

## Pack Llama Trail Association, Inc.



The Pack Llama Trail Association, Inc. (PLTA) is a not for profit corporation born of an idea that came while several members of the Western Idaho Llama Association (WILA) were sitting around a campfire in 1996. This was the beginning of the concept of testing pack llamas against a written packing standard.

The principal purpose of the PLTA is to preserve and promote working llamas while educating the public in the humane and safe use of llamas as packing companions. This is done by facilitating a social, non-competitive atmosphere where the pack llama is tested against a written standard in a realistic packing environment and by encouraging learning about packing with llamas through other opportunities.

[www.packllama.org](http://www.packllama.org)

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PRESERVING & PROMOTING WORKING LLAMAS

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## ABOUT US

The PLTA's objective in promoting pack llama trials is to discover and recognize llamas that can fulfill the llama packers' needs on the trail by performing in a manner consistent with the demands of actual packing conditions. The intent is to test the llama's natural ability and acquired training and conditioning. PLTA tests utilize primarily natural obstacles in a manner found in normal packing circumstances. While realistic packing conditions are subject to variations in different parts of the country, pack llamas are expected to possess a defined set of abilities which enable them to serve as useful packing companions.

The PLTA is the organization responsible for sanctioning Pack Llama Trials, compilation of the regulatory handbook, maintaining records from these trials, and conferring the appropriate titles of standard accomplishment (Basic, Advanced,



Master, and Elite Pack Llama). The PLTA also recognizes an additional level of complexity by adding String Level trials after completion of each of the standard rankings.

Annual full or associate memberships allow individuals to enter their llamas in trials, and/or to participate in other PLTA events and activities. The Packer's Primer is an introductory workshop designed to instruct the basics of llama packing and is especially of value for beginner participants in pack trials. PLTA's Mileage Club is a program which acknowledges the miles accrued by an individual and their llama. PLTA is a resource for packing information including trail studies and guidelines for packing with llamas. The website, newsletter, and email alert notifications keep the members informed of issues directly impacting their llama packing interests.

## OVERVIEW OF WHAT PACK TRIALS ARE ALL ABOUT

Llamas are entered in trial levels based on age requirements and the llama's training, trail experience, and conditioning. Llamas do not compete against one another for placement, but rather their performances are evaluated individually against a "standard" as they negotiate obstacles over a trail course set for distance, elevation gain, and within a specified time window. In addition, each level tests general manageability tasks. These include the llama having a halter removed and then put back on, be loaded and unloaded from a trailer or vehicle, negotiate a picket line for five minutes, be properly saddled, and have the packs suitably attached.

Recognizing that packing environments differ in various regions, obstacles are selected from categories that reflect typical packing challenges. They include tolerating adjustment of loads, picking ones way through difficult footing, having to extend stride or climb to go up, over or across obstacles, dealing with difficult or frightening footing, tight places, slippery slopes, and trail hazards such as bridges and dogs. In lieu of unavailable elevation gain, distance may be added at the rate of one mile per 250 feet of elevation to compensate.

**BASIC LEVEL** – Minimum age of the llama is 24 months. Llamas 24-30 months carry no weight other than the saddle system and filled-out packs. Llamas over 30 months carry 10% of their body weight. Five obstacles must be negotiated. Standard requirement for distance and elevation gain is 3 miles with an elevation gain of 250 to 500 feet. Llamas meeting these requirements and having no more than 5 performance points deducted for unacceptable or potentially dangerous acts committed by the llama or its handler, will successfully complete the trial. Two of these successful completions at PLTA sanctioned trials are required for the award of a Basic Pack Llama (BPL) Certificate.

**ADVANCED LEVEL** – Tested at a more advanced stage of training and against a moderate packing requirement, the llama must be a minimum 36 months old and carry 15% of their body weight. Ten obstacles including two water, one jump/step over, one deadfall, and one rock rubble must be negotiated successfully with no more than 3 performance points deducted as they cover a minimum of 5 miles with an elevation gain of 750 to 1000 feet. Llamas meeting all requirements successfully will be awarded one completion

toward the four required for award of the Advanced Pack Llama (APL) Certificate. Llamas that already have a BPL Certificate will only require three Advanced completions.

**MASTER LEVEL**—The llama is tested at a well developed stage of training and against a stringent packing requirement expected by the experienced llama packer. The difficulty of tests in this level will reflect the superior abilities expected. The llama must be a minimum of 48 months old and carry 25% of their body weight with a maximum weight load not to exceed 90 pounds. Fifteen obstacles must be negotiated over a minimum of 8 miles with an elevation gain of 1500 to 2000. Llamas meeting all requirements and having no more than 2 performance points deducted, will be awarded one completion toward the four required for award of the Master Pack Llama (MPL) Certificate. Llamas that already have an APL Certificate will only require three Master completions.



**ELITE LEVEL**—Llamas testing at this level are typically those who are truly working llamas supporting their handlers as seasoned, dependable, veterans on the trail. To participate in this level, the llama must have prior certification as a Master Pack Llama. The manageability tasks, weight requirements, and performance point allotments are the same as for the Master level. Twenty complex obstacles are required. The distance to be covered increases to 10 miles with 2500 to 3000 feet in elevation gain. Two successful trials at this level are required for certification as an Elite Pack Llama (EPL).

The PLTA regulatory handbook provides additional details about conducting trials and other PLTA events. Join PLTA today and start having fun with YOUR pack llama! Let llamas lighten your load!

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[www.packllama.org](http://www.packllama.org)