



# **Bluebonnet Rescue Horse Training Challenges**

**Rule Book  
2021**

**The Bluebonnet Rescue Horse Training Challenges** are competitions in which volunteer foster homes and professional trainers work with a Bluebonnet Equine Humane Society foster horse for four months (starting in mid-June for the October event and mid-January for the May event).

**Bluebonnet Rescue Horse Training Challenge Mission Statement:**

- To show the public that rescued horses and other equines can be useful, willing and enjoyable equine partners.
- To provide training and adoption opportunities for BEHS rescued horses.
- To provide a fun, competitive venue for Professional and Amateur trainers to display their horsemanship skills.
- To provide an opportunity for youth to work with and learn about rescued equines.

**General Information about the Event:**

The competition is open to any BEHS member who applies to foster and is approved, as well as professional trainers whose property is approved. If you are not currently an approved foster home or BEHS member, join the rescue, complete a Training Challenge application, and pay the Challenge entry fee to begin the process.

Current foster homes should fill out an application the first time they sign up for the Challenge and pay the entry fee.

Participants who have competed in the past do not need to fill out a new application. They do need to make sure their membership is current (for non-pros) and pay the entry fee.

**Deadlines**

October Event application deadline: June 15. May event application deadline: January 1. Bluebonnet Equine Humane Society may accept late applications on a case by case basis.

Horse pick-up: Participants need to email the Challenge Coordinator when they've picked up their horse (within 48 hours). Failure to meet this deadline will result in a deduction of 10 points from the participant's Training Challenge scorecard.

Evaluation Form Deadline: Evaluation forms must be submitted within two weeks of the date you pick up your training challenge horse. Failure to submit an evaluation will result in a deduction of 10 points from the participant's Training Challenge scorecard. Late submissions will result in a deduction of 2 points from the participant's Training Challenge scorecard.

Post Evaluation Form Deadline: October deadline: November 17, May deadline, April 2. These forms are important because they help our adoption coordinator make adoption decisions based on the adopter's needs and skill level and your Training Challenge horse's abilities and personality. Late submissions will result in a deduction of 10 points and failure to submit a form at all will result in a 10 point deduction.

Trainer adoption application deadline: If you plan to adopt your Training Challenge horse, you must notify the Training Challenge Coordinator and Adoption Coordinator via email by 9 pm CST of September 28th for the October event and 9 pm CST of April 10<sup>th</sup> for the May event. **We still strictly adhere to this rule and to these dates.**

#### **About Fostering Your Training Challenge Horse:**

- Foster homes pay for hay, grain, shavings, and part of farrier care. Since BEHS is a 501(c)(3) organization, fostering expenses may be tax-deductible. To help with these expenses, foster homes will receive a fostering stipend of \$60 per month/ per horse to help with feed, hay, and other expenses. This stipend will be paid quarterly. You do not need to file an expense report to receive your stipend.
- BEHS reimburses \$50 of each farrier visit, and 100% of paste de-wormers, and pre-approved veterinary care. You can use any vet you like to treat your horse, but you must get pre-approval for all veterinary work. For non-emergency work, you may get approval by emailing Foster Home Coordinator Denise Crosthwait at [dcrosthwait@westandtalbert.com](mailto:dcrosthwait@westandtalbert.com). For emergency veterinary care, contact Denise at [979 777 0768](tel:9797770768) or Jennifer at [832 425 8129](tel:8324258129). **Do not send email for emergency care.** For more information [review the fostering FAQs on www.bluebonnetequine.org](http://www.bluebonnetequine.org).
- All foster homes (including Youth competitors) who compete must sign a contract stating that they agree to foster the horse for three months after the Challenge is complete (unless he/she is adopted beforehand) or forfeit their winnings. **This rule does not apply to professional trainers.**

#### **Standard of Care:**

- Every BEHS equine shall, at all times, be treated humanely and with dignity, respect and compassion.
- Training techniques used on BEHS foster equines will be humane, least amount of force techniques, keeping in mind the mental and physical well-being of the equine at all times. Any evidence of failure to do so will result in an investigation and possible disqualification from the Challenge. If trainers demonstrate any excessively forceful training practices during the Challenge, warm-ups for the event, or any other time, the trainer can be docked points or removed (disqualified) from the competition at the discretion of the Training Challenge Coordinator.
- Use of any stimulant, depressant, tranquilizer or sedative which could affect the performance of a horse (stimulants and depressants are defined as substances that stimulate or depress the cardiovascular, respiratory or central nervous system) is strictly prohibited. Use of any performance-affecting drug on a BEHS equine at the Challenge will result in disqualification from the Challenge.

