



PFHA Trail Horse Test

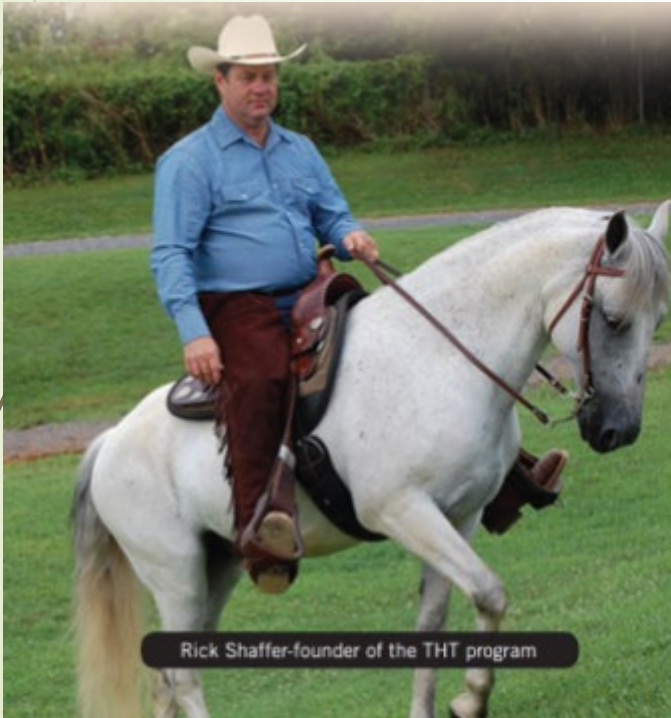
Defining the Program, Levels, and Testimonials



What is the PFHA Trail Horse Test?

- The PFHA Trail Horse Test (THT) is designed to evaluate and recognize trail horses based on specific skill sets.
- It includes ground handling, trail riding, and various obstacles to assess the horse's training, willingness, and ability.

Levels of the Trail Horse Test




1. Novice Level: Basic skills and introduction to trail riding.

2. Junior Level: Intermediate level with additional challenges.

3. Senior Level: Advanced skills and performance.

4. Master Level: Highest level requiring two judges or video review.



Testimonial from Susan Crawford

(Mason Dixon)

- ▶ The clinics have attracted various horse breeds, not just Paso Finos, which she believes broadens exposure to the Paso breed and increases participation.
- ▶ Rick Shaffer has been the primary judge for most clinics and does an excellent job showcasing the value of a well-trained trail horse.
- ▶ While the program is popular and impactful—boosting both rider and horse confidence—it is logistically demanding. Hosting a clinic requires an arena, trail access, obstacles, and involves extensive scoring, limiting the number of participants. The program includes three levels, but there's demand for more frequent clinics to allow participants to progress.



Testimonial from Susan Crawford


(Mason Dixon)

- ▶ A specific challenge was encountered during a Master Level test, which requires either two judges or video recordings of each step. Hiring two judges is financially difficult, and videotaping every step was cumbersome and time-consuming. Susan suggests simplifying the process by reducing the video requirement to only critical steps.
- ▶ Something to keep in mind are administrative tasks, such as paperwork submission to PFHA, can be considerable, especially with non-PFHA members.
- ▶ Despite the logistical challenges, she finds the clinic worthwhile due to the enthusiasm and positive outcomes for participants.

Testimonial from Misty Amsbaugh (Georgia)

- ▶ Participating in the multi-day Trail Horse Test Clinic. The extended format allowed sufficient time to cover a comprehensive list of skills and offer individualized support where needed.
- ▶ Had an opportunity to showcase Paso Finos' unique skills, which are valuable for recreational riders, and found it beneficial that skill mastery is officially recognized and attached to the horse, offering prospective owners a clear understanding of the horse's abilities.
- ▶ Social benefits of the clinic, emphasizing how it helped her form new friendships and strengthen the Georgia PFHA region through shared experiences.





