



**Western New York  
Combined Carriage Association  
Equine Cones Hazards and Obstacles**

**Show Series Rules  
and Handbook**

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# **INTRODUCTION**

The Western New York Combined Carriage Association was founded for the following purposes:

- To promote the sport of driving horses and ponies to carriages, both competitively and for pleasure.
- To educate current and prospective drivers in the techniques of safe and fun carriage driving.
- To organize driving events and to facilitate the organization of driving events by others, including the rendering of technical assistance to event organizers and the publishing of event calendars.
- To be a medium through which carriage drivers may meet other drivers in this area to swap ideas and be supportive of each other.

ECHO (acronym for Equine Cones Hazards & Obstacles) was created for all of the same purposes as WNYCCA, with a special emphasis on being safe and having fun! ECHO was constructed to be a union between ALL Equine disciplines where enthusiasts can come together to enjoy their Equines regardless of the style of tack they prefer, the size of their Equine, or even the species! ECHO offers a show-style event with a low-key and forgiving atmosphere that accommodates any range of experience of Equine or handler, especially great for anyone looking to get their first show experience. ECHO was started to offer a fun place to work with your Equine and be around other knowledgeable equestrians. Safety is the number one priority of ECHO, if you, your Equine, and your equipment are safe - then it's time to HAVE FUN!!!

**The following rules apply to all participants in ECHO competitions.**

**All participants are responsible for knowledge of and compliance with the standards in this Handbook. All participants should also be fully cognizant of the class specifications in the divisions in which they compete, as set forth in this Handbook.**

**The purpose of this ECHO Show Series Rules and Handbook is to promote safety in and provide standardization for conducting an ECHO event.**

**Each of the rules and regulations as stated here is intended to apply to all participants.**

**Failure to comply with the following may incur elimination or disqualification.**

**In situations not covered specifically in this Handbook, or by direct interpretation of these standards, the spirit and intent of these standards will be upheld.**

**All participants at ECHO events must be current WNYCCA members or pay the required non-member fee.**

**Organizers of recognized events may limit entries, refuse any entry, cancel, combine or divide a class, alter the proposed time schedule or substitute officials if necessary.**

## **Chapter 1 – Safety:**

- 1.1 All persons involved in the competition: riders, drivers, passengers, grooms, officials, spectators, etc., should keep safety foremost in their minds. Having the horse under control at all times is a safeguard not only for a rider or driver and their passengers but for everyone involved in the sport.
- 1.2 An Official must eliminate from a class or competition, or disqualify from an event, any Athlete with an unsafe vehicle, unruly horse(s) or Athlete clearly without sufficient control.
- 1.3 In the case of an accident, fall of an Athlete or Equine, unintentional or intentional dismount of an Athlete, turnover, etc. the Athlete must be eliminated from the class in which the occurrence took place and an Official or management must require a safety inspection of the Equine, tack, equipment, vehicle, and/or harness involved before allowing further use at the event.
- 1.4 It is the responsibility of each Athlete to ensure that all tack, harness, and vehicle are in good repair and structurally sound.
- 1.5 It is the responsibility of each Athlete to ensure that his horse or horses are physically fit to fulfill the tasks required of them.

- 1.6 The driver should always be the first person to enter the vehicle and the last to leave. Passengers must never be left on the vehicle while the driver is dismounted unless the passenger has taken control of the reins.
- 1.7 No driver should rely solely on a groom or other attendant standing on the ground to control the horse or horses, with the exception of hitching and/or unhitching. If a driver dismounts for any reason other than to make minor adjustments to harness, vehicle, or to unhitch, the reins should be given to a driver seated on the vehicle.
- 1.8 No Equine may be led from a moving carriage.
- 1.9 Whenever being put to or taken out of a vehicle, an Equine must wear a bridle with reins attached to the bit and passed through the saddle turrets.

Exceptions:

- A. Once an Equine is fully harnessed to a vehicle, one rein at a time may be adjusted.
- B. Equines in pair or multiple hitches must have at least one rein attached to the bit while being harnessed to a vehicle.



