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Competitive Trail

What is Competitive Trail?

A Competitive Trail Ride is a strictly timed event in which horses complete anywhere from 20 to 100 miles in a set time.

The time allowed for the ride is set the day of the ride, depending on trail conditions, weather and other factors.

Horses and riders begin in pairs or small groups and their start time is carefully recorded. Finishing more than a few minutes before or after their set finish time results in penalty points.

At checks along the trail and after the finish, horses are examined by veterinarians and qualified lay judges and judged on their soundness and cardiac recovery.

Cardiac recovery is measured by comparing the pulse rate taken at specific intervals after the horse has come to a stand still at the "vet checks" and compared to an average resting heart rate.

Points are lost according to how high the recovery rates are compared to the resting rate.

Points can also be lost for things like dehydration, lameness or soreness, tack or trail lesions.

There are three weight divisions. Riders are weighed in and compete against other horses carrying the same approximate weight.

Horses receive their placings according to the least points lost in each division with the lowest point scores overall awarded.

A novice division is also run with a longer time or shorter trail allowing the novice to learn without the pressure of competing against seasoned competitors.

Participants take great pride in successfully completing a ride regardless if they were "in the ribbons" or not.