



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
COMPETITIVE MOUNTED ORIENTEERING

RIDE MANAGER'S HELPER
Marti Caldwell

Setting up and managing a CMO ride is fun and helps you understand the sport better. Here's a primer for the successful ride manager.

On the web site you will find all the forms you will need. Figure on at least 30 rider entry forms and possibly 5-10 membership forms and 10-15 release forms. You may send in the ride sanction form with the \$5 fee (for each day) as soon as you agree to do the ride, or include it with your ride results after the ride. You need to clear your ride date with the person in your chapter who handles the season schedule and with the park where your ride will be.

Also on the website you can find ride announcement flyers for the rides already scheduled. Make up something similar describing your ride, and be sure to include the basic information: name, date(s), location, starting time(s), directions and/or a map showing how to get there, entry fees, day-member fees, description of park and facilities, fees charged for riding and/or camping, and a short description of CMO. Feel free to cut and paste anything from old flyers. Be sure to include your name, address, email if you have it, and phone, so people can get more information. Get this flyer to your chapter ride scheduler ASAP, so it will be put on the national web site. It is also a good idea to post copies at the park, in local tack and feed stores and at your horse vet's office.

Entry fees must be collected from each rider. Typically, adult riders are charged \$10 and junior riders are charged half of the adult rider fee. In addition to the entry fee, each non-NACMO rider must purchase a one-day membership for \$5 to cover insurance. Non-NACMO riders must also sign a release form in addition to filling out an entry form. If a rider becomes a member at your ride, they don't pay the \$5 day-member fee, but as part of joining they have to sign a release form. For a junior rider, a parent or legal guardian (not just any adult) must sign the release.

After the ride, you will send to NACMO \$3 for each adult rider, \$1.50 for each junior rider, and the \$5 day membership fee for each non-member. Some of the chapters also collect a fee for each rider. The tally sheets for chapters show the amounts.

When deciding on an entry fee, don't leave yourself without anything to buy prizes with. Ride managers have been very creative in making or buying really great prizes without spending big bucks. Ribbons, recycled trophies, hats, t-shirts, riding gear or supplies have all been popular prizes. There should be something for each of the top 6 teams.

Setting up the ride is the fun part. You want to reward riders who correctly reason out the clues, plot an efficient course and have well-conditioned and trained horses. It shouldn't be so easy as to be a horse race, but it shouldn't be discouragingly difficult either. It should take about 2 hours for the top teams, but use your own judgement. Many of us make the Sunday ride start earlier, have easier markers, and be shorter overall, so riders can get in and get home. Consider

the condition of the trails, the likely weather, and the distance most of your riders are coming from.

Use a standard white 9” paper plate, marked with the marker number, two code letters and the date of the ride in black indelible ink. You can also add words to make the ride more interesting and easier to decipher the letters if one or the other is smeared or damaged. Please make the underlined letters easy to see and not in the middle of the words.

MAKE SURE THE PLATE CAN BE SEEN AND READ FROM HORSEBACK, AND THAT A HORSE CAN SAFELY BE RIDDEN INTO A POSITION FOR THE RIDER TO READ IT.

THIS IS NOT A SUGGESTION BUT A BASIC RULE OF CMO!

A marker is harder to find if:

- The bearings from all landmarks are long distances.
- The landmarks are easily confused with other similar things.
- The landmarks are out of direct sight of the plate location.
- There are several possible choices of trails to the area circled.
- The plate is visible from only close by or from a certain angle.
- The plate is on the ground in heavy growth or above head height.

A marker is easier to find if:

- There are more than 2 landmarks.
- At least one landmark is obvious and easy to spot.
- The circle is at an easily identifiable location.
- The bearings are at or close to a 90-degree angle to each other.
- The plate is in an open, easily accessible area, between 1-8 feet from the ground.

Make some easier than others, vary your distances and try to describe your landmarks well. Don’t forget – you have to face the riders when they come in! Invariably, no matter how hard you try, the riders will see the markers differently than you do. If you are not sure a particular tree is an oak, don’t call it an oak! Measurements help too; “a 4 foot diameter, 30 foot tall sycamore” is better than “a huge tree”.