Testimonial from Misty Amsbaugh (Georgia)

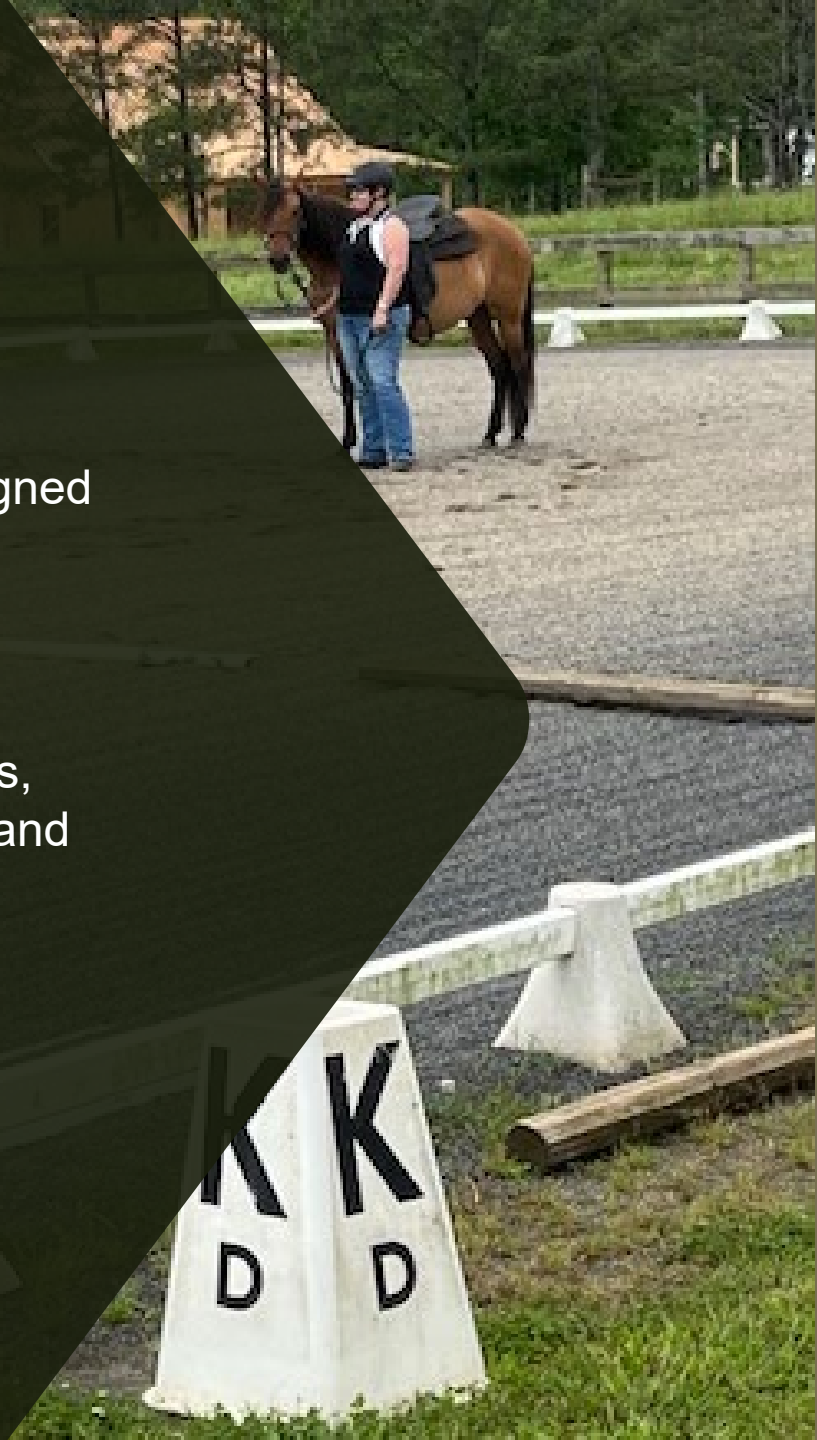
Possible areas of improvements for future clinics:

- ❖ include preparation for first-time participants; ensuring they are aware of the required skills beforehand.
- ❖ host a “play day” for members to practice together before the clinic.
- ❖ offer instructional videos on specific obstacles and skills, in areas like lunging, turning, and sidepassing.