- 1.10 The Equine must never be left unattended while put to a vehicle.
- 1.11 Athletes should strive to maintain a safe distance from other Equines and vehicles during the competition and in the warm-up and parking areas.
- 1.12 All rules of the road should be observed unless Officials direct otherwise.
- 1.13 Equines must be serviceably sound and must not show evidence of lameness, broken wind, or impairment of vision in BOTH eyes.
- 1.14 It is prohibited to tie a tail to a vehicle, harness, or other equipment. No ancillary device restricting the free movement of an Equine's tail is permitted.
- 1.15 At all times while mounted on an Equine or on a carriage, all Athletes and navigators/grooms/etc. must wear properly fastened protective headgear which meets or exceeds current ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials)/SEI (Safety Equipment Institute) standards for equestrian use and carry the SEI tag. Headgear must be properly fitted with harness secured. **Failure to comply while competing will result in elimination. Failure to comply after being notified to do so by an Official will result in disqualification.**

## **Chapter 2 – Equipment:**

- 2.1 At all times while mounted on an Equine or on a carriage, all Athletes and navigators/grooms/etc. must wear properly fastened protective headgear which meets or exceeds current ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials)/SEI (Safety Equipment Institute) standards for equestrian use and carry the SEI tag. Headgear must be properly fitted with harness secured. **Failure to comply while competing will result in elimination. Failure to comply after being notified to do so by an Official will result in disqualification.**
- 2.2 WNYCCA strongly encourages any and all participants to wear protective vests, though protective vests are not required to compete.
- 2.3 Failure to carry a whip in hand at all times while driving incurs elimination.
- 2.4 Whips carried by drivers must be in good working condition and an appropriate length for the turnout.
- 2.5 All Equines must be safely and properly tacked. Driven Equines must be correctly and fully harnessed to the carriage, including the reins. Ridden Equines must be correctly and fully saddled and bridled. If a rear cinch is used it must be connected to the primary cinch. If a tie- down is used it must pass through the breast collar.

- 2.6 Breeching is required and must be properly fitted on all driven Equines.
- 2.7 Nosebands and bits are required on all driving bridles. Riding bridles are permitted without a noseband and/or bit. Nosebands must be loose enough to fit two fingers between the bridge of nose and noseband. Flash, figure eight, crank, drop nosebands and similar equipment are not permitted. Any nosebands, attachments or ancillary equipment that impede or are likely to impede the free intake of air into the nostrils of an Equine are not permitted.
- 2.8 Driving bridles should be adjusted to fit snugly to prevent catching on a vehicle or other pieces of harness. A throatlatch and a full noseband or cavesson are required.
- 2.9 Lines/reins must pass through at least one set of turrets on driving harnesses.

Exception:

- A. Long line exhibition entries are strongly encouraged to run lines/reins through the tugs of the harness and not through the turrets, but must still have the lines pass through some part of the harness securely and in a free moving manner.

- 2.10 Check devices such as overcheck or sidecheck are permitted but not recommended. If used, check devices must be loose fitting and unrestrictive.
- 2.11 Traces must pass freely from breastplate or collar to singletree. Traces must not cross. Traces must not be wrapped around a shaft or any other part of the carriage or harness that may prevent freedom of movement.
- 2.12 Blinkers, if used, and ancillary equipment must not impede forward vision or be so close to the eyes as to irritate them.
- 2.13 Ear hoods and plugs are permitted. Ear hoods may not be attached to the noseband and must allow free movement of the ears of the Equine.
- 2.14 Bailing twine IS NOT considered a safe piece of tack. Bailing twine substituting for pieces of harness, tack, or any equipment is not permitted.
- 2.15 Equine protective leg gear is permitted, however “enhancing” equipment is prohibited.
- 2.16 Athletes must not be attached in any way to their tack, Equine, carriage, or any other equipment, which is also attached to an Equine. Velcro seats, rubber-banded stirrups, seat belts that attach on both ends, etc. are prohibited. Drivers with navigators may use a seatbelt, provided it is not attached to the carriage on both ends.

- 2.17 Leverage devices are not permitted. All rings, turrets and/or other devices, which have an extreme leverage effect on the reins or bits, are forbidden at any time within the Showgrounds.
- 2.18 Bicycle tires and wheels are not considered safe equipment.

Exception:

- A. Walk/Trot divisions ONLY may permit bicycle tires and wheels.

