

## **Maryland Horse Pulling Contest Rules**

1. Conduct Pulling Contests that are Attractive to the Public
  - A good field of teams comes first if an attractive contest is to be conducted. The purse offered and the spread of premiums is the most important part in bringing out teams.
  - Select a Superintendent and place him in charge of this event. His contacts and special efforts will be a factor in securing teams.
  - Advertise these contests.
  - Having pulling court so located and roped off that people cannot get on it, yet those in attendance can witness the contest.
  - Have public address system available for use.
  - Have an announcer who keeps the public informed as to the progress of the contest.
2. Pulling Court
  - The course on which a contest is conducted should be approximately two hundred (200) feet long and at least fifty (50) feet wide. This pulling field should be fenced or roped off for the exclusive use of the contestants.
  - The pulling court should be level and smooth and of such texture as to permit horse to obtain a good firm grip with their shoes.
3. Responsibilities of Organization Conducting Contests
  - Give date and time of each contest.
  - Provide teamsters with list of premium awards in each class.
  - Secure sufficient entries to afford keen competition.
  - Advertise contests to encourage attendance.
  - Place local Superintendent in charge. It shall be his responsibility to:
    - a. Weigh teams at a definite stated time on designated scales in accordance with rules.
    - b. Provide stabling facilities for such teams that may arrive early and be held over following their respective contest.
    - c. Secure a listing of each team in the contest with the accurate name of the owner and his correct address.
    - d. Get all teams on the pulling field and ready to begin contest at time scheduled.
    - e. Provide the following help: Two chain men; one man to measure distance; two official judges and one man to keep teams coming to the sled promptly and in proper order.
    - f. When using a sled and weights, the organizer shall have equipment and help to load and unload the sled.
    - g. Draw number for pulling order.
4. Judges
  - A minimum of two judges shall be designated by the fair management.
  - The judges have full jurisdiction over all questions pertaining to interpretation of rules and their enforcement. They shall determine the winners and shall award prizes in accordance with the rules.
  - Failure to comply promptly with the directions of the judges shall result in immediate disqualification of a contestant.
  - Horses or driver may be disqualified at any time by the judges, either for the violation of one or more of the rules or because the contesting team's condition is such as to render it cruel or inadvisable to permit the horses to proceed.
  - The judges shall not own nor have an interest in any team competing.
  - The judges will see that official records are kept and will sign these records at the end of the contest.

## 5. Classes for Teams

- The standard classification for teams shall be:
  - a. Lightweight class - pairs of horses and mule weighing 3,200 lbs. and under
  - b. Heavyweight class - pairs of horses or mules weighing over 3,200 lbs.

## 6. Weighing Teams

- Lightweight teams must weigh 3,200 lbs and under. Horses may be weighed individually or as a team. Total weight will be the deciding factor. They will be weighed without harness on the day of and previous to the contest.
- Teams must be weighed on scales designated by the Fair Association and under the supervision of the Superintendent in charge. Any other weight will not be accepted.
- Horses must be weighed on a loose lead. No lifting is permitted on the lead or otherwise.
- Horses will be weighed officially at a definite stated time. Teams should be weighed at least one hour before the contest is scheduled to begin. In no instance should light teams be weighed more than three hours ahead of the contest.
- Official scales should be open for the taking of check weights on light teams at least one hour prior to the time set for taking official weights. No check weight will be accepted as an official weight.
- Both horses of the team must be brought to the scales together.
- The official weight master should weigh teams.
- Excessive shrinking through withholding feed and water will be discriminated against and officials in charge may bar teams from the contest on these grounds.
- The type and thickness of any horse is as important as height in determining his size. The class in which any team pulls will be determined on the scales through accurate weights.
- Heavyweight teams, if weight is known, are not required to be weighed except upon special request.
- Teams cannot be watered or fed at the scales while weighing. This ruling must be enforced.

## 7. Entry of Teams

- Any team eligible to compete must be properly entered at such time as specified by the Fair Association.

## 8. Horsemanship

- Good horsemanship is judged by well broken, good handling teams that are driven into position to be hitched and start and pull together at command of the driver.
- Good horsemanship includes the skill of the driver in holding the lines taut while animals are pulling and keeping the animals even and pulling straight ahead.
- Horsemanship is indicated by a true team that gives a good account of themselves. Their training and handling should be reflected by their willingness to pull and handle when the load gets heavy. A team that refuses to pull when the load gets heavy should be seriously discriminated against, especially if the team is brought back on a second and third trial.
- It shall not be counted against a driver in horsemanship when his team is drive to the machine by helpers to be hitched.
- Proper harnessing, fitting of collars and shoeing are additional factors to be considered in making awards in horsemanship.
- Horsemanship awards, if available, will be made by the regular judges at the close of the contest.