## Bits and Equipment:

Violation of these rules will result in dismissal from the class and a score of 0 for that class and potential dismissal from the Training Challenge:

- Equines in the Professional Division may be shown in a snaffle bit, hackamore, bosal or sidepull. A curb bit may also be allowed if the Professional trainer feels their horse is ready, but caution is encouraged and extra points will NOT be awarded for showing in a curb bit. Equines in the Non-Pro Under Saddle Division may be shown in a snaffle bit, hackamore, sidepull, bosal or **approved** curb bit. Using a curb fit and failure to get prior approval from the Training Challenge Coordinator for a curb bit will result in your disqualification for the Training Challenge. Using an ill-fitting, modified, or improperly worn bit may result in disqualification.
- Prohibited equipment includes jerklines, tie-downs, tack collars, draw reins, standing or running martingales, a curb bit without a curb strap, wire, curb strap with tacks/rivets or solid metal curb straps no matter how padded, wire cavesson, bumper bits, metal bosals no matter how padded, metal hackamore, chambons, headstalls made of metal (even if encased in a protective material) or twisted rawhide. Please contact Training Coordinator if you have any questions regarding equipment requirements.
- Natural horsemanship stick and strings or other types of longe whips, longe lines, riding crops and drive lines are allowed in the In-Hand Division classes and in all Divisions for the Freestyle class, as long as they are used correctly and humanely. At no time should there ever be any evidence that a whip was used on the horse. If there is swelling, welts, raw skin or blood it is an indication that the whip has been abused by the trainer. If it is determined that a whip has been misused by a trainer, he or she will be disqualified from the Training Challenge and, if he or she has applied to adopt his or her Training Challenge horse, the application and adoption may be discarded and denied at the discretion of any of the following: the Training Challenge Coordinator, Adoption Coordinator, or Fostering Coordinator. Striking a horse during training, warm-up, or during any phase of competition is an automatic disqualification and the trainer will be removed from the training event and any trainer adoption application approval will be rescinded immediately.
- Spurs are permitted provided they are used correctly and humanely. At no time should there ever be any evidence that a spur was used on the horse. If there is swelling, welts, raw skin or blood it is an indication that the spur has been abused by the rider. If it is determined that spurs have been misused by a trainer, he or she will be disqualified from the Training Challenge and, if he or she has applied to adopt his or her Training Challenge horse, the application and adoption may be discarded and denied at the discretion of any of the following: the Training Challenge Coordinator, Adoption Coordinator, or Fostering Coordinator.

- If a horse is shown in a curb bit or a bit with shanks, only one hand may be used on the reins, and the hand must not be changed. In trail, it is permissible to change hands to work an obstacle. Violation of this rule is an automatic disqualification.
- Equines shown with a hackamore or snaffle bit may be ridden with one or two hands on the reins.
- Trainers will all be required to ride with soft hands; no jerking on the horse's mouth will be permitted. The bit is a tool and should never be used as a weapon.

### **Attire**

- Appropriate attire for the discipline you are showing in is requested for the trail class—this means a collared, long sleeved shirt and hat or helmet for Western disciplines and collared shirt, breeches for English disciplines.
- Helmets will be required for any youth (under age 18) that are competing. Youth appearing in the arena without a helmet will be dismissed from the arena and asked to return with a helmet. Adult competitors are encouraged to wear a helmet by awarding +2 points per event in which they wear a riding helmet.
- All riders/handlers will wear a boot with a heel while showing their horses either under saddle or in hand in all classes. Failure to do so will result in dismissal from the ring and a 0 in that class.

## **Divisions (Definitions and Rules):**

Trainers that wish to train more than one horse may request special consideration via email to the Training Challenge Coordinator. The trainer must be able to provide reasonable evidence of time available to commit to training two horses. A trainer who takes two horses for the purpose of competing with both horses in a Training Challenge may not withdraw from the competition with one horse while remaining in the competition with the other horse. If, however, a veterinarian deems one of a trainer's Training Challenge horses to be lame or otherwise unfit to compete, the trainer may continue with the remaining horse. Both horses will compete in a single trainer category. For example, a professional trainer may not enter one horse in the professional division and the other in the in-hand competition or non pro under saddle division.