## **Chapter 3 – Horsemanship/Sportsmanship:**

- 3.1 All participants in WNYCCA-recognized events are obliged to conduct themselves in an orderly manner and in the best interest of the WNYCCA. Acting or permitting another person to act in a manner contrary to WNYCCA standards or in a manner deemed improper, unethical, dishonest, unsportsmanlike or prejudicial to the best interest of WNYCCA and/or detrimental to the well-being of any animal(s) is considered not in the best interests of WNYCCA. Event organizers and other Officials shall bar violators from further participation in the event and future events.
- 3.2 Unsportsmanlike conduct, at the discretion of the Officials, will result in disqualification from the event, and may garner further action such as ineligibility for year-end awards and/or bar violators from future events and/or other club functions.
- 3.3 Distasteful horsemanship, at the discretion of the Officials, will result in disqualification from the event, and may garner further action such as ineligibility for year-end awards and/or bar violators from future events and/or other club functions.

3.4 Abuse of Equines will not be tolerated. Abuses of Equines mean an action or omission that causes or is likely to cause pain or unnecessary discomfort to an Equine including, but not limited to:

- A. Pressing of exhausted Equines.
- B. Excessive use of a whip, quirt, bat, or other device.
- C. An unacceptably severe, badly fitting, broken or damaged bit.
- D. Any piece of tack sitting below the nasoincisive notch.
- E. Badly fitting harness, bridle, or any tack, which might cause distress to an Equine.
- F. Damage to a carriage, harness, saddle, bridle, or other piece of tack, which might cause injury to an Equine.

- G. Wounds, lacerations and/or blood on Equines, including blood in the mouth or nose, may be an indication of abuse and must be investigated case by case by an Official. Such horses may be eliminated from the competition. In extreme cases where abuse is evident, further sanctions will be taken against the Athlete.
- H. Excessive gaping of the mouth.
- I. Neglected routine maintenance such as hoof or dental care.

- 3.5 Officials have the right and duty to eliminate any Equine at any time, which is evidently lame, in pain, injured, or unfit to continue.
- 3.6 An Equine who is considered out of control by an Official will be excused from the competition.
- 3.7 An Equine may be combined with up to two (2) Athletes at an event, but shall not attempt the course more than twice per class at any single event and must have a sufficient rest period between Athlete changes. If an Official deems the Equine to be unfit to continue to the second set of classes, the entry will be excused from further competition.



## **Chapter 4 – Course Regulations:**

- 4.1 Courses will be designed and constructed in order to adhere to and comply with all applicable American Driving Society (ADS) safety rules and guidelines, unless specifically stated otherwise in this Handbook, including minimum widths, slope regulations, distances between gates, dislodgeable elements, firmly fixed elements, multiple obstacles, and other considerations. The Course Designer should take into consideration the terrain and road and path surfaces when calculating times allowed. Obstacles that entail reining back are not permitted.
- 4.2 Courses must not include any feature that might cause damage or injury to the Equines.
- 4.3 Courses and gates must be clearly numbered/lettered in the sequence in which the Athletes are required to pass through them. As an alternative option, a maximum of two letters can be used twice in the same lettered obstacle.
- 4.4 The number of gates is to be proportionate to the dimensions of the driving area. Not to exceed 20 gates total including numbered and lettered gates in sum.

- 4.5 The course is the track by which the Athlete must follow when competing, from passing through the start in the correct direction up to passing through the finish. The length must be measured accurately to the nearest meter taking account, particularly on the turns, the normal line to be followed by the Equine(s). This normal line must pass through the middle of the obstacles. If there is an alternative obstacle, the official distance has to be measured by the longest route.
- 4.6 The course may only be inspected on foot. No motor vehicles or bicycles may be taken inside any part of the course.
- 4.7 All gates should be visible from the location of the Officials.
- 4.8 When cones form a gate they must be at least 30cm high and made of indestructible plastic material. A weighted ball must be placed in the hollow on top of the cone, so that it falls down if the cone is touched indicating a fault.
- 4.9 All gates consisting of a single pair or double pair (oxer) of cones will constitute a single gate. The maximum penalties per oxe are one fault, for hitting one to four balls. The first set of cones will have the number of the obstacle; the second set will only be marked with red and white markers.

