

THE IRISH PONY CLUB



RULES FOR HUNTER TRIALS UPDATED 2026

Irish Pony Club

RULES FOR HUNTER TRIALS

Note: Additions and amendments for 2026 appear in red.

INTRODUCTION

A Hunter Trial is a competition to test the ability of the horse and rider to negotiate a course of typical natural fences at a fair hunting pace. It provides members with an opportunity to gain experience and find enjoyment in riding across nearly natural fences.

Organisers of Hunter Trials take reasonable precautions to ensure the health and safety of everyone present. For these measures to be effective, everyone must take all reasonable precautions to avoid and prevent accidents occurring and must obey the instructions of the Organiser and all the officials and stewards.

Every eventuality cannot be provided for in these rules. In any unforeseen or exceptional circumstances, it is the duty of the relevant officials to make a decision in a sporting spirit and to approach as nearly as possible the intention of these rules.

In these rules, the term 'horse' refers also to ponies.

At senior and junior levels of competition, in the teams of three, pairs or individuals, should there be equality of penalties then the fastest time will be the winner. A competitor, who rides dangerously or excessively fast over fences or on turns, will be disqualified.

At novice and intro levels it is strongly recommended, that if it is necessary to time competitors in order to achieve a result, optimum time should be used and not the fastest time.

At area and branch competitions these rules apply. The specification for the horse and rider could be altered in certain circumstances to accommodate local requirements. These conditions should be clearly defined when notice of a competition is given.

The Hunter Trial Championships will be run under these rules which apply to competitions for Teams of Three, Pairs and Individuals.

Each combination must be competent at the level of the class in which they are entered.

Max number of entries is 500.

Table of Contents

SECTION 1 - THE COMPETITIONS	4
1.1 AREA AND BRANCH HUNTER TRIALS	4
1.2 CONDITIONS OF ENTRY FOR AREA AND BRANCH COMPETITIONS	5
1.3 HUNTER TRIAL CHAMPIONSHIP COMPETITIONS	5
1.4 HUNTER TRIALS CHAMPIONSHIPS CONDITIONS OF ENTRY	6
SECTION 2 - THE COURSE	8
2.1 LEVELS OF COMPETITION	8
2.2 OBSTACLES	9
2.3 PORTABLE FENCES	9
2.4 DESCRIPTIONS, DIMENSIONS AND MEASUREMENT OF OBSTACLES	9
2.5 MARKING THE COURSE	12
2.6 PLAN OR MAP OF THE COURSE	12
2.7 INSPECTION OF THE COURSE	12
2.8 MODIFICATION OF THE COURSE	13
SECTION 3 - THE COMPETITOR	14
3.1 UNATTENDED HORSES	14
3.2 TACK INSPECTION	14
3.3 WHIPS, SPURS AND BITS	14
3.4 PRACTICE ARENA	15
3.5 STARTING & TIMING	15
3.6 OVERTAKING	16
3.7 STOPPING AND RE-STARTING A COMPETITOR	16
3.8 FINISHING	16
3.9 ELIMINATION AND RETIRING	17
3.10 DISMOUNTING	17
3.11 OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE	17
3.12 FORBIDDEN ASSISTANCE	17
3.13 METHOD OF JUDGING	17
3.14 PENALTIES	18
3.15 DEFINITION OF FAULTS	18
3.16 DISQUALIFICATION	20
3.17 Anti-Doping	20
3.18 QUERIES AND OBJECTIONS	20
3.19 JURY OF APPEAL	20
SECTION 4 - THE ORGANISERS	21
4.1 MEDICAL COVER	21
4.2 VETERINARY COVER	21
4.3 DESTRUCTION OF SEVERELY INJURED HORSES	21
4.4 FARRIER COVER	21
4.5 COURSE MAINTENANCE	21
4.6 SAFETY OFFICER	21
4.7 OFFICIAL STEWARD	21
4.8 COOLING OFF ARENA	22
4.9 COMMUNICATIONS	22
APPENDIX 1 – ILLUSTRATED EXAMPLES OF FAULTS AT OBSTACLES	23
APPENDIX 2 - CROSS COUNTRY CHECKLIST	24

SECTION 1 - THE COMPETITIONS

1.1 AREA AND BRANCH HUNTER TRIALS

Hunter Trials should be run to suit local requirements based on the four levels known as Senior, Junior, Novice and Intro as detailed in Section 2.1

Competitors should be free to choose the level at which they feel best able to compete comfortably.

In the interests of fairness running more than one age group, within a level, is recommended. In order to encourage the less experienced, and to assist them in gaining confidence, it may be helpful to begin the day at the lowest level.

At Intro and Novice levels, if timing is used, the optimum time should be generous and must be posted on the course map. If the organisers so decide a suitable fence judge might be asked to note competitors who ride a fence particularly well. This could be used as a deciding factor should there be equality of penalties.

At Junior and Senior levels either an optimum time or the fastest time may be used. This decision will be made by the organising committee and should be included on the course plan.

With this in mind a schedule might include a selection of the some of the following.

Intro: Maximum 60cms. - Riders must be of "D+" standard of riding
Class 1 Riders under 10 years (Singles only) Class
2 Riders under 12 years (Singles only) Class 3
Riders over 12 years (Singles only)

Novice: Maximum 75cms. - Riders must be of "D+" Standard of riding
Class 4 Pairs under 12 years
Class 5 Pairs over 12 years
Class 6 Singles less than 12 years
Class 7 Singles over 12 years

Junior: Maximum: 90cms. - Riders must have passed "C" Test and be of C+ Standard of riding
Class 8 Pairs under 15 years
Class 9 Pairs over 15 years
Class 10 Singles less than 15 years
Class 11 Singles over 15 years
Class 12 Teams of Three

Senior: Maximum - 1.05cms. - Riders must have passed "C" Test and be of C+ Standard of riding

Class 13 Pairs
Class 14 Teams of Three

1.2 CONDITIONS OF ENTRY FOR AREA AND BRANCH COMPETITIONS

Competitors must be paid up members of the IPC and must be carrying their medical armband

1.3 competitors must have satisfied the IPC test requirement for the class entered.