9. If the Dynamometer is used, the operator in charge
  - Shall have charge of its operation and questions arising in connection therewith. It shall be his duty to keep official records or instruct the fair management to appoint a clerk for recording required data. He shall be one of the judges on all committee of judges.
  - If a sled is used, judges will determine the weight added to the sled for each round.
10. Helpers for Teamsters
  - Each contestant must furnish his own helpers to bring team to the sled and to hitch and unhitch eveners from the sled.
  - Each driver will be limited to the following helpers: Two men to carry the eveners as team is brought to and taken from the sled and one or two men on the lines of the horses. No one may be at the heads except for broken harness or other emergency.
  - Helpers and teamsters must keep away from the machine or sled other than when their teams come up to pull.
  - No one else will be allowed in the pulling area when a team is pulling. The pulling area will be clearly marked. Drivers and helpers of other teams must abide by this rule also.
11. Eveners
  - The contestant must furnish and use his own eveners.
12. Placing of Teams
  - Placing will be made on a basis of 100 percent for pulling. The official pull or distance shall be a continuous forward movement of 27 ½ feet for any given load. Pulls of shorter distance shall be used only to place teams.
  - A team shall be given a total of three trials to move any load the full distance. Teams failing to take the load the full distance are eliminated and placed on their best distance.
  - In case teams are tied on their best distance, then their second best distance determines their placing.
  - All teams hauling a given load the full distance will proceed to the next higher load until all teams have been placed.
  - The load after the starting load shall be increased as the judges shall deem most advisable to give a good contest and not over load the field of teams.
13. Any Team
  - Any team is permitted to compete in one class only. Any team after competition in their respective class will not be permitted as a pair to be entered at the same fair in another weight class even though they may qualify by making the required weights.
  - No horse that has competed in one division of a contest can be entered in another division of that contest. In the event of very small contests, management may choose to waive this rule.
14. Unmanageable and Runaway Teams
  - If any team becomes unmanageable or difficult to handle, and in the opinion of the judges becomes dangerous to the public, they will be disqualified and ordered to be taken from the field.
  - If any team breaks away from the owner or helper or runs away, it will be sent from the ring and eliminated from the contest. If a team runs away it forfeits any premium it might have earned in the contest up to the time it runs away. Any team requiring an unreasonable time to hitch shall be eliminated.
  - A team must be hitched to the sled or dynamometer within three minutes after being called or this will be counted as a trial pull. Also, three attempts to hook will constitute a trial pull with no distance.

15. Late Arrival of Teams

- Any team that is late or arrives when the contest is in progress is barred from competition unless special permission is obtained from the Superintendent and officials in charge.
- Every team must be brought up on each load after the official starting load.
- A team must be on the grounds, harnessed and ready to pull when the contest is scheduled to begin. Teams will be called to the pulling court by the Superintendent in charge.
- Any light team must arrive on the field sufficiently early to be weighed ahead of the contest and when other teams are being weighed.

16. Placing the Sled or Dynamometer

- Judges will set the machine or sled, and teams will make several continuous pulls using the entire pulling court. If, in the opinion of the judges, the sled or machine is too close to the edge of the court, it will be reset.

17. Bringing In Teams

- Competing teams shall be hitched to the eveners before bringing up to the machine. Two men may carry the eveners while the team is being driven into position and hitched; if evener is dropped and scares the team this may count as a trial. If the eveners are repeatedly dropped and the team goes away from the machine without being hitched, trials will be called or the team may be disqualified.

18. The Driver of Any Team

- The driver may take his position on the seat and have the team driven into position but the lines must be handed to the driver before eveners are attached to the dynamometer. The tails of lines, if long enough, may be carried by a helper, if the helper stays to the side and back of the sled or dynamometer.
- Owner of each team must have his team in their position and be in position to hitch as the team ahead leaves the sled. Teams should hold their order and hitched promptly as the team ahead is taken from the sled.
- **HELPERS ARE NOT PERMITTED IN ANY WAY** to help drive the team. Any assistance given by helper will constitute a trial for that team.
- Helpers must drop back to at least the middle of the sled.

19. Changing Drivers

- A change in drivers is permissible only at the discretion of the judges. A change in drivers without permission voids the haul, but the trial is counted.
- A change in drivers will not be granted after the team fails to pull the load the full distance. Not to exceed one change in drivers will be granted.

20. Starting Teams

- Teams must be brought into position and their trace must be reasonably tight when the load is started. Backing a team and lunging them into the load will not be permitted. Backing and lunging a team into the load often causes traces to unhook, horses to get over a trace and harness and equipment to break. When this is done deliberately, trials will be called and any distance made not allowed. If teams get out of control and lunge against the load before called upon by the driver, trials may be called against the team.

21. Driving

- Drivers must ride the sled or dynamometer at all times if a seat is there. Lines must be held reasonably tight, one in each hand while the team is pulling; slackening or “pushing on” the lines so they hang loose enough to touch a horse while the pair is pulling voids pull from that point on. Teams must be driven straight ahead.

22. Trials

- Teams must have two trials when at the machine unless so stated by the official in charge.
- Teams that are hard to hitch and handle may be required to take all trials on any load without being taken from the machine.
- All trials must be taken (or passed) in turn.

23. Passing Trials

- A driver may pass any trial but such trial will be counted against the team.
- Trials may be called against teams if they lunge away from the machine while being hitched.
- Teams that jackknife (turning the yoke) or those, in which one horse throws his head over the other, should be withdrawn. Judges may rule that they be taken from the machine immediately if they are not withdrawn.

24. Bridles

- Bridles used in a contest may be either open face or blind bridles, but no change therein may be made after the contest starts. Blind on bridle must be up and cannot be dropped at any time. Horses working in open bridles must work quietly.

25. Mistreatment of Horses

- If any whipping, punching, prodding or punishing of animals is observed during the contest, the judges and officials may penalize or disqualify the team and contestant from further participating in the contest.

26. Drugs Stimulants

- No person shall administer a stimulant or narcotic to a horse prior to a pulling contest. If testing facilities are available, samples must be taken from at least two teams competing.
- Any team testing positive from stimulants and narcotics will be disqualified and forfeit all premiums.

27. DRIVERS OR HELPERS WHO ARE INTOXICATED WILL BE REMOVED from and barred from entering the pulling contest.

28. Miscellaneous

- Blindfolding a horse in a contest is not permitted.
- Horses must not be tied together by neck yoke, straps, ropes or in any other way. They are to be held together only by the regular lines used in driving. Hitching with cross tugs is prohibited.
- Each team will be assigned a place to stand and await their turn to pull. They must stay there until they are called to pull.