- 4.10 A gate includes all parts that make it up including the red and white markers and can be faulted for dislodgement even without a “knockdown ball” being included on the element.
- 4.11 The course must be open for inspection at least one hour before the start of the competition.
- 4.12 Only the Course Designer and their staff may alter or work on any part of the course. If any Athlete, or any person associated with them alters the course in any way, the Athlete will be disqualified.
- 4.13 Timing shall be done by an electronic timing device or stopwatch, and it is strongly encouraged to use both simultaneously. Time shall be started when the nose of the Equine crosses the start and time shall be stopped when the nose of the Equine crosses the finish.
- 4.14 Whenever possible a digital display unit should be visible to the Athletes.

## **Chapter 5 – Divisions:**

5.1 End of year and event awards will be divided into six (6) divisions as follows:

- **Walk/Trot/Canter Horse Driving**
- **Walk/Trot/Canter Pony Driving**
- **Walk/Trot/Canter Riding**
- **Walk/Trot Horse Driving**
- **Walk/Trot Pony Driving**
- **Walk/Trot Riding**

5.2 Walk/Trot/Canter divisions may compete at any speed or gait that is safe and healthy for the Equine and Athlete to complete the course to the best of their ability for each class.

5.3 Walk/Trot division Equines **MUST NOT** be encouraged to canter or gallop. Athletes will be penalized harshly for encouraging gaits faster than a trot in these divisions, usually each occurrence on course will be treated as a double fault for the class in which the occurrence took place, at the discretion of the officials.

- 5.4 Walk/Trot Entries who incur excessive penalties for failure to remain at a walk or trot will be required to move to a Walk/Trot/Canter division at the discretion of the Officials.
- 5.5 Long line will be offered as exhibition only and may choose one of the three classes.
- 5.6 Equines may be of any breed, color, or size as long as they are capable of performing the work required. Equines of any species may enter respective "Horse" or "Pony" divisions as these divisions are solely dictated by height not by species.
- 5.7 **A Pony will be any Equine of a height of 12.2 hands or less.**
- 5.8 **A Horse will be any Equine of a height greater than 12.2 hands.**
- 5.9 Any Equine may be required to submit for measuring at the discretion of an Official.
- 5.10 Actual measurements will take precedent, regardless of height carding by any other organization.
- 5.11 Time given and/or time allowed per class will be unique to each division at the discretion of the Officials and announced prior to the start of the event.

## **Chapter 6 – Classes & Scoring:**

6.1 There will be three (3) classes offered at each event and every Entry will permit that Equine and their Athlete to attempt the course once for each class.

### 6.2 **Optimum**

- A. Based on accuracy to time given for one lap on the course in the correct order as numbered/lettered.
- B. Closest Entry to the time given is favored, regardless if the time completed is under or over the time given.
- C. Faults on course will incur a five (5) second detriment to the time completed.
  - 1. If the time completed is over the time given, the five (5) second detriment is added to the time completed.
  - 2. If the time completed is under the time given, the five (5) second detriment is subtracted from the time completed.

### 6.3 Progressive

- A. Based on speed and stamina for the duration of three (3:00) minutes allowed on course.
- B. Entry to proceed through the course as numbered/lettered continuing from last gate back to first gate and through the course as far as possible until the time allowed is called.
- C. Once the last gate is completed on any lap the entire course becomes “live” again for subsequent laps.
- D. When time allowed is called the Entry is to proceed immediately to and through the start/finish from any direction to stop their time completed. Time completed shall be used in the event of a tie with the fastest time being favored to break the tie.
- E. Entry with the most gates passed through in correct order minus faults is favored.
- F. Faults on course will be a detriment of that gate for the time it is passed through and faulted, AND every subsequent time it is passed through even if it is not faulted again.

6.4 **Hot Lap**

- A. Based on speed and accuracy for one lap on the course in the correct order as numbered/lettered.
- B. Fastest time completed will be favored.
- C. Faults on course will incur a ten (10) second detriment added to the time completed.

6.5 Each class will be placed per division at an event. In addition to each class placing, every division will have an Overall Champion and Overall Reserve Champion at each event.