All rider ages are as on 1st January of the current year.

Horses and ponies must be a minimum of 5 years of age.

Horses and ponies must have been ridden at rallies, been schooled cross country to a suitable standard or have hunted regularly.

A horse or pony cannot compete more than twice on one day.

Should the Intro or Novice courses be shorter than that recommended in Section 2.1, with less than the maximum number of jumping efforts, it may be acceptable for a pony to do a third round at the discretion of the official steward or the organiser.

An older or more experienced member could give a lead to a less experienced rider at Intro level. This is to facilitate a new member who may be attending their first hunter trials. Under these conditions the entry would be hors concours. The secretary should be informed, and permission sought from the official in charge.

1.4 HUNTER TRIAL CHAMPIONSHIP COMPETITIONS

Note:

Under 12's Competition, competitors must be in their 10th year and under 12 years of age in the competition year and must be of a D+ standard of riding. For all other competitions competitors must have their C test and a C+ standard of riding.

A. Senior Teams of Three Championship for the Owen Kehoe Cup.

Riders must be a minimum of **15** years. Two of the team must be under 21 years; the third rider may be under 23 years. Riders must be members of the same branch. However, neighbouring branches with less than 39 members, in the previous year, may join, together to form a team. Branches who participate in a multi branch team may not field a full branch team and may only be involved in one multi branch team.

Teams must ride as so, not as individuals.

B. Senior Pairs Championship for the Farrell Family Cup

Riders must be a minimum of 15 years and under 23 years.

Pairs must ride as so, not as individuals.

C. Senior Singles

Open to riders who have competed in Teams of Three and Senior Pairs **and open to those who only want to ride as senior individuals.** Riders must be a minimum of **15** years. Please note members must pre-enter this competition via the online system.

D. Junior Pairs Championship for the Sarah Miller Memorial Trophy.

Riders must be a minimum of 11 years and under 15 years.

Pairs must ride as so, not as individuals.

E. Junior Singles

Open to riders who have competed in Junior Pairs/Junior Teams of Three **and open to those who only want to ride as junior individuals.** Riders must be a minimum of 11 years and under 15 years and have passed the 'C' test. Members must pre-enter via the online system.

F. Junior Teams of Three for the Tom O Donnell Trophy.

Riders must be a minimum of 11 years and under 15 years. Competitors must have passed the 'C' test and be and a C+ standard of riding. Teams must ride as so, not as individuals.

G. Running order for Championships will be as follows:

All u12 competitions first, followed by Junior, Intro and then Senior.

1.5 HUNTER TRIALS CHAMPIONSHIPS CONDITIONS OF ENTRY

- Competitors must be paid up members of the IPC and carry membership number and wear their medical armband.
- Competitors must have passed "C" test and be *C+ standard of riding.*
- ***For members who have ridden in the Teams of Three, Senior Pairs, Junior Pairs, will be permitted to bring a second horse/pony to ride in either the Senior Singles, Junior Singles. If the Championships is oversubscribed the above rule does not apply.***
- Competitors may enter only two competitions.
- **All rider ages are as on 1st January of the current year.**
- Competitors must have trained together as a team or pair on the horses or ponies on which they intend to compete.
- **CLUB REP NAME & CONTACT NUMBER MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE BRANCHES OFFICIAL ENTRY, TO ENABLE A WHATSAPP TO BE SENT TO ALL CLUB REPS WHEN RESULTS HAVE BEEN POSTED AND ALSO, TO INFORM ALL CLUB REPS WHEN THE 30 MINUTE APPEALS PROCEDURE HAS FINISHED.**

The combinations being entered must be competent of riding the class they are entered in.

Horses or ponies must be a minimum of 5 years of age.

- Horses and ponies must have been ridden at rallies, been schooled cross country to a suitable standard or have hunted regularly.
- A horse may be ridden by only one competitor.
- Horses registered, with Eventing Ireland or British Eventing in the current or previous year, that have 61 points, or more are not eligible.
- **If a stable name of a horse/pony is used on the entry form or the entry name does not match the passport name, then the competitor must compete as HC.**

Only one **horse, registered with** Eventing Ireland or one CNC 2* pony or one CNC1* pony may be part of a Team of Three or a Senior Pair. None **of these horses or ponies** may be ridden in the Junior Championship by a rider who has competed on any pony with E.I. **A child whose partner has fallen off in the team/pair's competition can ride again in another competition if entered to do so.**

A rider, who has never competed in Eventing Ireland, may be entered on a CNC2* or CNC1* pony in a Junior Championship. Only one of these ponies may be part of a pair.

For the Under 12's competition optimum times only for this competition. Competitors must be in their 10th year and under 12 years of age on the 1st of January on the year of competition and must be of D+ Standard of riding for this competition. Teams must ride as so, not as individuals.

