

Techniques de Randonnée Equestre de Compétition: TREC

TREC adventures started in the 1970s in France where equine tourism flourishes. Sure enough, the equine guides felt the urge to compare their horseback and wilderness prowess in a competition of skills. Their games of skill were so much fun that it was not long before the equine tourists themselves wanted into the games, and TREC was born. It began as a ridden activity, and its evolution there has taken it from wilderness meadows to international competitions. Now a recognized international sport, TREC's governing body is the Federation Internationale de Tourisme Equestre (FITE).

For us, it is now being enthusiastically adapted for carriage driving with aficionados from Europe to North America. Here in the U.S., we've taken our lead from the British Driving Society via our friends in Canada.

An organized TREC tests horse-and-driver combinations over a range of challenges, rather than focusing on one style or discipline. The games are geared for safe and proper driving practices among a variety of drivers including all kinds of horses, ponies and carriages. Versatility is emphasized, second only to welfare of the horse and respecting and enjoying the countryside. TRECers engage in route finding in literal and figurative terms from modest ambitions to the highly competitive strategists. In keeping with the origins of TRECing, camaraderie is fostered as central to the sport. Skills are displayed in safety and preparation, route finding, speed and control of paces, and demonstration of an array of parcours skills.

Sometimes the signature of an event is the heart-pounding hoof beats of world-class horses as they thunder their prowess. Our TREC's hallmarks have always been the ringing chimes of laughter across the fields and meadows in sunshine and in rain. Smiles and camaraderie are the greatest of our equipment and our demonstrated skills.

TREC DRIVING

OVERVIEW

Technique de Randonnée Equestre de Compétition (TREC) originated for riders in France in the 1970s with equine tour guides comparing their horseback and wilderness prowess in games of skill. The tourists themselves were keen to take part, and thus TREC has developed. Ridden TREC is now an international sport governed by the Federation Internationale de Tourisme Equestre (FITE). The sport was developed for driving by the British Driving Society and has spread to many countries of the world. TREC is a very informal competition, ideal for the recreational driver, as it offers a few similarities to Pleasure Driving obstacle-games and Combined Driving marathon and obstacle-cones competitions, but the formality, dress codes, volumes of pre-event information, regulation and volunteer requirements are greatly reduced. The goals of TREC are safety, horsemanship, fellowship, versatility, and respect for the countryside.

The following points describe the competition and are general guidelines that may be modified as necessary by the organizer or person in charge. Safety, welfare of animals, and fairness must be maintained in a friendly atmosphere, allowing good horsemanship and sportsmanship to prevail. Improvements and constructive comments are welcome and should be forwarded to the ADS Recreational Driving Committee at http://www.americandrivingsociety.org/com_rec.asp

PRE-EVENT

Basic planning considerations:

- Locate a suitable area. The Cross-Country course may vary from approximately 3 km – 10 km or more. In addition, an area with suitable footing is required for five to ten skill demonstrations to be laid out along a track from .5 km to 2 km or more in length. Elapsed time on this route may or may not be timed.
- Event information should include an entry form stating the date, entry deadline, costs, a general description of the terrain, footing and distances to be driven, as well as any unique features of the

- course such as water crossings or bridges. It should also note any pre-competition meeting time, detailed location directions, provisions for lunch and contact number for additional information.
- Arrange for on-site or on-call emergency medical services and/or arrange for reasonable response time for ambulance services. Contact information for a local veterinarian and farrier should be available as well.
 - Arrange for a general meeting area, a place for presenting orientation and map briefings, and viewing scores. Provide for water and toilets or porta potties.
 - Lay out one or more routes for Part 2, the Cross-Country drive and control of paces, considering experience and proficiency of drivers and horses, time of year and conditioning of horses, terrain, footing and anticipated weather conditions.
 - One large-scale master map of the intended routes is to be posted at the driver orientation for viewing and note taking. Copies are not distributed to the participants.
 - Devise skills tests for Part 3, the Skills Demonstration. Use natural features wherever possible. Skills should ideally be as close as possible to conditions or situations one would actually encounter in a backcountry drive.

ARRIVAL

- Provide directions or assistance to parking, unloading, harnessing, putting to and exercise areas.
- Provide suitable areas for registration, general meetings, driver orientation and refreshments.
- Post proposed schedule for the day and order of go for each part of the TREC in the meeting or arrival area. Order of go may be finely scheduled (for many competitors) or as simple as first come, first out (if fewer turnouts are expected).
- Drivers must complete registration, pay required fees, sign any required waivers, and receive a turnout number.

SAMPLE SCHEDULE FOR THE DAY

- 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. only – Registration. Join us for coffee and donuts
- 9:00 a.m. -- Orientation meeting, map room (for all drivers)
- 9:30 -- Mandatory safety check opens for all turnouts on first come,

first served basis. Upon completion, drivers will start report to the Cross-country starter.

