



## **2023 *EXTREME* MULE TRAINING CHALLENGE RULE BOOK**

**The Lost Meadows Mule Refuge Training Challenge** is a competition in which 5 Contestants work with a Lost Meadows Mule Refuge Mule for five months (starting on May 1st and concluding on October 1st).

### **Lost Meadows Mule Refuge Training Challenge Mission Statement**

To show the public that rescued Mules can be safe, friendly and fun equine partners, to provide training and adoption opportunities for LMMR rescued Mules, and a competitive experience for Contestants to display their training abilities.

### **Challenge Prerequisites**

2023 will be a TEXAS ONLY Training Challenge. The Challenge is open to any individual over the age of 18.

Individuals are required to pass a criminal background check, provide references, pictures of their property, and examples of their equine-related experience.

Previous Challenge Trainers and winners from 2022 may reapply with the same application.

### **Dates and Deadlines**

Applications may be submitted as early as March 1st and the deadline to apply is March 30th.

5 individuals will be selected by the Challenge Manager by March 31st.

Mules can be picked up or will be delivered no earlier than April 1st and no later than April 30th. This is a “first come, first serve” basis.

The Challenge starts on May 1st and ends on October 1st.

Judging will conclude no later than October 15th.

### **Delivery and Pickup**

Mules can be either picked up by their Contestants, with gas expenses reimbursed (MUST PROVIDE RECEIPTS) or delivered within 250 miles of San Angelo, Texas, free of charge. If the Mule is delivered, the Challenge Manager will determine the Mule for the Contestant. If the Contestant picks up their Mule, they may choose their training Mule from a group of Mules approved by the Challenge Manager.

### **Care and Expenses**

For this particular challenge, Mules will be anywhere from 44-60" at the withers and be between the ages of 4 and 12. FOR THIS PARTICULAR CHALLENGE, SOME OF THESE MULES MAY HAVE "FAILED" IN OUR TRAINING PROGRAM.

All LMMR Mules will come with a current Coggins, CoreVax (includes rabies and tetanus), a dewormer within the last 6 months, a dental within the last 12 months, and trimmed feet.

The Mule picked or assigned to each Contestant is their only eligible Mule for the current Challenge year. There will be no swapping unless their Challenge Mule unexpectedly dies or is injured and no evidence of abuse or neglect is suspected.

Contestants must supply hay and farrier care. Since LMMR is a 501(c)(3) organization, expenses may be tax-deductible. To help with these expenses, LMMR will provide a stipend of \$100 per month, via check, per Mule. This stipend will be mailed on the 1st of each month.

LMMR reimburses \$50 of each farrier visit and 100% of pre-approved veterinary care. Contestants must use the vet listed on their application and get pre-approval from LMMR for all veterinary work. Requests can be submitted to [matti@lmmr.org](mailto:matti@lmmr.org) or by calling (325) 301-2251.

### **Training Additional Mules**

A Challenge Mule must have at least 1 other equine companion on the property. Contestants may request a license for 1 additional Mule for an additional stipend and no prize money. This is so their training Mule may have a companion if the Contestant does not wish to intermingle their personal animals.

### **Standard of Care for a Training Challenge Mule**

Violation of these rules will result in dismissal from the Training Challenge.

Every LMMR Mule shall, at all times, be treated humanely and with dignity and compassion. Training techniques used on LMMR Mules will be humane, least amount of force techniques, keeping in mind the mental and physical well-being of the Mule at all times. Any evidence of failure to do so will result in an investigation and possible disqualification from the Challenge. If Contestants demonstrate any excessively forceful training practices during the Challenge or any other time, the Contestant can be docked points or removed (disqualified) from the competition at the sole discretion of the Challenge Manager.

Use of any stimulant, depressant, tranquilizer or sedative which could affect the performance of an equine (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 an LMMR Mule will result in disqualification from the Challenge.

**For this particular Challenge, mules above 48” at the withers may be saddled, but riding during the Challenge period is strictly prohibited, otherwise their Contestant will be disqualified. Mules below 48” may not be saddled.**

**All decisions regarding violations of these rules shall be in LMMR’s and the Challenge Committee’s sole and absolute discretion.**

### **Bits and Equipment**

No bits, carts or weight on or behind the Mule is allowed in this Challenge. No lariat rope is permitted. Soft cotton rope, natural horsemanship stick and strings or lunge lines and drive lines are allowed.

Striking a Mule during training or any phase of competition is an automatic disqualification and the Contestant will be removed from the training event and any Contestant adoption application approval will be rescinded immediately.

### **Training Criteria and Scoring**

**Body Conditioning** 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.

**Basic Skills Test** The goal of this test is to showcase the ability of the LMMR Mule to perform basic skills to the public. Each Mule/Contestant combination will be

judged for their ability to perform everyday skills. The skills tested are:

1. Catchable with a halter by hand (+20)
2. Able to lead beside the handler on a halter (+20)
3. Be brushed front to back safely (+10)
4. Pick up all of their feet safely and willingly without the use of a cotton rope (+20)
5. Load into a trailer (+20)

**Freestyle** The freestyle presentation is an opportunity for the Contestant to further showcase the Mule's training beyond the basic skills. Permitted skills are:

1. Standing for fly spray (+10)
2. Wearing a fly mask and/or a blanket (+10)
3. Negotiating obstacles OR saddling (if  $\geq 12h$ ) (+10)
4. Taking a hose bath OR standing for electric clippers (+10)
5. Trotting in-hand (+10)

Additional skills not listed will not receive points and Contestants should seek approval from the Challenge Manager before training other skills not listed.