**(Note: Videos demonstrating desired THT skills provided by Rick Schaffer and Virginia Foster, are available on the Trail Horse Test page on Facebook.)*

Testimonial from Kiki Praser (Georgia)

- ▶ The Trail Horse Test Program is a well-designed and logical method for evaluating a horse's willingness and training as a trail partner.
- ▶ The program assesses a wide range of skills, including groundwork, trailering, grooming, and riding, providing a thorough evaluation of a horse's training and character.



Testimonial from Kiki Praser (Georgia)

- ▶ THT has the real-world nature of the test, as it takes place on actual trails, which has been helpful due to her show ring anxiety.
- ▶ Having participated with two of her mares, she commended the clinicians and judges for their excellence.
- ▶ The program has the ability to promote the versatility of the Paso Fino breed as it is open to other breeds, which helps showcase Paso Finos' abilities in comparison to other horses.




Testimonial from Lu Ann Lackey (Georgia)

The Trail Horse Test Program has a positive impact on our association, its members, and the horses.

Started as a novice rider with a dream of confidently trail riding her Paso Fino. Inspired by auditing a THT event, she persisted with practice and guidance from the program judges and marshals. Over time, she and her mare earned Junior, Senior, and Master levels, which gave her the confidence to pursue trail riding adventures and even compete in regional shows, ultimately winning the National Champion Amateur Trail title.





Testimonial from Lu Ann Lackey (Georgia)

- ❖ At 66 years old, Lu Ann's accomplishment with her 18-year-old mare demonstrated the program's accessibility and transformative power.
- ❖ She has since coordinated four THT events in the Georgia Region, where demand remains high. Now serving as the THT point of contact on the PFHA National Recreational Rider Committee, she finds joy in helping others achieve their trail riding dreams.

Testimonial from Judi Bradbury

(Great Western)

Their Trail Horse Test event held this past July had participants from:

- Idaho
- Oregon
- Montana

- ✓ 2 achieved Novice level,
- ✓ 7 earned Junior level
- ✓ 4 reached Senior level.

Testimonial from Judi Bradbury (Great Western)



Attendees highlighted that the clinic was informative, enjoyable, and non-competitive.

Suggestions for hosts include:

- ❖ limiting the time or number of attempts for obstacles
- ❖ providing clear task instructions
- ❖ adding another day for practice
- ❖ including more obstacles
- ❖ Clearly explain the scoring process

Testimonial from Montana Davidson (Mid America)