- 12:30 -- Lunch
- 1:00 pm. -- Skills demonstration walk
- 2:00 pm -- Skills demonstrations open as first come, first on course.
- 4:30 pm -- Prizes, awards, recognition, refreshments (whatever your group decides to do)

ORIENTATION and MAP ROOM

- An informal introductory meeting is held to explain the day's activities, outline any important restrictions, offer general information, and answer questions. This takes place following arrival and registration, but before any competitions.
- Drivers may view and record whatever information they may deem appropriate from the master map following the orientation. They may draw their own maps from the master if they so choose.
- Each driver starts with a score of 50 points.

PART 1 – SAFETY CHECK

A Safety Officer will review each turnout and may require any unsafe harness, hitching or vehicle to be corrected prior to starting. There is a list of specified spares to be carried throughout the event. It is recommended that each driver complete a Pre-competition Checklist such as that offered via the ADS website:

http://www.americandrivingsociety.org/Forms/Safety_CheckList_Appendix_CD-D.pdf

Required items: 2 points are deducted for each item NOT present or not in good repair:

- Spare halter and lead line for each horse
- Spare rein or rein splice and hole punch
- Spare trace or trace splice and hole punch
- Spare hames strap if full collar is used
- Signaling device for emergencies
- SMV sign properly installed
- Reflective vest or raingear (must be worn by driver and groom(s))
- Human first aid kit
- Equine first aid kit
- Hoof pick

- Quick release trace, shaft loop and back strap connectors or knife

One point is awarded for additional personal choice safety-related items such as (but not limited to):

- Length of rawhide or cord
- Duct tape or baling wire/twine
- Reflective tape on vehicle/harness for increased visibility
- Easy boot and/or tool for removing loose shoes.
- Weather-specific or “survival” gear for humans or horses

Any vehicle or harness deemed “unsafe” or inappropriate for conditions will not be allowed to continue.

PART 2 – CROSS-COUNTRY DRIVE and CONTROL OF PACES

- Drivers must have completed the safety check prior to starting.
- Signage on the route is minimal. The only required markers are the start and finish of each section and in the Cross-Country Drive, the mandatory walk section and the last-200-meter mark. No kilometer markers are to be provided. Any additional course signs or wayfinding markers will be indicated on the master map.
- An “ideal time” for Part 2, the Cross-Country, is posted or announced for each of the available routes. The total distance is measured from start to finish marker. A mandatory walk section between 500 and 1,000 meters is included within each route. Drivers will be given the required speed/pace based on equine size. The ideal time will be calculated by combining the total distance for trot at trot speed plus walk distance at walk speed.
- Maximum speeds are based on experience of drivers and conditioning of equines, adjusted for terrain, footing, and weather conditions. Suggested speeds are:
 - horses - 14 kph
 - ponies - 13 kph
 - small ponies - 12 kph
 - draft horses -10 kph
 - VSEs - 9 kph
- Participants may not walk or drive on Part 2, the Cross-Country stage, before the competition. It is to be driven blind, using the map the competitor has prepared. A compass may be used. No kilometer markers are to be provided.

- Consecutive starts may be 4 minutes apart with spacing between different horse size groups. Starts may be 3 minutes apart if sufficient passing room is available throughout the course. Safe passing on course, if conditions permit, may be allowed as a valuable TREC skill.
- Two courses may be offered simultaneously from the same starting position – one relatively easy for novice drivers/horses, and a second with a more challenging course for the more experienced horse/ drivers. The determining factors for the course choice may be made jointly by the organizer and participant.
- Drivers must pace their horses appropriately to arrive at the “ideal time.” One point is taken for each whole minute under or over the ideal time. Timepieces such as watches, cell phones, GPSs, and speedometers may be carried, but not used in the competition. Such devices must be stowed in spares, only to be used if an emergency arises. Each competitor gauges time on course by the pace of his or her horse or pony.
- Horses must trot from the “Trot Only” sign for the last 200 meters.

PART 3 – SKILLS DEMONSTRATIONS

A true TRECker is able to demonstrate a number of skills that would be necessary in the “wilderness.” Therefore, skills demonstration areas are provided over a short course of about 1 km. A course walk along the track for Part 3 may be conducted to explain the purpose and requirements for each of the skills demonstrations.

A volunteer observer is required at each skill position to award points. Points range from 1 to 10 for each skill position based on pre-determined requirements.

Drivers may be timed between the start and finish line (same location). They are awarded points for each skill that they attempt. Drivers are spaced approximately two skill areas apart to avoid hold-ups.

A predetermined “time allowed” may be established with a wide window, giving consideration to reduced pace or time taken at each of the skill demonstration areas. The object is only penalizing drivers who are excessively slow or unnecessarily fast in completing this course. One point would be deducted for each commenced minute outside the “time allowed” window.