### **Training Challenge Divisions:**

- **Professional Division:** Professional is defined as any person who receives money in exchange for horse training services, riding lessons, or clinics. Horses eligible for the Professional Division will be those who have had no previous under-saddle training or those who have behavioral problems. They may have already had groundwork or other in-hand training.
- **Non-Pro Under Saddle:** Non-professional adults and pre-approved youths (14 and over) that are willing to take on a BEHS equine as a foster horse for the length of the Challenge plus 3 additional months afterward (if the equine is not adopted) are eligible to compete in this division. Horses eligible for the Non-Pro Under Saddle Division are those who have had previous training and work under saddle.
- **Non-Pro In-Hand:** Non-professional adults and pre-approved youth (12 and over) exhibitors that are willing to take on a BEHS equine as a foster horse for the length of the Challenge plus 3 additional months afterward (if the equine is not adopted) are eligible to compete in this division. Horses eligible for the Foster In-Hand Division are those who are too young (under 3 years old) for under-saddle work, or have any other issue (such as age or lameness issues) which would make riding inappropriate for that horse.
- **Non-Pro in Hand 12 and Under:** Youths who are under 12 and are supervised by a professional trainer or parent with extensive horse experience who are willing to take on a BEHS equine as a foster horse for the length of the Challenge plus 3 additional months afterward (if the equine is not adopted) are eligible to compete in this division. Horses eligible for the Foster In-Hand Division are those who are too young (under 3 years old) for under-saddle work, or have any other issue (such as age or lameness issues) which would make riding inappropriate for that horse. Competitors in this division be accepted on a case by case basis.

**Eligible horses:** The Bluebonnet Fostering Coordinator and the Challenge Committee will select a pool of eligible horses. BEHS will assign the horse to the applicant. BEHS foster homes may compete with a foster already in their possession as long as no professional trainers have handled the horse in the six months preceding the Challenge Competition (Exceptions will be made if the Foster Home Coordinator sends the horse to a trainer in the preceding six months to assess what the horse knows or to correct dangerous behavioral problems). If you wish to compete with a foster horse already in your possession, note that on your application.

- Participants in the Non-Pro Divisions may attend a maximum of ten training sessions, riding lessons or clinics with a professional trainer during the competition. The Rescue Horse Training Challenge participant should handle or ride the horse for the majority of the time spent in those training sessions, lessons or clinics.
- Participants will be responsible for transporting their Challenge horses after they received their assignments between June 15 and June 30 for the October event and December 1 and January 1 for the May event. BEHS does not provide transport for horses in the challenge. Participants are also responsible for transporting their horse to the challenge event. **We will accept late entries on a case-by-case basis. Those contestants will have less time to work with their horses.**
- **Competitors will NOT be allowed to switch divisions without consideration from the Training Challenge Coordinator.** If a competitor is having issues with their Challenge horse, they are encouraged to notify the Challenge Coordinator as soon as possible so that another horse can be assigned to them or other arrangements can be made. The decision to allow a change of divisions is at the discretion of the Training Challenge Coordinator.

### **Prospective Adopters**

Trainers are allowed first right of refusal (dibs) on their Training Challenge horse if the Adoption Coordinator feels the adoption is in the best interest of the horse up until two weeks before the Challenge.

If the trainer declines to adopt his/her Training Challenge horse, the Adoption Coordinator will make the horse available for adoption at the event. If you know of someone who is interested in adopting your Challenge horse, encourage them to apply to adopt as early as possible. Adoption questions should be directed to [adoption@bluebonnetequine.org](mailto:adoption@bluebonnetequine.org). Adoption arrangements are made with only the best interests of the equine in mind. There is no guaranteed or implied "place in line." The Adoption Coordinator may refuse any adoption for any reason.

Prospective adopters may contact you via Facebook Messenger during your time with your Training Challenge horse. Please do your best to answer their questions in a timely manner.. **The Adoption Coordinator must approve any visits by prospective adopters before the event.** At the event, approved adopters must present their

APPROVED ADOPTER slip (a sample will be in your check-in folder) before being allowed to interact with your horse in anyway. Please make every effort to allow approved adopters to interact with your horse and ride your horse (if applicable) during the day, but you are not required to do so until you are finished competing.

