

## Competitive Trail Riding

### How do I get started in the sport of competitive trail riding?

By Priscilla Lindsey

Q. How do I get started in the sport of competitive trail riding?

A. The first thing you will want to do is check the websites of the various Competitive Trail Ride (CTR) organizations to find rides that are near you. Some of these organizations include the North American Trail Ride Conference ([www.natrc.org](http://www.natrc.org)), Upper Midwest Endurance and Competitive Rides Association ([www.umecra.com](http://www.umecra.com)), Eastern Competitive Trail Riding Association ([www.ectra.org](http://www.ectra.org)), Middle of the Trail Distance Riders Association ([www.motdra.fws1.com](http://www.motdra.fws1.com)), Southeastern Distance Riding Association ([www.distanceriding.com](http://www.distanceriding.com)), and Ontario Competitive Trail Association ([www.octra.on.ca](http://www.octra.on.ca)).

Once you have found some scheduled rides near you, contact the organization for a set of rules and membership information. Becoming a member of an organization usually saves money on entry fees, plus they probably have an information packet for new members that will have helpful tips for getting started in the sport.

A competitive trail ride is very different from a pleasure trail ride. Many newcomers to the sport are surprised by this. Something you might want to consider, instead of jumping right into competition, is to start as a volunteer worker at a ride. This will give you a good overview of how the rides are conducted. Examples of jobs that might be available: secretary for a judge, official timer, or member of a pulse and respiration check team. Another advantage of working at a ride first is that you have a chance to visit with the competitors in camp, see how they set up camp with their horses, and see all the various tack and equipment used on the trail and in camp.

One more thing that can help a new competitor is a mentor. Many of the organizations, or even individual ride managers, will help you find an experienced fellow rider who will ride with you and coach you through your first competition. Just ask!

Priscilla Lindsey, of Concordia, Kan., is a Horsemanship Judge for the North American Trail Ride Conference (NATRC) and a Centered Riding Instructor. She started in the sport of competitive trail in 1981, after years of showing horses and enjoying pleasure trail rides. She enjoyed the sport so much that she started concentrating her horse breeding and training business on producing horses specifically for this sport. Priscilla and her husband, Steve, have enjoyed competitive trail in 19 states. They have raised and trained two National Champion competitive trail winners in both NATRC and Arabian Horse Association (AHA) competitions. Several other horses from their breeding program have become winners, including the 2006 National Champion Half-Arabian in AHA competition. In addition to raising Arabian and Half-Arabian horses, and giving riding lessons and clinics, they also raise beef cattle and produce a variety of grain crops on their Kansas farm.