Suggested skills (to be creative and imaginative while respecting safety, animal welfare, drivers' experience and local conditions):

- Driving a serpentine, penalties for knocking markers or paces other than that called for
- Picking a flag or other object from one cone and putting it in another; penalties for stopping, dropping the flag, failing to remove or replace the flag
- Halting in a square for 10 seconds; penalty for horse not remaining immobile or less than ten seconds
- Driving a figure or shape defined by rails lying on the ground; penalties for horse or wheels touching the rails, pace other than that called for
- Driving with left wheel(s) through a pair of rails spaced 15-20 cm apart; penalties for touching rails.
- Backing three paces; penalties for disobedience, horse not backing willingly or rearing
- Ascend or descend a short hill; penalties for disobedience
- Drive through a water splash; penalties for disobedience
- Passing through a lettered obstacle; penalties for improper order, contacting elements with horse or vehicle; pace other than that called for
- Straddling a 20m circle with wheels; penalty for each time a wheel crosses the line, for break to pace other than that called for.
- Crossing a bridge (or simulated bridge)

SCORING

Drivers may be grouped depending upon entries. Suggestions:

- Experience: "Novice", "Done it before", "Tenderfoot," "Adventurer," or other fun ways to give everyone a chance to be a winner.
- Horses, ponies, VSEs. For small numbers – for limited entries. "Times allowed" in Part 2 allow all sizes to compete together.
- Groups competing on different routes in Part 2 – optional as results are comparable
- Skill demonstrations – any group may not be required to drive every skill. (A group's experience level may be determined by the organizer.)

Each Driver starts with 50 points

Part 1: subtract 2 points for each listed item in not good repair

add 1 point for each additional item (Safety Inspector's discretion)

Skill 9 +									
Skill 10+									
T/ A-									
Total									
Place									

Leaving the competition: A driver may retire or withdraw from participating in the TREC at any time. A horse or driver may be asked to retire or withdraw if in the opinion of the organizing committee, that driver or horse is clearly out of control or presents potential harm to himself or others. There is no appeal against this decision.

Only the safety check is mandatory. Drivers may participate, withdraw or retire from the cross-country or skills demonstration at any time without penalty other than loss of points. Incomplete cross-country will receive minus 20 points. Drive may continue to skill demonstrations where any points will be awarded only for attempted demonstrations.

While a driver and/or horse may retire, withdraw or be asked to withdraw, there are no eliminations as such. Score differences, yes; eliminations, no.

TREC How-To

Map room - We'll put up a large course map that you can study and copy if you wish. The map will prepare you not only to follow your route (it's easy) but also where to expect walk or trot sections. (They're marked on course, too.)

Safety check – Each turnout will be reviewed for safety prior to starting on courses. Plan for a cross-country drive. What would you take if you were to be out all day, prepared for anything? Something for the weather? Something for safety? Something for comfort and welfare? For you or your horse? Both? You'll lose points for unsafe or inappropriate outfitting. This part of the event is judged the same for Tenderfoot and Adventurer. Note: no bribes for the judge this year. If you want to bring that clever or lovely or scrumptious something, we'll be quite happy to accept it for the day's silent auction.

Cross-country drive – Cross-country drive and control of paces will take place over a prescribed course of approximately 3 kilometers for Tenderfoots and closer to 5 kilometers for Adventurers, journeying across fields and ranch roads. You will be expected to follow the route and cover the distance at a predetermined speed, coming in as close to target time as possible. There will be a mandatory walk section and an "any pace" section that is timed for a working trot. You'll lose points for incorrect pace or for time over or under the optimum time allowed. This year, for an extra twist of fun.....no watches, GPSs, speedometers, or radioing to the mother ship. Paces will be different for Tenderfoots and Adventurers. You gauge your horse's speed by his pace, not by a timing device and distance markers.

Cross-country drive speeds -

Tenderfoot Speeds:

	Walk	Trot
VSE.....	4 kph	9 kph
Sm. Pony..	5 kph	11 kph
Pony.....	5 kph	12 kph
Horse.....	6 kph	13 kph

Adventurer Speeds:

	Walk	Trot
VSE.....	4.5 kph	10 kph
Sm. Pony	5.5 kph	12 kph
Pony.....	5.5 kph	13 kph
Horse.....	6.5 kph	14 kph

Skills Course ~ will introduce elements you may find along any trail drive, with some added twists. We will not time this section, but it is timed for walk or trot. No cantering – just keep moving along the course at a comfortable pace. Abilities can vary greatly in this section. There is something for everybody here. Can't do one of them? Just pass it by.....a few points lost, but no eliminations. Things you might find could include hills, bridges, reinback, serpentines, circles, crossing fields, standing quietly, driving straight, driving over stuff. Expect more challenging skills tests for the Adventurers. Nothing is meant to startle or scare horses or drivers. See the drawings and instructions for each of the ten skills trials.