- 6.6 Divisional Overall awards will be calculated using a point system by which each placing in the three separate classes accrues points based on the placing in those individual classes at that event.
- A. The points awarded for individual placings in each class will be dictated by the number of entries in that specific class and division: First place in a class will accrue the same number of points as total entries in that class and division, second place in a class will accrue one (1) less point than first place, third place in a class will accrue two (2) less points than first place and so on. Zero (0) points will be awarded for an Entry that did not start a class or was eliminated from a class.
  - B. Each of the three (3) classes completed for one Entry (Equine and Athlete combination attempting each of the three (3) classes once) in one division will be added together to determine their divisional total points. Overall Champion and Overall Reserve Champion will be the Entry in each division with the greatest number of points and second greatest number of points respectively.

- 6.7 Year-end awards will be tabulated for High Point Grand Champion and High Point Reserve Grand Champion for each of the six (6) divisions at the finish of one annual season of ECHO competitions. High Point awards will be determined by the total divisional points accrued by an Athlete throughout a season for one division at sanctioned events for a single series. If an Athlete competes in more than one division the points will be split accordingly and cannot be added together.
- 6.8 A single Athlete may only accrue one set of year-end points per division per event. If an Athlete enters multiple Equines in the same division only the Equine/Athlete combination with the highest divisional points will count toward that Athlete's year-end High Point total for that event.

## **Chapter 7 – General Rules:**

- 7.1 Every event will have three Officials, which will include the following: Score keeper, Timer, and Scribe. These three Officials must be declared prior to the start of the event.
- 7.2 For the purposes of a smooth-running event, the maximum time allowed on course shall be five (5:00) minutes.
- 7.3 Entries must enter the ring when called. If an Entry fails to enter the ring within 45 seconds of their call they may be eliminated. Entries must wait for the signal from the timer before starting on course. Once the signal is given the Entry has 45 seconds to pass through Start and begin on course.
- 7.4 Entries may Retire for any reason during any of their classes and be allowed to compete in subsequent classes.
- 7.5 Entries may Withdraw for any reason during the event and may NOT continue to compete in any subsequent classes.
- 7.6 Navigators are strongly encouraged for driven divisions and may be made required by an Official if the Entry is deemed unsafe due to the absence of a navigator.

- 7.7 All gates must be passed through in the correct sequence and must be passed through in the correct direction indicated by the red marker being to the right-hand side of the gate and the white marker being to the left-hand side of the gate.
- 7.8 Off course will be faulted more severely than knock down faults. Off course Entries may still be placed in their class but only behind all other on course Entries regardless of other faults and/or times. If there are more than one off course Entries in a class the placings shall be at the discretion of the Officials if necessary - usually with the entry going off course later being favored or the entry going off course less cumulative times being favored.

Unless otherwise specified in individual class rules, an Entry is off course if:

- A. The start or finish line is not crossed.
- B. A required gate is not passed through.
- C. A gate is executed in reverse direction or out of sequence.
- D. The entire Entry (all parts of the Equine(s) and all wheels of the vehicle if driven) fails to pass through a gate or the start/finish markers.

- 7.9 When a disturbance or dislodgement occurs at any gate, even out of sequence, the intended pattern must be completed as closely as the disturbance or dislodgement will allow or the gate(s) will be considered off-course and penalized as such.
- 7.10 An Athlete or navigator/groom who attempts to prevent a dislodgeable/detachable element from being dislodged will incur a penalty congruent to a fault for the specific class in which the attempt was made.
- 7.11 Knocking down one or more balls of a single gate or dislodging any part of a gate or tipping over any part of a gate (such as a barrel or number/letter marker etc.) will incur a fault for that gate.
- 7.12 Gates are “live” until passed through in the correct sequence and direction after which they become “dead”. Once a gate is considered “dead” it may be passed through again in any direction or sequence.  
Exception only in Progressive class where once the entire course has been completed, all gates become “live” once again for every subsequent lap.
- 7.13 Knockdowns and dislodgement of “dead” gates are equal faults to “live” gates.
- 7.14 Dislodgement of ANY part of the course shall count as a fault, including elements that are not directly part of a gate.

7.15 Disruption or dislodgement of any timing device or part of any timing device shall be penalized as equivalent to off course.