The speed for the under 12 competitions for optimum time will be calculated at 400 mpm

SECTION 2 - THE COURSE

2.1 LEVELS OF COMPETITION FOR CHAMPIONSHIP, AREAS & BRANCHES

	SENIOR	JUNIOR/ INTRO INTERMEDIATE	U12	INTRO NOT A CHAMPIONSHIP EVENT
Length of course	Maximum 3,220 metres or 2 miles	Maximum 2,415 metres or 1.5 miles	Maximum 2,000 metres or 1.250 miles	Maximum 805 metres or 0.5 mile
Number of jumping efforts	Maximum 36 efforts	Maximum 30 efforts	Maximum 23 efforts	Maximum 14 efforts
<u>OBSTACLES</u>				Ideally within an Enclosed or confined area.
Maximum height	1.05 m	0.90 m	0.80 m	0.60 m
With height and spread				
Max. spread at highest point	1.20 m	1.00 m	0.80 m	0.70 m
Max. spread at base	1.80 m	1.50 m	1.20 m	0.80 m
Maximum spread fence without height	2.20 m	1.20 m	1.00 m	0.90 m
Maximum drop fence	1.50 m	1.20 m	1.00m	0.80 m
Water	Jump in Jump out	Jump in Jump out	Run in Jump out	Run in Run out
Maximum depth of water	0.30 m or 12 inches	0.30 m or 12 inches	0.20 m or 8 inches	0.20 m or 8 inches
Speed			400mpm for optimum time	

In the senior section at the Championships five obstacles may be up to 1.10m in height.

Note: Water that is too deep achieves nothing and can pose a safety issue, in particular to the smaller ponies. From a spectator point of view, shallower water gives a more dramatic 'splash' element.

2.2 OBSTACLES

Obstacles used for hunter trials are usually more rustic and natural than those in the cross-country phase of eventing. Ideally, they should be similar to those likely to be met in the surrounding countryside and should where possible utilise and resemble natural fences, be strongly built and look imposing. The course should be designed to reward good riding and horsemanship and to allow the child on the average animal an opportunity to be competitive.

The severity of obstacles is often determined by the terrain, state of going and location as well as their actual height and spread. Therefore, these factors must be taken into consideration when deciding dimensions and selecting fences for classes.

At area and branch competitions it is the decision of the organisers to reduce the above levels to suit any particular hunter trials.

The course of fences must be jumped in numerical and alphabetical order. Tests of skill that may be useful in the hunting field could be incorporated such as: opening a gate whilst mounted, riding through and closing it again; dismounting, removing a slip rail, riding through, replacing the slip rail and re-mounting; jumping knockable poles or negotiating a maze.

Fences fitted with a breakable device ie a frangible pin cable tie or any other breakable device capable of being activated under due pressure must be shown on the course plan. when the device is activated, it must be replaced and resulting in 11 penalties.

2.3 PORTABLE FENCES

If included, particular attention should be paid to anchoring portable fences to ensure that, if they are hit by a horse, they remain in position and do not move.

2.4 DESCRIPTIONS, DIMENSIONS AND MEASUREMENT OF OBSTACLES

The table in Section 2.1 gives the maximum permitted dimensions of obstacles for each class. This does not mean that obstacles must always be of uniform or maximum height or spread throughout their length or that these dimensions may never be exceeded anywhere between the red and white flags marking the extent of the obstacle. It is sufficient if that part of the obstacle where the average horse and rider could reasonably and conveniently be expected to jump, does not exceed the maximum permitted dimensions.

Poles used for timber obstacles shall be not less than 10cm in diameter at their narrowest end.

The height of an obstacle is measured from the point from which a horse would normally take off. In the case of an obstacle where the height cannot be clearly defined (e.g. natural hedge, brush fence) the measurement is taken at the fixed and solid part of the obstacle, through which a horse cannot pass with impunity, and which must be visible from the approach. The overall height of a natural hedge or brush fence may not exceed the maximum height by more than 20cms and must be flexible enough to allow a horse to brush through it without injury.

In the case of an obstacle with spread only (e.g. dry ditch, water jump) a low guardrail or hedge not exceeding 50cms which only facilitates jumping, is permitted in front, but must be included in the measurement of the spread.

- A. Open Ditches** (i.e. Ditches on the take-off side of the fence)
These must be at least 45cm deep irrespective of the guardrail; if they have no guardrail, they should be riveted on the take-off side

Banks

Banks on to the top of which a horse is intended to jump shall not exceed the maximum height appropriate to the class in question and must have a spread of a minimum of 2.75m. If the slope is sufficient to allow a horse to land on the face of it and scramble up there is no limit to the height or spread.

B. Drop Fences

The depth of drop is measured from the highest point of the obstacle, including from the top of the brush to where the average horse would normally land.

C. Water Obstacles

At Area, Branch and Championship Hunter Trials, water obstacles that require a horse to jump into water, either over a fence or down a vertical drop may be included provided that the underwater surface is sound.

Where a horse is required to jump into or out of water or where there is an obstacle in the water, the depth of water is measured from firm ground where the horse would normally land or take off. Elsewhere the water must not greatly exceed the maximum depth. In order to prevent a bold horse from jumping it in one, the water must be at least 5.50m wide.

D. Steps

Each individual step shall not exceed the maximum height or drop permitted for the relevant class.

E. Bounces, Bullfinches and Corners.

Bounces, bullfinches and corners are not permitted.

F. Overhead Obstructions

Any roof, rigid or solid barrier or branch over an obstacle must be a minimum of 3.65m. above ground level.

G. Keyhole Fences

- There must be not less than 25cm brush above the solid part of the fence.
- The minimum width within the hole must be 1.60m.
- The minimum height within the hole must be 1.80m.
- The spread, if any, must be not more than 50% of the maximum for the relevant class.
- There must be at least 50cm brush below the solid part above the obstacle.

H. Adjacent Obstacles

If two or more obstacles, although sited close together, are designed as separate tests, each shall be numbered and judged independently.

Competitors may circle between them or go beyond the line of the fence without penalty, provided that

this is not as a result of attempting to negotiate the next obstacle. They must not, under penalty of elimination, retake any obstacle, which has already been jumped.

I. Combination Obstacles

Where an obstacle, though formed of several elements such as banks or steps, a normal or an angled combination, is designed as one test, each part shall be flagged and marked with a different letter (A, B, C etc.). Only the first element shall be numbered and all elements must be jumped in the correct order, without deviating by going around a subsequent element, or an element already jumped.

