

PWV Pack Training Procedures and Requirements

Optional/Certification Process

Purpose:

- 1) To get the maximum usage of our horses, riders, and equipment to benefit the forest and the organization. PWV Packers enable trail and work crews to get deeper into wilderness areas faster, so we can make the most of the short high-country season. (Late June or early July into October weather permitting)
- 2) To create exciting and productive jobs for our riders.
- 3) Ensure proper training to safely carry out these duties and limit risk to riders and stock. We must limit risk through proper training and demonstration of these abilities before being allowed to pack in as a pack leader. Members must be able to demonstrate the skills that will be outlined here. PWV new recruits will not be allowed to pack the first year. Although they may be able to assist a Pack leader if their skill level allows. If a new member has prior packing experience, they can be approved by the committee chairs to proceed without additional training. We would like to be able to review the first-year patrols. We don't want to see 8 patrols in the Pawnee grassland by a new recruit who wants to pack in the Rawahs. We would like to see patrols logged on the Rawah trails or similar trails for more than 6 miles or so, one way.
- 4) Most of the packer training will be done at the Stub Creek Ranger Station except for any local day clinics and the required springtime equipment check and annual refresher. We will do an optional winter refresher as well. New recruits and non-members are welcome to attend any of these. You must also do **mandatory** Llama encounter.
- 5) Member "ability demonstration" (certification) will likely be done at Stub Creek Ranger Station as well, which includes night riding, camping with horses highlined and hobbled, most likely in the east pasture. These demonstrations must be witnessed by a current PWV member, not

necessarily a stock member. After a member's first year, they will have likely built some friendships and may have someone they know accompany them.

Pack Crew Duties

Pack crews will assist trail crews by packing in their personal and overnight camp equipment, thereby maximizing the trail crews' usage of time and energy for trail clearing and or maintenance. **EXAMPLE:** The Pack Leader will communicate with the trail crew as to how he or she wants them to pack their equipment. We will likely ask them to use airline "carry on" sized bags and ask them to pack them as evenly weighted as possible, and to leave their back packs empty. The better the equipment is packed the easier it is for the packers to load and minimizes the need to go thru other people's bags to make adjustments. Their empty backpacks make for a light easy top load. The other bags, ("carry on's") and anything else they would like us to take back, we will take back to the designated vehicle at the trailhead. Pack crews will also assist other work crews as needed in similar fashion.

Required Rider Equipment

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION DEVICE Two way; By at least 2 members. In case you are separated for any reason, or one fails. Prepare for the worst, hope for the best!

Rain slicker; that covers **your entire saddle and your legs**. Stored behind your saddle in a cante bag. Rain "jackets" are not acceptable. If your saddle, butt, underwear, and legs are wet you can become hypothermic and a liability to yourself and everyone else, including the trail crew who is depending on you for their camp equipment.

A Powerful headlamp. Even if you are not planning on riding in the dark, you can easily run into delays. You must be prepared to ride in the dark on every trip. You cannot rush pack horses or you increase the chance of an accident.

Emergency blanket; and at least a basic first aid kit for humans and stock.

Saw; even though the trail crew just cleared the trail there is a possibility of a downfall you cannot go around or over. If you don't have a saw the trail crew is stranded.

Silka Saws are great. We suggest a 16-inch blade minimum. You can also get a saddle saw locally at Latigo Lariat.

Saddle bags; of any kind to carry your own personal items.

Grazing hobbles; while unpacking crew equipment it allows the unpacked horses to graze and obviously for longer stays.

Feed bag; you must have your own.

You and your horse should have a decent amount of mountain riding experience. On your first pack trip, if you and your horse are on a familiar trail you will both be more comfortable. RIDE THE RAWAH'S! Also, you must be able to control your horse at all times, with one hand. One thing that people often overlook is that, even if they ride alone and with a group they have never had to separate from the "Herd". Unfortunately, they may find out they will have a difficult time controlling their own horse even with two hands. Practice it!

Recommended Equipment

Spurs; While many horses were not trained with spurs, if you know how to use them and your horse responds well with them, we would suggest them. Spurs enable you to get a fast response from your horse. If you need your horse to move immediately to avoid a wreck, spurs might make all the difference.

Steel shoes; you cannot ride your horse in the mountains without shoes. If you prefer a hoof boot on your riding horse, it should be tried and true. Packers have a lot to focus on. If you lose a boot you probably won't notice it right away. Now, you must stop and look for it and if you can't find it you have compromised not only a horse but the entire team. A horse without a shoe is a big, big problem. If you use boots on your riding horse, you need to have at least one spare.

Packers Scale; Some people may not be comfortable estimating weight. Your panniers must not vary more than 4 pounds. A packer's scale may make things easier. The more even your load is the better it will ride. Locally, Latigo Lariat carries them.

Horse Requirements

Your horse must have as much rough, mountain trail experience as possible.

SUGGESTION: North Fork, and Cruiser Rainbow to Glen Haven loop is a great spring warm up. I would do Cruiser Rainbow **last** unless you're ok with walking a bit. It is a steep, long uphill. If your horse can do that trail, with you riding the whole time, by the end of June, your horse is ready for any trail in the Rawah. Your patrol reports should log a lot of miles in individual patrols. **EXAMPLE:** If you needed to pack into the Medicine Bow trail and back out in the same day, that's about 18 to 20 miles round trip. Your two options are, to stay the night and camp or ride back, partially in the dark. The trail crews need a 4-to-5-hour head start to clear the trail. Packers won't be leaving until 11:00 or 12:00. So, you won't be back to the trail head until after 10:00PM.

Your horse must be able to hobble and/or highline all night long. This can be practiced anytime at Stub Creek. We will also have pack clinics. Dates to be determined.

Your horse must be able to cross water. Streams, large, small, and fast moving without hesitation.

Your horse must be able to be mounted on BOTH sides. There will be many times you will not be able to mount on the downhill (if that's on the left) side and you will have to mount on the right. Practice it often!

All pack horses must have steel shoes. No hoof boots of any kind! You not be able to keep an eye on all horses' feet.

Rider Requirements for Packer Certification

- 1) You must assist a certified packer on at least one trip.
- 2) Along with everything above, you must demonstrate the ability to tie these essential knots and hitches you will commonly use while packing. If you

cannot tie them, then you can only assist a packer until you can. **Bowline, Half Hitch, Sheet Bend, Barrel Hitch, Basket hitch, Box Hitch, Diamond and Double Diamond hitches.** These are the most commonly used, and, while not complicated, require practice.

- 3) You must spend one night in a back country camp with your horses and ride at night. And a PWV member must witness it. This can be done in the east pasture at Stub Creek or any other place you want.
- 4) Read the “**Job Hazard Analysis for Stock**” on the PWV website. Enter your log in information as usual, in the dropdown list (under member logout) you will see “Member Downloads” click that and the 4th one down is the information.
- 5) Read the “Back Country Horsemen Guidebook.” This is a handy booklet we will give you. It has the essentials you need to know BEFORE you become a packer.
- 6) Your patrols to date must reflect the type of riding you will be doing on these pack trips. Patrols will be reviewed by committee chairs.
- 7) You must have completed a llama encounter! A photograph of your horse next to a Llama will do. Many times we will have a Llama at the stock evaluation. That should be noted on the report.

Handouts and useful links

Outfitterssupply.com check out their “trail tips” for a lot of useful information.

YouTube also has some great videos on setting up a pack saddle, fitting a pack saddle and much more.

Trailmeister.com Knot tying videos and more

Trailhead Supply.com More great videos