You can have one long and one short bearing. Or have 3 or even 4 landmarks. One landmark can be to aim people down a certain trail where they might then see the others. You can put a LM plate (a quarter of a regular plate with the letters LM on it) or a ribbon etc., on a landmark that looks too much like similar ones in the area. These are sometimes called “confidence ribbons” and can be anything that tells the rider that this is, indeed, the landmark. In parks where the map may leave a bit to be desired or where it is easy to get lost, you might use “you are here” plates. Put a letter on a plate and identify where in the park it is on the maps. We also sometimes sketch in signs, junked cars or crop fields etc. on our maps to help people orient themselves. Getting lost and not even finding the circled area is a sure turn off for competitors, especially rookies.

Write down lots of details about the landmarks – more than you think you will use on the final maps. You will have more choices on how to describe your landmarks, and it helps you find the landmarks and plates yourself when you go back for a final check before the ride. We use a double record system when we set up a ride. A hand held tape recorder is really handy, but get something down on paper too. Just a suggestion – tape the little door shut on the tape recorder so

the tape won't come popping out while you are galloping down the trail after you have just finished setting up the whole ride – you will never find that miserable little tape. Also tape the little springy staple gun thingy. They can disappear into tall grass forever. Don't ask how we know this.

We usually set up more plates than we will ultimately use. We can then pick and choose which ones will make the best use of the park, and which ones to use for each day without having people tripping over Sunday's plates on Saturday. Make sure the map is as good a representation of the actual riding area as you can. Draw in "outlaw" trails (and identify them as such). Identify off-limits areas. Show safe or hazardous watering places or crossings. Indicate major landmarks like park boundaries, major power lines and road crossings. If trails are numbered, make sure the numbers are on your map. Most parks provide a reasonably good map, but they can all be improved. Be sure to keep a blank (no circles) map to show riders before the ride.

On ride day, arrive early and do your best to check all the plates before riders go out. Deer eat plates and landmarks, landmarks fall over or are moved, plates get swiped by environmentalists and hikers, and there is nothing more annoying and frustrating than looking for a plate that isn't there. Double check that your azimuths are correct and not backward, and that the landmarks still look like their descriptions. Get someone else to check in riders and help newbies learn the compass stuff if you need to.

Try to get at least one member of each team to attend the rider's meeting. Use your blank map, and show everyone the main routes out of camp, good places to water horses, dangerous or soupy places, off-limits areas and any features that will help folks find their way around the park. Describe the trail conditions that day, and any other activities going on in the park. Stress that courtesy and respect for "speed bumps" take precedence over time. Read the applicable parts of the rules to the riders. Draw for start times and allow teams to trade among themselves if you want.

Use a score sheet to record the rider names, horse names, rump numbers, and membership numbers in team groupings. It doesn't matter in which order you put them, just keep team members grouped together. It is a simple matter to rearrange them later by time out or by placing. Make a couple of copies of the score sheet to give you room to scribble. Send teams out at the same time interval as much as possible and call out the "on deck" team frequently so they know when to be ready. Record the time out as soon as you determine which teams go when and then your hands will be free to hand out the maps. It is the riders' responsibility to be ready and at the start/finish line on time. Record the finish time as hour:minute:second. We have had many rides where the places were separated by a minute or less. Remember to hand out the FIRST map at the start time and to record the finish time when the LAST team member crosses the finish line. We often hand out all the maps during the minute before the start time and have riders wait to look at their maps until they are told to start.

After the ride, make a new copy of the score sheet so it is as legible as possible. Include the correct rider names and numbers and horse names and numbers. These can be looked up on the website. Make a note if a rider is riding someone else's horse. The tally sheet for your chapter will tell you what (and how much money) to send to whom. In general, you will send the tally sheet, the entry forms, membership forms for new members, releases for day riders and new members, copies of your maps, and checks made out to NACMO and your chapter (if

needed). All of this might go to the same person, but each chapter has its own division of responsibilities. Do what the tally sheet says.

It's nice to write up a "story" of your ride and send it to Colleen Cathcart (studiocmarketing@gmail.com) for the Meadow Muffin.

There, you did it! Thanks for having that great ride. We can't wait to see what you will come up with for next year!