- In teams of three the third refusal within the obstacle as a whole eliminates.
- In pairs, the third refusal within the obstacle eliminates.

If competitors refuse or run out at any part, they may retake the whole obstacle, or any part thereof, or may pass the wrong way through the flags of any element in order to do so. Any further penalties incurred, at an element initially jumped clear, are cumulative.

J. Knockable Obstacles

Knockable fences should be constructed so that they are not easily dislodged. There should be two similar fences, side by side at each knockable obstacle.

A team or pair must present and jump only one of the two similar fences. Jumping both fences will result in elimination.

If one member of a team knocks down an obstacle, the remaining members of the team will jump it in that state and only 5 penalties will be incurred.

If a knockable fence is knocked down by a competitor in refusing, the competitor or team may jump it in that condition and penalties both for the refusal and knock down will be incurred. If, however, the competitors wait for the obstacle to be adjusted, while no allowance will be made for the time involved, the team then *has* the opportunity to clear the obstacle at the second attempt. In this case, the fence judge's instruction must be obeyed.

When a fence is knocked down by the previous team, the fence judge shall, if necessary, hold up the next team while the fence is adjusted. In this case, the time shall be recorded and deducted from the team's overall time.

Stones knocked from a loose wall do not count as a knock down.

Refusals at an obstacle are cumulative, irrespective of whether they are incurred by the same competitor or by different members of a team i.e. should each rider in a team of three have one refusal, and the team is eliminated.

K. Obstacles without Jumping Effort.

Where an obstacle is without height or drop and may include several elements, it must be completed in the correct order. Penalties will be incurred should competitors fail to negotiate the obstacle correctly. Failure to present will incur elimination.

2.5 MARKING THE COURSE

All flags and markers shall be large and placed in conspicuous positions and shall be at least 1.50m high. Ideally, flags and flag poles should be made in such a way and of such material that they will break away cleanly if hit by a horse or rider, thereby avoiding injury to either party.

A. Boundary Flags

Red and white boundary flags or indicators are used to mark the start and finish and compulsory sections of the course, to define obstacles and to indicate compulsory changes of direction. They are placed in such a way that a rider must leave a red flag on his right and a white flag on his left. Such red or white flags or indicators must be respected, under penalty of elimination, wherever they may occur on the course, whether singly or in pairs. Only obstacles which are numbered and marked by two boundary flags are judged as obstacles.

B. Direction Markers

Direction Markers (Yellow or Orange) are placed so as to mark the route and help the rider in keeping to the course. They may be passed on either side and keeping close to them is not necessary. Boundary flags and direction markers shall be large and placed in conspicuous positions. Compulsory turning flags may be used only if absolutely necessary and will have the red flag on the right and the white on the left. They should be marked on the plan of the course.

C. Black Line Flags

A black line on red and white boundary flags is used to show that an obstacle, either single or made up of several elements, has an alternative route which may be jumped without penalty. Both sets of flags will be marked with a black line. A competitor is permitted to change without penalty from one black line flagged route to another (e.g. jumping 9a left hand route then 9b right hand route) provided he has not presented his horse at the next element of the original line.

2.6 PLAN OR MAP OF THE COURSE

A plan of the course shall be displayed by the time it is open for inspection.

It must include for each class:

- the course to be followed and its length
- the numbering and lettering of the obstacles
- any compulsory turning points
- obstacles with black line flag alternatives

2.7 INSPECTION OF THE COURSE

The Cross-Country course, in its entirety, should be completed, flagged, and ready for inspection by competitors from 2.00 pm on the day preceding the Hunter Trial. It will remain open until dusk. It may be inspected on foot only. The completed map should be prominently positioned in the vicinity of the first fence.

Climbing on or playing on obstacles is strictly forbidden.

If a member or any connected party is seen to be interfering with or *tampering* with a course, fences, boundaries etc. *the member in question will be eliminated from the competition and asked to leave the venue.*

The competitor will be eliminated from all eventing and hunter trials qualifiers and Championships for 1 year.

There will be a €1000 fine to the branch the member is representing.

2.8 MODIFICATION OF THE COURSE

A. Before the Competition Starts

After the course is open for inspection by competitors, no alteration may be made except where exceptional circumstances (such as heavy rain) make one or more obstacles unfair or dangerous. The Official Steward if appointed, or the Organiser if there is no Official Steward is authorised to reduce the severity of or to by-pass such obstacles. In such a case, the Cross-Country Steward and every competitor must be officially informed of the proposed alteration before the start of the Test.

B. During the Competition

No modification to the obstacles is allowed but if it is necessary in the interests of safety to order an obstacle to be passed during the competition all jumping faults previously incurred at that obstacle shall be cancelled with the exception of eliminations. A time allowance may be made at the discretion of the Official Steward. A competitor who has been eliminated shall NOT be re-instated in the competition. Once taken out, the obstacle shall NOT be re-introduced.

SECTION 3 - THE COMPETITOR

3.1 UNATTENDED HORSES

Horses must not be left unattended while tied in an unconfined space outside a trailer, lorry or stable. The rope attached to the head collar should be passed through a small loop of string and tied with a quick release knot. **Trailers must remain attached to the towing vehicle at all times. Horses may not be left standing in unhitched trailers.**

3.2 TACK INSPECTION

Tack inspection will take place before competitors enter the warmup arena **after which no changes in tack are permitted.** This ensures, in so far as is possible, that tack is in a serviceable condition and is correctly fitted, and that riders are safely and properly attired. In the interests of fairness and animal welfare competitors must comply with the rules on the current tack sheet. Failure to do so could result in disqualification. Competitors must have the horse's passport available at Tack Inspection.

3.3 WHIPS, SPURS AND BITS

Whips may be up to 75cms in length and must not be weighted. Spurs and bits permitted are listed on the current tack sheet.