**TOTAL SCORES** will be a combination of scores in Body Conditioning, Basic Skills, and Freestyle.

<b>Body Conditioning</b>	<b>20 pts</b>
<b>Basic Skills</b>	<b>80 pts</b>
<b>Freestyle</b>	<b>50 pts</b>

### **Voting Committee**

3-5 independent judges will review video footage of each training Mule at the end of the Challenge and submit independent scoring for each. The average for each Mule will then be used to determine their placement in the Challenge. Any ties will be discussed amongst the judges to determine final placement. In the case of a tie, subjective judging may be used based on the apparent relaxation and willingness of the Mule, perceivable relationship between the Mule and its trainer, and the quality of training perceived to be provided.

### **Social Media Information**

All pictures and videos should be submitted to the Challenge Manager via text (325) 301-2251, email ([matti@lmmr.org](mailto:matti@lmmr.org)) or Facebook Messenger (Lost Meadows Mule Refuge) and may be posted to the main Lost Meadows Mule Refuge Facebook account

with pre-approved captions from the Contestant. Contestants can submit as many photos and videos as they like, although it is LMMR's sole discretion as to what will be posted and when. **Separate social media pages or any form of public posting for the Challenge is NOT PERMITTED and will result in disqualification from the Challenge. Contestants are allowed to share photos and videos posted by the Lost Meadows Mule Refuge Facebook account to their personal pages.** A final video will be created by the Challenge Manager during a visit to the property on a scheduled date prior to the end of the Challenge in which the Contestant will demonstrate the above Basic and Freestyle skills with their Challenge Mule. This video compilation will then be posted by the Challenge Manager on the Lost Meadows Mule Refuge Facebook page. This video is a requirement in order to finish and receive any points for the Challenge.

### **Anti-Disparagement Clause**

Our nonprofit organization invests considerable money, time and effort into making each Challenge possible. The undersigned Contestant agrees not to make any statement to any third party concerning other Contestants, judges and/or Lost Meadows Mule Refuge or its affiliates which is false, slanderous or defamatory. For purposes of this agreement, the term disparagement includes, without limitation, comments or statements made in any matter or medium, including but not limited to posts and comments made on personal profiles or public groups/pages on social media. **Failure to comply with this clause will result in forfeiture of 100% of prize money and adoption from Lost Meadows Mule Refuge.** If prize money has already been transferred to Contestant, Contestant will refund 100% of prize money to Lost Meadows via a certified check if it is determined by representatives of Lost Meadows Mule Refuge that the Anti-Disparagement Clause has been violated, in perpetuity.

**I, Contestant, agree to adhere to the above Anti-Disparagement Clause.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Attire**

Appropriate attire is required in order for photos and videography to be used by LMMR. Contestants will be required to wear a shirt provided by LMMR, jeans and close toed shoes for the final videography. All other clothing (aside from shoes, including hats) must be without any other type of visible brand, endorsement or verbiage.

### **Prizes**

Prizes will be awarded after judging to each Contestant who can provide video evidence that the Mule is at MINIMUM:

1. Catchable with a halter by hand
2. Able to lead on a halter
3. Be brushed front to back safely
4. Pick up all of their feet safely and willingly without the use of a rope
5. Load into a trailer

IF THE MULE DOES NOT MEET ANY OF THE ABOVE CRITERIA, NO PRIZE WILL BE AWARDED REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCE!

A \$7,000 Grand Prize will be awarded when the winner is determined using a grading system and social media voting. A 2nd place prize of \$3,500 will also be awarded, a 3rd place prize of \$3,000, and a 4th place prize of \$2,500, and \$2,000 to each Contestant thereafter.

Prize money will be awarded via mailed check mailed no later than October 30th, 2023.

### **Adoption**

Contestants are allowed first right of refusal on their Training Challenge Mule if the Challenge Manager feels the adoption is in the best interest of the Mule up until two weeks before the Challenge ends. Contestants will be required to pay the standard adoption fee of \$500 for their Challenge Mule.

If the Contestant declines to adopt his/her Training Challenge Mule, the Challenge Manager will make the Mule available for adoption immediately after the Challenge. Adoption arrangements are made with only the best interests of the Mule in mind. There is no guaranteed or implied "place in line". The Challenge Manager may refuse any adoption for any reason.

I agree that I have read, understood, and will abide by the Lost Meadows Mule Refuge Mule Training Challenge rulebook.

I understand that I must get pre-approval for all veterinary bills and procedures, farrier work, medications, and/or supplements. If I do not receive pre-approval, I understand I will not be reimbursed.

I understand that stipends are paid monthly via check mailed within the first week of each month, and that postal delays may occur but this does not preclude me from rendering care to my Challenge mule. I also understand I will not be reimbursed for travel/mileage/fuel/etc.

I understand that this is a judged competition, and I may not win prize money. Whether or not I win prize money, Lost Meadows Mule Refuge will not pay training fees, boarding fees, or other expenses incurred that are not explicitly listed in the rules of the Training Challenge.

**I, Contestant, agree to adhere to all of the above rules and statements and understand that any violation may result in disqualification from the Challenge.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**LOST MEADOWS MULE REFUGE**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_