

Mounted Team Member Qualifications, Testing, Requirements and Expectations

Welcome to NCSSAR! Thank you for your interest in the Mounted Team. The following is an introduction, with information about what we do, how we train, and what is needed to join our Team. Please let us know if you have any questions.

General Information:

Team meetings are held prior to the regular SAR general meetings, on the first Monday of the month, at 5:00 pm. The location (usually at a local restaurant) is sent out via email, a few days prior to the meeting. All SAR members are welcome at our Mounted Team Meetings. Before you and your horse can participate in Mounted Team training or testing, you must be certified as 'Mission Ready', and pass a brief evaluation trail ride with at least one of the team leaders (for basic safety).

Obstacle training is generally held at a local arena, during the second week of the month. (The day of the week and time is usually set in the Spring, taking into consideration what works best for the most members.) Typical training time is 1-2 hours. (Uniforms are not required.)

Field training is held at various locations, generally within Nevada County, during the last week of the month. (Again, the day of the week is set in the Spring each year.) You should be equipped with basic gear (including first aid kit) and always with your GPS (calibrated and with good batteries). Typical rides can last from 2-4 hours or more.

All training times are 'Ready to Ride'. You should plan to be able to attend a minimum of 50% of team meetings, obstacle training, and field training dates.

To become a qualified and deployable Mounted Team searcher, you and your horse must pass an Obstacle Test and a Field Test for skills and safety. You must also have completed 4-6 'ground pounder' searches, with at least one subject search, (the NCSSAR Coordinator will determine when the Mounted Team member has met the search requirement and is considered ready to be deployed as a Mounted Team Searcher.)

Once a horse has been fully qualified, you will be provided with a SAR bridle/halter combination set, and a breast collar to use during searches and training (these items remain the property of NCSSAR and must be returned when a member leaves the Mounted Team). NCSSAR will also reimburse you for a qualified horse's routine veterinary expenses, up to \$150 per year.

Mounted Teams will only be deployed when a minimum of two horse/rider teams are available to respond. On a mutual aid search, one horse/rider team could respond to join other Mounted SAR Teams.

The **Obstacles Test** will evaluate skills in an arena environment (evaluation form attached). This is a pass/fail test. A team that doesn't pass the first time, can retest after after 30 days. A rider that has not yet met the minimum requirement of 4-6 ground searches can participate in the obstacle testing. The Obstacle Skills Test is required every two years, or to qualify a new horse.

The **Field Test** will evaluate the horse and riders ability to actively search in a variety of terrains at altitudes under 7000'. The team should demonstrate the ability to complete a five (5) hour ride in rugged conditions, in heat, cold, moderate/heavy ground cover, with no or infrequent breaks (i.e. Loney Meadow, Grouse Ridge).

The Field Test will be a minimum of two (2) hours, with at least one Mounted Team Leader, and at least one additional, qualified, mounted team member and horse. A team is eligible for the Field Test after the member has completed the required ground pounder searches and has successfully passed the Obstacles Test. As long as a Mounted Team member has met the 50% participation requirement for obstacle and field trainings per year, the Field Test will only be required during the initial qualification phase, or when a rider changes horses.

Additional info:

Your horse should be able to safely cross slow to moderately moving water, and not react dangerously to moving vehicles. The team member must be capable of searching for one 12-hour operational period with self support, Refer to the NCSSAR Mounted Team Guidelines for a complete list (on the NCSSAR Yahoo Groups page: 'files' 'Mounted Team'). For all teams, the Environment is Type 2, with a minimum requirement of Type 3 Capabilities and Skills for Mounted Teams.

You are expected to have the required equipment and supplies in your saddle/cantle bags and trailer (refer to the Mounted Team Pack List). You should be prepared to keep your horse fit and maintain necessary skills through individual practice.

Desired, but not required, skills for you and your horse: Drag a heavy object, accept a strange rider or injured subject (potentially unskilled and off balance) while being lead by the Team Member, and transport a willing K-9 Search Dog as a 'rider'.

Horses that kick, rear, bite, or show aggressive behavior are not suitable for Mounted Team work. Riders must demonstrate control of the horse at all times. The horse must be sound and in good health, as well as, be calm and steady.