A. Whips

The use of a whip must be:

- for a good reason - The whip must only be used either as an aid to encourage the horse forward or as a reprimand. Thus, it must never be used to vent a rider's temper.
- at an appropriate time - As an aid, the appropriate time is when the horse is reluctant to go forward under normal aids of seat and legs. As a reprimand, the only appropriate time is immediately a horse has been disobedient, e.g. napping, refusing (but not after elimination, which is always excessive). The whip should not be used after a horse has just jumped the fence.
- in the right place - As an aid to go forward, the whip may be used down the shoulder or behind the leg. It must never be used 'over arm', e.g. a whip in the right hand being used to the left flank. The use of a whip on a horse's head, neck etc. is always excessive use.
- with appropriate severity - As a reprimand only, a horse may be hit hard. However, it should never be hit more than three times for any one incident; and if the horse is injured by the whip, e.g., the skin is broken or there is a weal, its use is excessive.
- **Excessive use of whip will lead to elimination at the discretion of the Chief Steward**

B. Spurs

- **Excessive use of Spurs will lead to elimination at the discretion of the Chief Steward**

C. Bit

The bit must never be used to reprimand a horse. Any such use is excessive.

3.4 PRACTICE ARENA

A simple practice fence for warming up should be provided near the start marked with red and white flags, the dimensions of which must not exceed the maximum height or spread permitted for the competition in progress. If the obstacle is adjustable adhesive tape must be applied to the holes that are above the permitted maximum height. **Only one trainer from a branch is allowed in the arena at any time. All other supporters or connected parties should remain outside the boundary of the practice arena and cooperate with the directions of stewards on duty.**

3.5 STARTING & TIMING

In order to start, the horse, and all parts of it, must be behind the start flags, under the direction of, and at the discretion of the Starter. Competitors should start from a standing position. If they are unable to comply with this requirement, they may move around quietly within the start box but must not gain any advantage by so doing. The Starter will alert the riders by counting down from five before giving the signal to start. Competitors who start early will have their time recorded from the moment they started and will have 2 penalties added to their score. If a horse fails to cross the start line within 60 seconds of the signal being given, the competitor is eliminated.

At the Championships, competitors must start from within a simple enclosure erected at the start and made of wooden posts and wooden or plastic rails measuring approximately 5m square with an open front marked with a red and white flag and a gap in one or both sides through which the horse will enter. At Branch and Area events this will be at the discretion of the Organisers.

Assistance within the starting enclosure is permitted, provided it ceases immediately the signal to start is given. From that instant, competitors are considered to be on the course and any subsequent assistance is forbidden (See Section 3.11 Forbidden Assistance). It is important that the atmosphere at the start is as calm as possible.

Time is counted from the signal to start until the instant when the horse's nose passes the finishing post. In the case of a team competition the finishing time of the last horse counts. It is counted in whole seconds, fractions being taken to the next second about, e.g. 30.5 seconds is recorded as 31 seconds. When it is necessary for an official to stop competitors on the course while an obstacle is being repaired or because of an accident, the period during which competitors were held up should be deducted from the above time to give their correct time for completing the course.

Ideally competitors should be started at two-minute intervals. However, with large entries it is permissible to start competitors at one-minute intervals. The starter must never reduce this interval and must at all times take action to avoid excessive numbers on the course.

3.6 OVERTAKING

Overtaking is allowed only between fences at a safe and visible place having due consideration for fellow competitors, spectators and officials.

A minimum distance of 40m should be kept between riders competing as individuals/ teams/ pairs. They must stay at least 40m apart on the approach to a fence. And must ride as a team/pair around the entirety of the course.

A stationary rider, pair or team near a fence, for whatever reason, should make every effort to position their horses so as not to distract other horses from approaching and jumping the fence. They must obey the fence judges' instructions. **A stationary rider part of a team/ individual for whatever reason must give way to any oncoming riders. And cannot distract other horse/ ponies from approaching and jumping the fence. They must obey the fence stewards' instructions.**

The penalty for wilful obstruction of an overtaking rider, failure to follow the instructions of the steward or causing danger to another competitor is elimination, at the discretion of the Chief Steward

Any competitors having already acquired penalties on the course must be particularly vigilant in not causing obstruction and impeding other competitors and must give way to overtaking competitors. **Any competitors having 3 refusals anywhere on the course must retire and can walk home on horseback.**

Competitors must always follow directions from fence judges and officials. Failure to comply with any of the provisions of this rule may lead to disqualification at the discretion of the Official Steward.

3.7 STOPPING AND RE-STARTING A COMPETITOR

If it is necessary to stop competitors because the course has become obstructed, or because of a breach of safety rules, an official or fence judge will record the time as the competitor passes a specific point at full competition speed. He will indicate the requirement to stop by waving a red flag in the path of the competitor. Any signal to stop will be given clearly and only after the competitor has passed the stopping point. An Official will stop competitors only upon the instructions of Control or during an emergency at his own obstacle.

The riders, having been informed of the stopping point at which the time was recorded, may decide where they need to re-start in order to pass the stopping point at full competition speed. The time during which the competitors were stopped will be deducted from the total time taken by the competitors to complete the course.

3.8 FINISHING

On completion of the course competitors will ride directly to the cooling off arena and vacate the finish area in order to avoid a clash with subsequent finishers.

3.9 ELIMINATION AND RETIRING

Competitors, pairs, or teams eliminated or retiring from any part of the cross-country course for any reason whatsoever shall leave the course at a walk and shall take every precaution to avoid disturbing other competitors.

3.10 DISMOUNTING

If competitors need to check their horses, adjust saddlery or equipment they may dismount and remount without penalty. If in the vicinity of an obstacle the rider must seek permission from the fence judge in order to avoid the possibility of being penalised for a fall. They may request and receive assistance from fence judges, officials or onlookers while so doing, including remounting.