### **Stall Calls**

Trainers should plan on being at their horse's stall during the scheduled Stall Calls. These times are mandatory periods of time in which a trainer makes himself or herself available to the Adoption Coordinator and prospective adopters to answer questions about their horse. Trainers will check in with the Adoption Coordinator for each Stall Call and then report to their horse's stall. Failure to make a Stall Call will result in a 15 point deduction from the final score. 10 points will be deducted for trainers who are late to or leave early from the Stall Call. Please be honest in your assessment of your horse; we do not want our horses placed with an adopter who is not a good fit. Trainers are encouraged, but not required, to allow prospective adopters to ride the Challenge horse. Trainers are asked to facilitate prospective adopters riding the horse once the trainers are through competing for the day.

## Classes (Definitions and Rules):

**\*\*Scorecards and a list of possible obstacle challenges will be published online and emailed to our competitors one month prior to the competition. Trail maps may, at the discretion of the Training Challenge Coordinator, be published just prior to the competition. Allowing trainers to practice on the obstacles the day before a competition is a decision that will be made by the Training Challenge Coordinator. Some categories of trainers may be refused access to the practice course.**

- **Body Conditioning Class:** Animals will be judged for weight based on the Henneke body score system, coat condition, grooming, hoof condition and overall appearance. Equines are NOT in any way to be judged based on conformation or presence of previously incurred scars or injuries. Body conditioning may be judged while the horses are in stalls.
- **Basic Skills Test: The goal of this test is to show case the ability of the BEHS horse to perform basic skills to the public.** Each horse/trainer combination will be judged for their ability to perform everyday skills. The skills tested will consist of basic skills such as: picking up all 4 feet, standing for fly spray, blanketing and loading in a trailer.
- **Trail Class: The goal of this class is to show case the ability of the BEHS horse to the public.** Horse and handler/rider teams will be given 4 minutes to complete a course that will include a minimum of 7 and a maximum of 9 obstacles. The obstacles will be selected from the following list: tarp, serpentine cones, hanging vines, balloon arch, jump (no more than 18"), bridge, back-through, 360 degree turn in a box, mystery obstacle, water obstacle, log drag, trot-/lope-overs, raised cavaletti, mailbox, gate, trailer-loading, pool noodles. Teams will be given three attempts on each obstacle. If the horse and rider or handler do not successfully compete the obstacle within three tries, they will receive a score of zero for that obstacle. Some points may be awarded for any horse under saddle who dismounts and walks their horse through any obstacle. Teams will be judged on completion of obstacles, completion of course in correct order, transitions, willingness and calmness of the horse. Trainers will scratch if they do not navigate the obstacles in the correct order and/or enter and exit the obstacles in the correct places. The Pro Division trail course requirements will be different from the other divisions.
- **Freestyle Class:** The freestyle presentation is an opportunity for the trainer/foster home to showcase the horse's abilities, training level and aptitude. Each team will have 4 minutes to perform their freestyle routine plus 2 minutes to set up any props and 2 minutes to tear down their props. The use of music and/or costumes is strongly encouraged during the freestyle. If a trainer chooses to use music, the music selection must be commercially available (Amazon, etc) or the trainer must email an .mp3 of the song to the Training Challenge Coordinator. All music selections must be sent to the Training Challenge Coordinator no later than 14 days prior to the event. After that time, the Training Challenge Coordinator will choose a music selection for the trainer. No trainer will be permitted to supply their own music the day of the event **WITHOUT EXCEPTION**. Skills the judges are looking for during the freestyle presentation: For horses under saddle, ability to walk, trot, canter, stop, and back with a rider. For horses in

hand, ability to walk, trot, stop and back in hand without being pulled/tugged or encouraged using a whip/stick. For ridden horses, the ability to pick up a lope/canter on the correct lead in both directions, smooth gait transitions, and seeing that the horse is balanced and relaxed. The judges are also looking to see that the handler demonstrates "softness" with the equine as well as positive training and positive reinforcements are used instead of harsh corrections. In-hand horses may be shown with a saddle but trainers may not stand in a stirrup, mount the horse in any fashion, or have the horse bear any of the trainer's weight in any fashion; to do so will result in an automatic disqualification in the Freestyle class and no points will be awarded. Rather than deduct points for a performance going over the given time, the contestants music will be turned off at the 4 minute mark so they can begin tear-down. **TOTAL SCORES will be a combination of scores in the compulsory classes of Body Conditioning, Basic Skills, Trail and Freestyle, Facebook score, helmet score, and points received for turning in evaluations, submission of your Training Summary Report, horse difficulty score, and notifying the Coordinator when you pick up your Training Challenge horse.**

