

TRAIL CLASSES

by Karen Chorney

Ever wonder how well your pony would handle the unexpected on an actual trail ride? That's exactly what trail classes test—your pony's willingness, manners, and ability to navigate obstacles they might encounter in the real world. These classes showcase the partnership between you and your pony, whether you're leading or riding.

Trail classes are open to all ponies and offer something for everyone. The Western Canadian Pony Classic offers both in-hand and ridden classes for different age groups. You can compete in either English or Western tack—whatever you and your pony are comfortable with. The focus here is 100% on performance, so it's all about how smoothly and confidently your pony tackles each challenge.

In-Hand Trail

In these classes, you'll lead your pony through a course of obstacles using just a halter and lead rope. You'll guide your pony at a walk and trot/jog over and through various obstacles—things like poles on the ground, small bridges, backing through narrow spaces, or weaving around cones. Judges are looking for a pony that responds well to your cues, shows good manners, and approaches each obstacle with confidence and a willing attitude. This is a fantastic class for young ponies, ponies new to showing.



In-hand trail

Ridden Trail

Here's where you navigate the course together from the saddle. You'll work at a walk and trot/jog, and sometimes canter/lope, depending on the obstacles. Common challenges include opening and closing a gate while mounted, riding over poles (sometimes raised), crossing a bridge, backing through or around obstacles, and side-passing. The judges want to see a pony that's calm, responsive, and willing—one that uses their own intelligence to pick their way through the course while listening to your cues. A great trail pony doesn't just complete the obstacles; they do it willingly, staying alert and engaged the whole way through.



Ridden trail

Why Try Trail?

Trail classes are perfect for ponies and riders of all experience levels. They're practical, fun, and they build real-world skills that translate directly to actual trail riding. Plus, they're a nice change of pace if you usually compete in other disciplines. You get to show off your pony's athleticism, brains, and your partnership in a way that highlights both precision and trust.

Whether you are brand new to showing or looking to try something different, trail classes offer a welcoming place to test your skills and have a great time doing it.