3.11 OUTSIDE ASSISTANCE

Competitors may ask, and fence judges should inform them, of the number of refusals or run-outs incurred. Competitors may ask if they have to re-take a fence, and the fence judge is obliged to tell them. This is not considered 'forbidden assistance'.

3.12 FORBIDDEN ASSISTANCE

Competitors may be eliminated for any of the following:

- Any intervention by a third party, whether solicited or not, with the object of facilitating the task of the competitor or of helping his horse is considered illegal assistance.
- Joining another competitor and continuing the course in company with him.
- Posting any persons at certain points to call directions or give signals in passing.
- Anyone at an obstacle actively encouraging the horse by any means whatsoever.
- Anyone, including a fence judge or official, calling back or assisting a competitor by directions to rectify an error of course.
- Receiving any information, by any means whatsoever, about the course, before it is officially open to competitors.
- Whether or not a competitor has received forbidden assistance, and is to be eliminated, will be left to the discretion of the Chief Steward.
- Normally a competitor will be eliminated unless, in the opinion of the Chief Steward, he did not receive benefit in any way from such assistance.

3.13 METHOD OF JUDGING

Penalty points for faults incurred as the result of the negotiation or attempted negotiation of an obstacle are awarded to each competitor, the winner being the competitor with the least penalties.

In the teams of three or in a pair's competition, penalties are cumulative, i.e. the third refusal by any team member or by a member of a pair eliminates the whole team or pair.

In Senior and Junior sections in the event of equality of penalties the competitor, team of three or pair with the fastest time will be the winner.

In the event of equality of penalties in Intro and Novice classes the competitor whose time is closest to the optimum time will be the winner.

3.14 PENALTIES

Teams of Three:

Knocking down an obstacle, classed as knockable:	5 penalties
First refusal, run out or circle at an obstacle:	10 penalties
Second refusal, run out or circle at the same obstacle:	20 penalties
Third refusal	Elimination

Failure at an obstacle without jumping effort, by one or more competitors, to negotiate multiple flags correctly: **15 penalties**
These penalties are also cumulative within the team

Senior & Junior Pairs:

Knocking down an obstacle, classed as knockable:	5 penalties
First refusal, run out or circle at an obstacle:	10 penalties
Second refusal, run out or circle at the same obstacle:	20 penalties
Third refusal	Elimination

Failure at an obstacle without jumping effort, by one or more competitors, to negotiate multiple flags correctly: **15 penalties**
The above penalties are cumulative within a pair.

Fall of horse or rider anywhere on the course: Elimination

Failure to present at an obstacle without jumping effort by one or more competitors:	Elimination
Error of course not rectified:	Elimination
Omission of obstacle or boundary flag:	Elimination
Jumping obstacle in wrong direction:	Elimination
Re-taking an obstacle already jumped:	
except at combination fences: (see page 7, rule 2.4, J)	Elimination
Continuing course without crash helmet or with chin strap undone:	Elimination

If one member of a team or pair is eliminated the whole team or pair is eliminated from the competition and must walk quietly home without jumping any obstacles or obstructing other competitors.

3.15 DEFINITION OF FAULTS

See illustration in Appendix 1, page 19.

A. Refusals

At obstacles or elements with height exceeding 30 cm a horse is considered to have refused if it stops in front of the obstacle or element to be jumped. If a horse, then jumps from a standstill this is considered a refusal. After a refusal, if the competitor re-doubles or changes his effort, still without success, or if the horse is re-presented at the obstacle after stepping back and stops or steps back again, this is a second refusal and incurs further penalties. A third refusal at the same obstacle incurs elimination.

At obstacles or elements of 30 cms or less in height a stop, followed immediately by a standing jump is not penalised, unless the stop is sustained or in any way prolonged. The horse may step sideways but if it steps back with even one foot, this is a refusal.

After a refusal, if the competitor redoubles or changes his efforts without success, or if the horse is represented at the obstacle after stepping back and stops or steps back again, this is a second refusal. A third refusal at the same obstacle incurs elimination.

B. Run-Outs

A horse is considered to have run out if having been presented at an obstacle it avoids that obstacle in such a way that it must be represented.

C. Circles

A horse is considered to have circled if it crosses its original track, from whichever direction, while negotiating or attempting to negotiate the obstacle, or any part thereof. If a horse completes a circle while being re-presented at the obstacle after a refusal or a run-out, it is penalised only for the refusal or run-out but not for both. A competitor may circle without penalty between two separately numbered obstacles even if they are quite close together, provided he clearly does not present his horse in an attempt to negotiate the second obstacle after jumping the first.

D. Falls

A rider is considered to have fallen when he is separated from his horse, as a result of negotiating an obstacle in such a way as to necessitate remounting or vaulting into the saddle.

A horse is considered to have fallen when the shoulder and quarters have touched either the ground or the obstacle and the ground as a result of negotiating an obstacle

A fall of either horse or rider anywhere on course is penalised by elimination.

A fall of either horse or rider in the warm-up area of the competition, may continue to compete once they have been cleared by a medical officer, at the discretion of the Chief Steward.

Fallers on cross country are not allowed to remount and must walk home on foot. Please refer to section 4.1 In the case of a head injury, or other injury likely to cause concussion the following applies: Concussion – mandatory 21-day suspension from all Irish Pony Club activities which involve riding. For further information on Irish Pony Club rules regarding concussion go to www.irishponyclub.ie

E. Flags

There is no penalty for knocking down a fence flag. If in the process the horse's head passes the wrong side of the flag, i.e., to the left of the white or to the right of the red, the competitor must retake the fence and shall be debited the penalties for the run- out(s).

