

## ACTIVITY STANDARDS FOR

### HORSE AND MULE USE

To establish Servicewide activity standards for horse and mule operations in the National Park Service.

#### GENERAL

These standards will be considered satisfactory when a program of horse and mule use has been implemented to provide all appropriate activities that can be accommodated without impairment to the resources of the area, and to provide for safe and efficient operation.

Selection of a horse for saddle or pack will be satisfactory when:

1. 15 hands, 3 inches, or taller, and 1,000 to 1,250 lbs., in weight.
2. 3 to 7 years of age.
3. No abnormal deviation in the structure or function of the horse is accepted. The horse must pass a veterinary examination for certification of soundness, general health and age. The horse will be well balanced, muscular, have good stamina, good carriage, a straight, well-muscled back, and good feet.
4. Quality is given first consideration over color and breed.
5. Gentle, free of vicious habits such as biting, kicking or striking. Will not object to harnessing, saddling or grooming, will not balk, rear, shy, or be hard to catch when turned out.
6. Primarily geldings.
7. Can be ridden with a bridle and saddle at a walk, trot, and canter. Horse must allow all feet to be handled in an easy manner.
8. A contract stipulates a minimum of a 30-day trial period.

Training of saddle horses will be satisfactory when:

1. Horse responds to the slightest touch of the rein with the slightest indications and immediately responds with lightness and exactness.

2. He remembers or recognizes the indications given him by the reward or punishment resulting from a particular response. The horse is calm, forward moving, light and manageable.
3. He is capable of the following unnatural movements.
  - a. neck rein
  - b. side step
  - c. pass
  - d. back
  - e. stand
  - f. performs predictably in his assigned environment.
4. Developed to his full capabilities.
5. A periodic evaluation of the abilities of the animal is made, and if necessary, proper retraining is accomplished.

Selection of a mule for saddle or pack will be satisfactory when:

1. 14 hands, 2 inches, to 15 hands, 3 inches.  
950 to 1,150 lbs., in weight.
2. 3 to 7 years of age.
3. Quality is given first consideration over color and breed.
4. Gentle and calm when haltered, tied or led.
5. Either sex.
6. The mule is well muscled, with medium to long type muscles allowing a good, easy walk and trot. Withers are medium to prominent, back is short, with good strong loin connecting back to hindquarters. Hindquarters deep, wide and with smooth muscling. Legs straight as possible, well set under the mule with good, heavy, dense bone and strong, clean joints. Typical mule foot with wide heels and no problem of contraction. No cracks, splits or punctures of the hoof.
7. Green broke.
8. A contract stipulates a minimum of a 30-day trial.

Training of the mule for saddle or pack will be satisfactory when:

1. Can be led from foot, horse, or in a string.
2. Can carry bulky, odd shaped or heavy pack calmly.
3. Performs predictably in his assigned environment.
4. Accepts rider, bit and saddle when used as saddle mount.
5. Developed to his full capabilities.
6. A periodic evaluation of the abilities of the animal is made, and if necessary, proper retraining is accomplished.

Selection of a horse or mule for harness will be satisfactory when:

1. Activity dictates the animals size.
2. 3 to 7 years of age.
3. Quality is given first consideration over color and breed.
4. Gentle and calm when haltered, tied or led.
5. Primarily geldings.
6. Broke to harness, hitch and drive.
7. A contract stipulates a minimum of a 30-day trial.

Training of a mule or horse for harness use will be satisfactory when:

1. Can be driven
2. Will work in shafts
3. Will back
4. Will stand quietly
5. Will work singly or as a team
6. Will perform predictably in his assigned environment.
7. Developed to his full capabilities.
8. Animal understands the user's intentions from the slightest indications and immediately responds with lightness and exactness. He must be sensitive to the user's lightness of hand and other aids.

9. A periodic evaluation of the abilities of the animal is made, and if necessary, proper retraining is accomplished.

Personnel assigned to horse and mule duties will be satisfactory when they:

1. Have successfully completed the prescribed NPS training.
2. Know correct description and have thorough knowledge of the intended use and care of tack and equipment.
3. Can properly and professionally handle horses and/or mules in any given situation.
4. Can identify and provide basic first aid for illness or injury.
5. Know proper feeding techniques and stable management.
6. Are able to sit a horse at the walk, trot and canter.
7. Can execute figure eights and stop at all gaits.
8. Know grooming procedures and care of the feet.
9. Are able to tack horses or mules with all issued equipment.
10. Are able to properly prepare, load and transport horse.
11. Have the ability to handle more than one horse in a given situation.
12. Know trail courtesy and safety.
13. Know care of mounts and tack on extended or overnight patrols.
14. Know basic packing procedures.
15. Know basic equine anatomy.

NOTE: Applicants will be selected on past performance, experience, health, attitude and basic knowledge of horses and/or mules.

Users of horses and mules who will be involved with search and rescue, protection and law enforcement, crowd control, living history demonstrations or other specialized fields must receive advanced training.

Tack and equipment will be satisfactory and serviceable when:

1. Uniform with Service requirements for the intended use.
2. Safe, and in good repair for its intended use.

Facilities will be satisfactory and serviceable when:

1. Design has insured adequate space for storage of hay, grain, tack, equipment and other essentials, i.e., water supply, proper stall space, etc.
2. Adequate drainage, ventilation and lighting is provided.
3. All construction, reconstruction and restoration plans and specifications are reviewed for conformance with applicable fire and safety requirements of nationally recognized codes and standards.
4. An approved Stable Management plan has been formulated.
5. Each individual unit which has horse and/or mule operations has a Service employee with assigned responsibility for care and use.
6. They are neat, clean, and free of debris, exposed surfaces are sound and properly furnished, and all electrical, mechanical and safety equipment is properly serviced.

Occasional users will be satisfactory when:

1. They are authorized by the Superintendent or his designated representative.
2. They demonstrate confidence and ability to handle their horse or mule in a proficient and safe manner.

Safety of the visitor, employees and animals will be satisfactory when:

1. Safety inspections and programs are implemented.
2. Documented emergency and fire plans are known and have been incorporated into the areas' "documented safety programs."