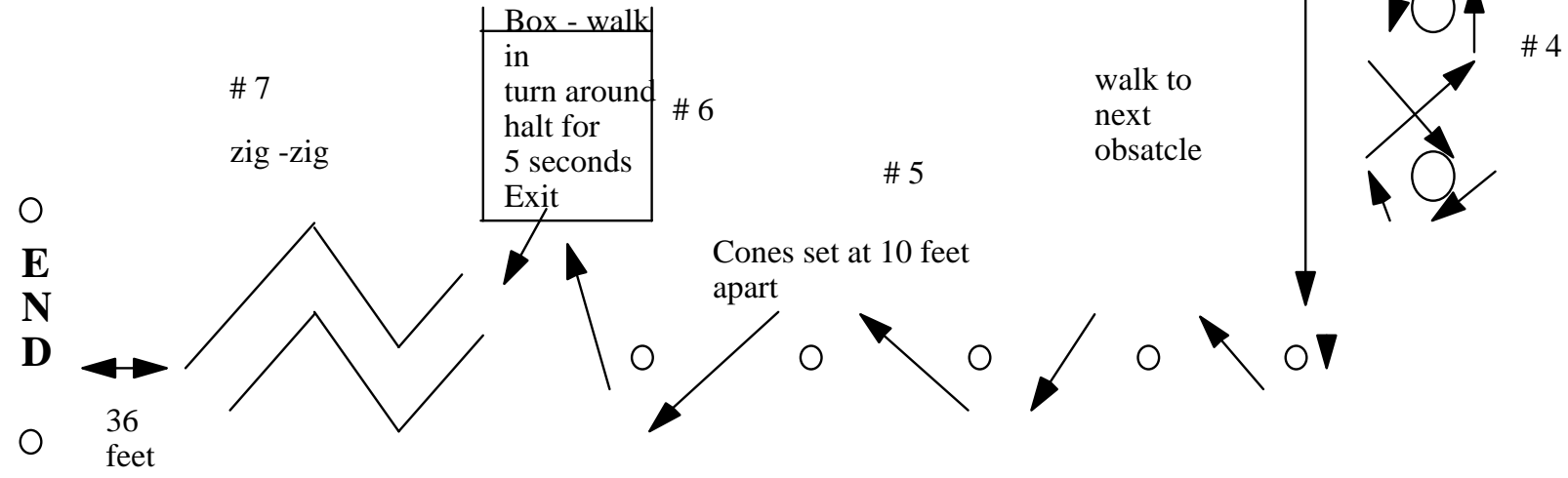
For maximum assistance classes it is permitted to have the following box obstacle:

- Ride into a "3-sided box" of ground poles, turn and ride out. Interior spacing of the "box" must be at least 6' apart.

S
T
A
R
T



4-H Obstacle Trail Class Sample Pattern # 1



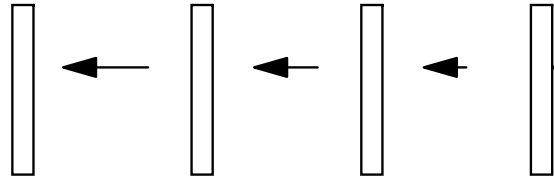
END

○

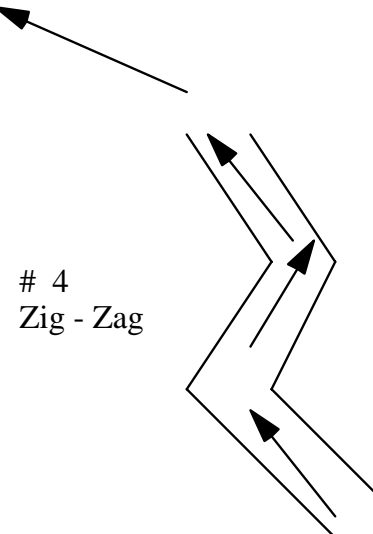
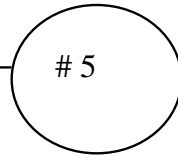
START

○

6 Poles



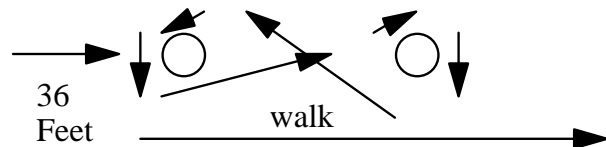
Enter circle or box
turn around and halt



4
Zig - Zag

4-H Obstacle Trail Class Sample Pattern # 2

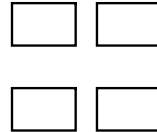
1
Barrels 25 feet apart



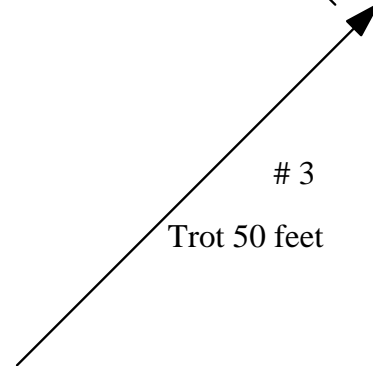
36
Feet

walk

2 Hay Bales

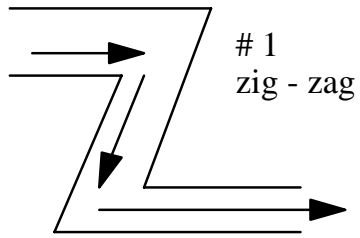


3
Trot 50 feet

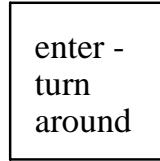


○
S
T
A
R
T
○

→
36 feet



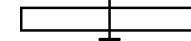
2 Box or Circle



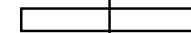
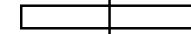
3
Trot at least 50 feet

**4-H Obstacle Trail Class
Sample Pattern #3**

4
Halt
5 seconds

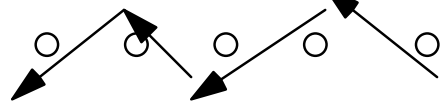


5
walk over
poles



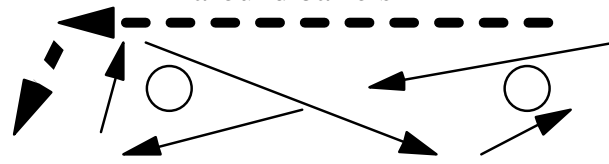
○
E
N
D
○

7 Walk thru cones



Cones at 10 feet apart

6 Fig. "8"
around barrels



Barrels are 25 feet apart