3.16 DISQUALIFICATION

The Chief Steward may disqualify competitors at any stage of the competition for:

- Failure to comply with the rules
- Disrespect for any duly appointed officials
- Dangerous riding
- Excessive speed
- Unseemly behaviour
- Bad language
- Misuse of the whip or spur
- Ill treatment of a horse
- Lameness, unfit or exhausted horses

3.17 Anti-Doping

The Irish Pony Club Anti-Doping rules are the Irish Anti-Doping Rules as adopted by the Irish Sports Council, as amended from time to time. The rules contained in the said Irish Anti-Doping Rules shall have effect and be construed as rules of The Irish Pony Club. These rules are available at: <https://www.sportireland.ie/anti-doping/news/anti-doping-irish-sports-council-publish-new-anti-doping-rules>

3.18 QUERIES AND OBJECTIONS

All queries must be lodged in the office on the official IPC form and will be sent to the Chief steward/Technical Delegate. Only the Chief Steward/Technical Delegate is allowed to give clearance to any submitted query.

Any query regarding an incident or a competitor's score should be made only at the secretary's office. The D.C. of the branch, or an appointed representative, must do so within thirty minutes of the incident or of the scores being posted. The Chief Steward will investigate and convey the findings to the D.C. Should the D.C. wish to lodge a formal objection he may do so in writing, accompanied by €50, within thirty minutes of receiving the decision of the Chief Steward. The originator of the protest may amplify his case before the Jury of Appeal but will not be present at their deliberations. If they decide that there were good and reasonable grounds for the objection the deposit will be returned. The Jury of Appeal's decision is final.

No interference with the scorers is allowed. The only person allowed to amend a score or time is the Chief Steward/Technical Delegate

3.19 JURY OF APPEAL

At Area & Branch competitions, the Jury of Appeal shall consist of three of the following:

- District Commissioner of host branch
- The Area IPC Eventing Committee member
- The Cross Country Steward
- Any other members of the IPC Horse Trials Committee

The Organiser of the event may appoint a replacement for any member of the Jury if the need arises. Any three persons from the above shall form a quorum.

At the Championship, the Jury of Appeal shall consist of:

- The Chairman of the Irish Pony Club

- The Eventing Chairman
- The Technical Delegate and if necessary
- The Cross-Country Chief Steward
- Those members of the Irish Pony Club Horse Trials Committee who are present.

Any three persons from the above shall form a quorum. At both Area Trials and the Championships at least three members of the Jury of Appeal must remain on the ground until half an hour after the scores have been published.

SECTION 4 - THE ORGANISERS

4.1 MEDICAL COVER

At all Hunter Trials competitions it is mandatory to have either a doctor/ paramedic, 2 ambulances and their crews present on site before and during the competition. The doctors/paramedic vehicle along with One ambulance must be a four-wheel drive in order to reach all areas of the venue/competition. A plan must be made with the doctor / paramedic/ first aid personnel for an alternative arrangement should it be necessary for one of the ambulances to leave the venue during the competition.

All competitors who have fallen must report to the ambulance or medical team onsite. Failure to do so will incur a €50 fine payable by the branch in question to Head Office. To compete at the next event a doctor's letter clearing the member to ride must be submitted to Head Office before 3pm on the Friday before the next competition. Otherwise, entry will be refunded, and competitor CANNOT compete.

4.2 VETERINARY COVER

At all hunter trial competitions, a veterinary surgeon should be present at the venue. If this is not possible a commitment from a local veterinary practise should be obtained to attend an emergency if required. An arrangement such as this needs to be made well in advance of the competition. An empty trailer with suitable towing vehicle, tarpaulin and screens must be available to cover all eventualities.

4.3 DESTRUCTION OF SEVERELY INJURED HORSES

If in the opinion of the official Veterinary Surgeon a horse is so severely injured that on humanitarian grounds it ought to be destroyed the following procedure will apply: If the owner or his authorised representative is present, his agreement will first be obtained by the official Veterinary Surgeon. If the owner or his representative is not available the Official Steward, acting on the advice of the Official Veterinary Surgeon may order the destruction of the horse.

4.4 FARRIER COVER

Ideally a farrier should be present at the venue. If not, an agreement should be reached that one would attend if required. An arrangement such as this needs to be made well in advance of the competition.

4.5 COURSE MAINTENANCE

Throughout the day of competition, a course maintenance crew must be available. They will maintain the take-off and landing areas of fences, flags, roping and repairs to any damaged fences. They will be responsible for making screens and tarpaulins rapidly available if and when required.

4.6 SAFETY OFFICER

A safety officer must be present at the event who will complete the risk assessment form in advance of the hunter trial. He will ensure that the fall report forms are completed, monitor general safety throughout the day and report to the Official Steward.

4.7 OFFICIAL STEWARD

Official stewards may be appointed to attend hunter trials. They shall check that all necessary

medical and veterinary personnel or arrangements are in place and that the risk assessment and crisis management forms have been satisfactorily completed. They shall be responsible for the standard and safety of the cross-country course, brief the fence judges and ensure that

the hunter trial is run according to these rules. They shall check the results and deal with queries and attend prize giving.

The Chief Steward/Technical Delegate has the authority to remove a fence/ fence at their discretion on the day of an event.

4.8 COOLING OFF ARENA

In the interests of animal welfare, it is recommended that an arena should be provided where horses may be led round while recovering after the cross-country round. A knowledgeable steward should oversee this in an effort to promote education in this matter. Where possible it is desirable that a fresh water supply should be convenient to this arena.

4.9 COMMUNICATIONS

It is essential that rapid communication is in place to cover all eventualities. The principal reason for having radios is to be in a position to instantly alert the medical and veterinary personnel about a problem. A second reason is to help with the smooth running of the hunter trial, and thirdly, to provide information to the commentary personnel. The presence of a good commentator is a huge addition at any cross-country competition and should be an essential part of the team. Radios are required for the doctor, ambulances, vet, safety steward, course maintenance personnel, organiser, secretary, scorers, tack inspector, arena stewards, starter, commentator, zone stewards and/or fence stewards.