**Body Conditioning 15 pts**

**Basic Skills 20 pts**

**Freestyle 85 pts**

**Trail 85 pts**

**Facebook Posts (up to) 25 pts**

**Helmet (up to) 4 pts**

**Evaluation (- 10 if not submitted/-2 if late)**

**Training Summary Form (-10 if not submitted/ -5 if late)**

**Pick Up Notification (-10 if TC Coordinator not notified)**

**Horse Difficulty (up to) 10 pts (0 points awarded if not submitted)**

#### **Social Media Information:**

- Since one of the goals of the Training Challenge is to help horses get adopted, and in an effort to help find horses homes we have added a horse promotion portion to the Training Challenge. Additional points will be added to each score for promoting the horse on Facebook. **The Training Challenge Coordinator or Training Challenge volunteer will create your page for you.** Post only information that you KNOW is true about your horse. If you THINK your horse has a medical condition, contact Denise to get approval for veterinary care; avoid posting what you THINK COULD be wrong with the horse. Once a medical issue is confirmed by a veterinarian), you are free to post that information on the Facebook page. If you post erroneous information or hyperbole, your page may be edited by the Training Challenge Coordinator. If you persist in posting erroneous information, your page will be removed and you may be removed from the Training Challenge. Deleting any information posted by the Training Challenge Coordinator, the Executive Director, the Adoption Coordinator, the Fostering Coordinator, or any volunteer designated by the Training Challenge Coordinator is prohibited and will result in your dismissal from the Training Challenge. Posting fundraisers or promoting another rescue or non-profit organization is prohibited and will result in your dismissal from the Training Challenge.

1 point – Posting a profile picture that includes the horse and trainer on the Facebook page.

7 points – 1-2 original updates and/or original photos or videos of the horse **per month** (memes, shares of other people's posts, etc. do not count)

15 points – 3-5 original updates and/or original photos or videos of the horse **per month** (memes, shares of other people's posts, etc. do not count)

25 points – 6+ original updates and/or original photos or videos of the horse **per month** (memes, shares of other people's posts, etc. do not count)

- All participants must be either professional trainers or current members of Bluebonnet Equine Humane Society in good standing.
- Foster horses may not be handled/ trained by any other individual or trainer from the time trainers pick up their horses until the competition. An exception may be made by the Foster Home Coordinator and Training Challenge Coordinator if the horse is exhibiting dangerous behavior.

### **Additional Information:**

- Competitors will be responsible for the cost of feeding their horse, shavings/bedding, and farrier work during the Challenge and the foster period after the Challenge. To help with that cost, Foster homes will receive a \$60 stipend each month, payable to Foster quarterly. Bluebonnet Equine Humane Society will reimburse \$50 of every farrier visit, 100% of paste de-wormers, 100% pre-approved veterinary care, and 100% of pre-approved corrective farrier work and medications. In order to receive your stipend, you **MUST** bring your horse to the Training Challenge event. Failure to do so will result in the forfeiture of your stipend.
- Competitors are responsible for pickup of their Challenge equine and for transporting it to the Expo. No travel reimbursements will be made by BEHS.
- A foster home may pay a professional trainer for part or all training fees associated with preparing a foster horse to compete in the Professional Division. The professional trainer must show the horse (foster homes will not be allowed to show in the Professional Division). Foster homes are encouraged to discuss making these arrangements with the Challenge Coordinator. The Professional trainer must apply to compete in the Challenge.
- **Sponsors:** Participants may recruit individuals and businesses to sponsor their horse in the Challenge. Sponsors may help cover the cost of feeding the horse, gift equipment, gift services, etc. Sponsorships made directly to the trainer or foster home are not tax-deductible, but trainers/foster homes may promote sponsors on their Challenge Facebook page, in signage on their stall, etc. If the trainer or foster home provides the name of the sponsor to the rescue ([jenn@bluebonnethorseexpo.com](mailto:jenn@bluebonnethorseexpo.com)), the sponsor's name will also be listed on the horse's Bluebonnet webpage.
- **Open to all Texas residents and surrounding states**