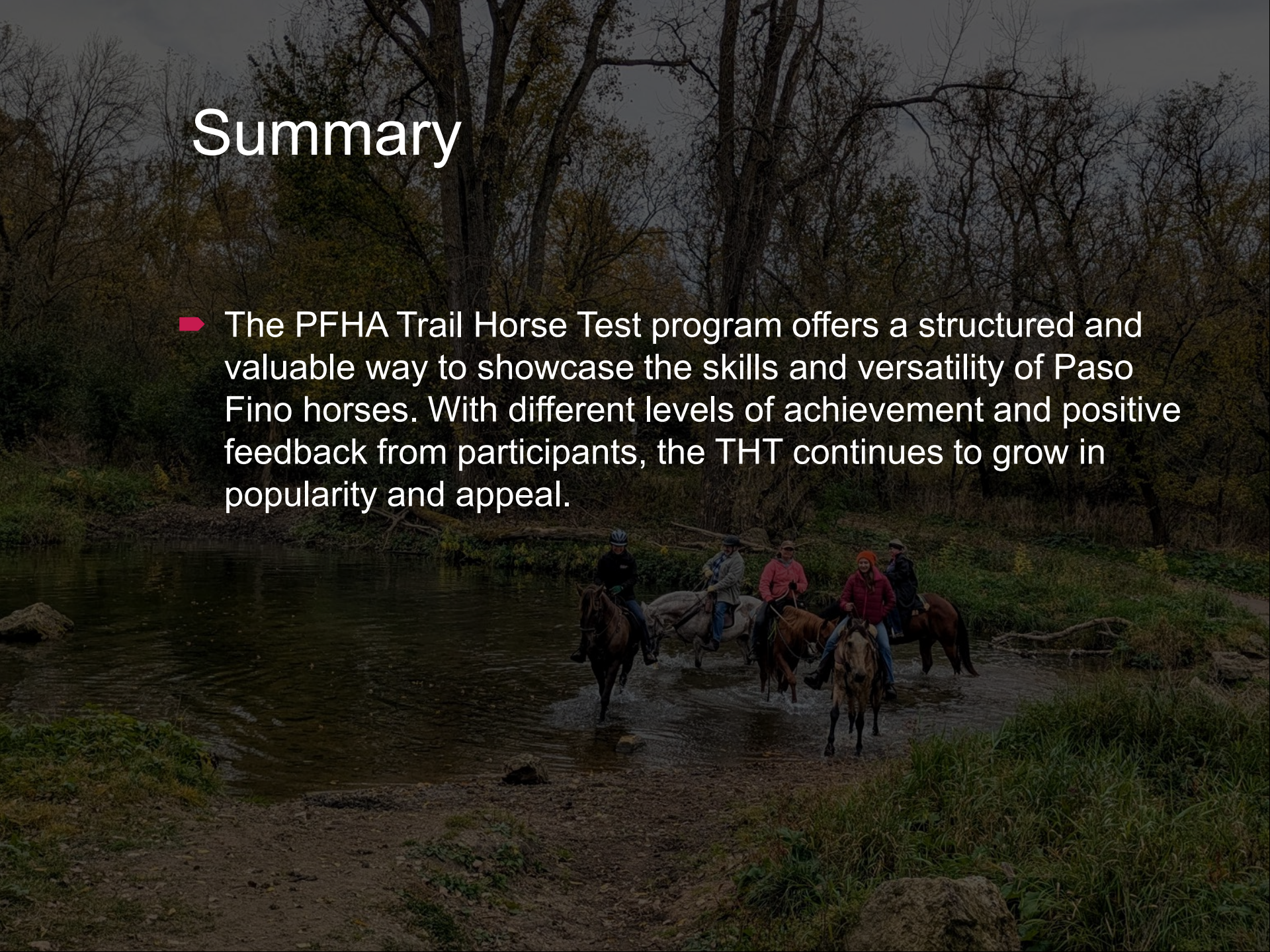
- Is both an event planner and participant for the MAPFHA Trail Horse Test (THT)
- Praised the THT for providing recreational regions with an opportunity to participate in a sanctioned event.
- Hosts need to keep in mind the possible financial burden of judge travel expenses, which may limit the frequency of such events.





Summary

- ▶ The PFHA Trail Horse Test program offers a structured and valuable way to showcase the skills and versatility of Paso Fino horses. With different levels of achievement and positive feedback from participants, the THT continues to grow in popularity and appeal.



For more information

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Trail Horse Test Program

The Paso Fino Horse Association introduced the Trail Horse Test Program (THTP) which provides a way to demonstrate the horse's ability to perform trail riding skills based upon a series of tests that gauges the horse's natural ability and training against a standard of performance. This is not a competitive trail riding obstacle course, but a gauge of your horse's abilities to complete the tasks normally performed before, during and after a trail ride.



Objectives:

Highlight the pleasure of a trained and responsive trail horse.

Set non-competitive goals for the horse in an effort to improve both horse and rider.

Resources

- [Brochure](#)
- [Trail Horse Test Presentation](#)
- [Rules](#)
- [Overview of Tests](#)
- [Judge's Score Card](#)
- [PFHA THT Results Report](#)

Trail Horse Test Experience

- Encouraging/program selling point: It is a PFHA developed event, therefore name recognition
- Mid America is a small Region but the program such as this allowed us to conduct an actual PFHA program
- Judge: Paul Marlowe, everyone enjoyed Paul. Very attentive and interactive with everyone.
- Attendees: Test participants and auditors
- 2 Paso's, all others were multiple breeds, various rider ages and experiences
- Attendees: All Test Entries interested in testing at the Junior level
- Curriculum: Test elements can expand in difficulty with test level therefore test elements were the same for all participants.
- Everyone had fun, test preparation, test day and social activity.
- Participants were offered breakfast, lunch and pot-luck dinners
- Weatherman fully cooperated, comfortable temperatures and sunny days,
- Financially unsuccessful. Costs for out-of-town judge was the major factor

2025 Program

- 2-day Clinic only, No testing. The intention is to give participants more experience about the process and time to practice prior to taking the program
- Considering offering the Trail Horse Test in 2026