Mobile phones are not an adequate substitute due to the possibility of poor coverage or loss of network.

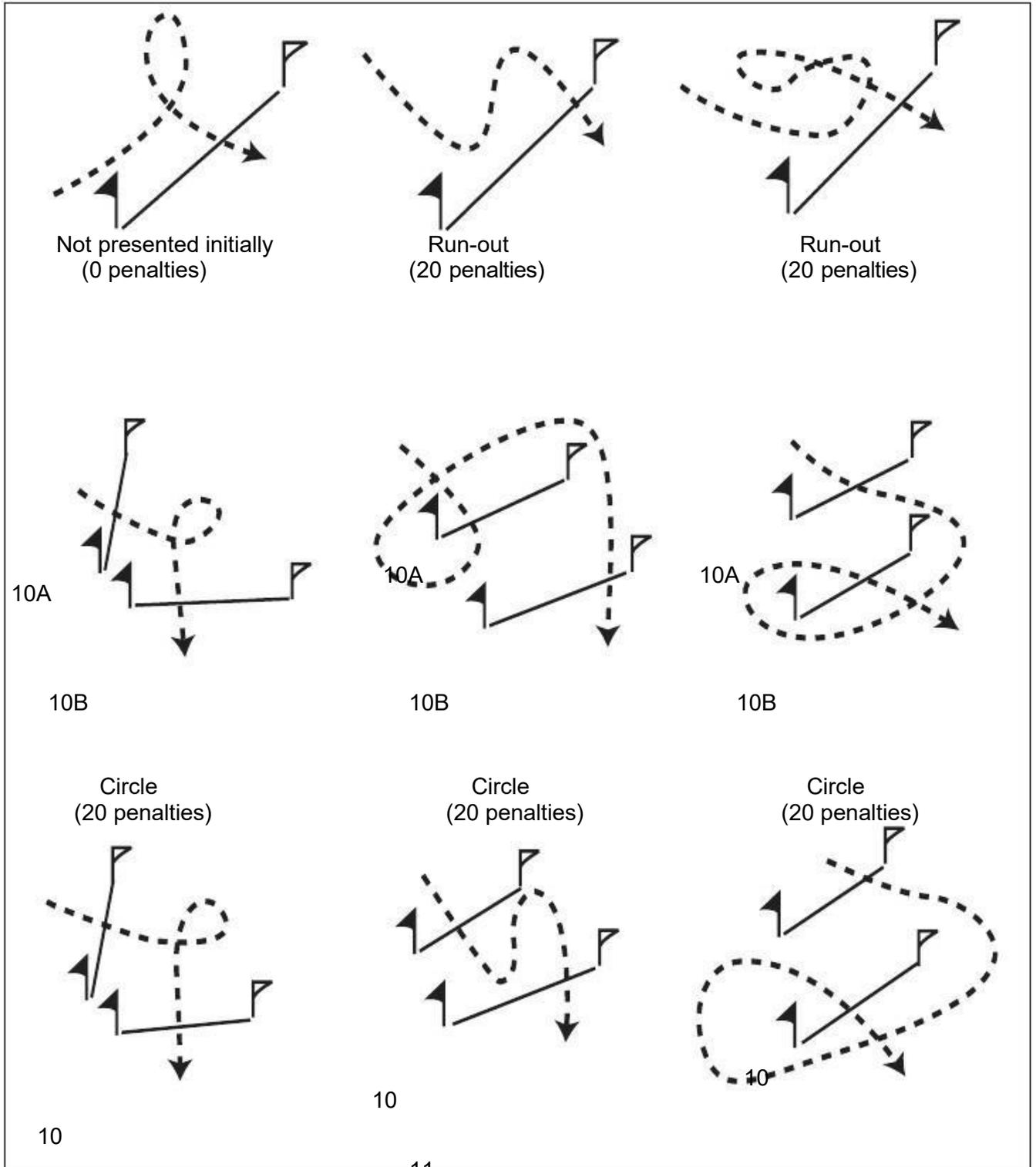
4.10 SAFETY

No mechanically propelled vehicles or battery-operated vehicles are allowed at the Championships. This includes, but is not limited to, bicycles/Pedal Bikes, scooters, segways, hover boards etc.

Regarding use of quads or similar please refer to:

[S.I. No. 619/2021 - Safety, Health and Welfare at Work \(General Application\) \(Amendment\) \(No. 2\) Regulations 2021 \(irishstatutebook.ie\)](#)

APPENDIX 1 – ILLUSTRATED EXAMPLES OF FAULTS AT OBSTACLES



11

Not presented initially
(0 penalties)

11

Run-out
(20 penalties)

11

Not presented at 11
(0 penalties)

APPENDIX 2 - CROSS COUNTRY CHECKLIST

Personnel	
<i>Role</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Official Steward	
Secretary	
Safety Officer	
Doctor/Paramedic	
Vet On Call	
Farrier	
Course Builder	
Tack Steward	
Arena Steward	
Call Up Steward	
Starter and Timer	
Fence Judges	
Commentator	
Scorers	
Jury of Appeal	
Caterers for hospitality	
Public Caterers	
Mobile Tack Shop	
All relevant documentation	
Equipment	
<i>Item</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Ambulance	
Tent or Caravan	
Public Address	
Radios	
Portaloos	
Road Signposts	
Stop Watches	Supplied by IPC for Championships
Timing Clock	Supplied by IPC for Championships
Rule Book	
Competitors Numbers	
XC Score Books	
XC Time Sheets	
XC Results Sheets	
Rosettes	
Prizes	
High Viz Vests/Whistles	