



**MASSACHUSETTS FAIRS ASSOCIATION  
Rules Governing "Pulling Contests"**

Approved by

**Mass. Department of Agricultural Resources  
Bureau of Fairs**

**2021**

**Rules prefixed O apply to oxen only.**

**Rules prefixed H applies to horses only.**

**Rules prefixed P applies to ponies only.**

**All other rules apply equally to horses, ponies & oxen.**

1. The fairs pulling events committee shall be charged with promulgating and enforcing all rules and guidelines pertaining to pulling events in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The committee shall consist of two members representing the Mass. Department of Agricultural Resources, the Mass. Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Mass Fairs Association, Pull Superintendent, Pull Judges, Pony Pull Association, Horse Pull Association, and the Oxen Pull Association.

2. There shall be a fair superintendent and up to three judges in charge at all drawing contests. They shall be vested with the authority to disqualify any team or driver for any cause that in their judgment might be detrimental to the best interest of the public, animals, or the organization conducting the contest. An official will be designated to determine the proper use of the reins, whip or goad stick. **The sole responsibility of 1 judge is to just JUDGE THE CLASS and to ensure compliance with the rules and regulations.**

3. The judges and superintendent shall be qualified in stone boat contests and shall have full jurisdiction to decide the weight of the load at any time and to decide anything relative to the actual drawing.

4. Any individual, firm or corporation found guilty of administering drugs which may affect the conduct, actions, endurance, strength, speed or performance of any animal competing in any pulling competition within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, shall forfeit all prize monies won that day. First offense would consist of a \$500.00 fine and a 30-day suspension to be served from May 15 through October 30. A Second Offense within a five (5) year period from the first offense will result in a \$1,000.00 fine and a 1-year suspension. A third offense (within 3 years of the second or 8 years of the first), will result in the teamster being barred for a period of 10 years from the date of the third offense, to be served from May 15 through October 30. The teamster at the completion of the suspension, may at that time, petition to return into the pulling ring after a review and hearing before the Massachusetts Pulling Committee.

Any Teamster who refuses to assist the Vet in testing any animal, or refuses to have an animal tested, will be guilty of a drug violation. Suspension to be served

between May 15 and October 30.

**A ll fines are payable to the Mass. Fairs Drug Testing Fund and should be mailed to Rose M. Sherman, 795 Old North Rd., Worthington, MA 01098.**

**5.** Any owner and/or teamster who has been convicted or found in violation of any other state's statute relating to the use of drugs or stimulants, or other animal protection statute shall be barred from participation in any contest, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, for the period prescribed by that state. All testing will be done before the first load or after the last load for a team.

**6.** Any team disqualified by an agent of the Humane Society appointed under Chapter 22C, Section 57, of the M.G.L. shall be taken out of the contest immediately. Before any team is taken out, there should be consultation among the Humane Society, superintendent and judges, and may be announced to the public by the judges.

**7.** All participants will be properly dressed. Any driver, judge, superintendent, hitcher, family member, raker, pinner, measurer, tractor driver or spectator, who has been drinking alcoholic beverages, will be disqualified from the contest and removed from the pulling area. Breathalyzers may be used at any time during the pulling events to determine if an individual has been drinking. The reading will show a 0.04 tolerance. The drinking of alcoholic beverages in and around the ring is prohibited. Any foul or abusive language to the public or anyone connected with the draw, by the driver or his helpers, will cause the driver and team to be disqualified immediately. A First Offense may result in fines up to \$250.00 and a 2-week suspension; A Second Offense within a 5-year period of the first offense, may result in a 1-year suspension and fines up to \$1,000.00; A third offense (within 3 years of the second or 8 years of the first), will result in the teamster being barred for a period of 10 years from the date of the third offense, to be served from May 15 through October 30. The teamster at the completion of the suspension, may at that time, petition to return into the pulling ring after a review and hearing before the Massachusetts Pulling Committee.

Moneys collected to be sent to address listed under #4.

**8.** Sores and abrasions caused or likely to be irritated by the bearing surface of harnesses or yokes will deem the animal unfit for use in the contest, decision to be made by superintendent or judges. Any lame animal will not be allowed to pull. Lameness, mechanical in nature that doesn't cause pain or suffering, as certified by a licensed veterinarian on a health certificate dated within the previous twelve months, will be allowed to pull.

**9.** Teams deemed uncontrollable or teamsters losing control that goes beyond the defined pit area, will immediately be disqualified by the Superintendent or judges and removed from the contest. Each fair will mark a defined pit area and make it known at the Driver's meeting prior to each class. In addition, any driver that pulls the load beyond the defined pit area will be penalized - First offense will be loss of that hitch; Second offense is disqualification for the day and forfeit of the entire day's premiums.

**10. HP** - All horses and ponies to compete in a contest, other than Free-For-All, shall be weighed in no earlier than three hours before the first class. Horses will be marked by numbers when weighed. Check weighing will be permitted before the three hour period prior to the first class. Horses must wear halters while on the scale. All

horses and ponies will be weighed in the presence of a delegate appointed by the fair, organization or person who is conducting the contest. The delegate shall present the weigh-bill to the teamsters, a copy of which is to be kept by said delegate, certifying the horse's or pony's name and description as certified by a negative coggins certificate, and the exact time of weighing. The scale shall be balanced with a person standing on it - This person shall hold all horses or ponies. The person holding horses or ponies shall be appointed by the delegate if he/she is unable to do this himself/herself. The delegate must sign the weighing certificate. **It is the judge's discretion whether animals can be weighed with or without blanket coverage.**

**11. O** - All oxen will be weighed in front of the sponsoring delegate; all weight classes shall be under 2400 lbs., 2400 lbs - 2800 lbs., 2801 - 3200 lbs., over 3200 lbs. and/or Free-For-All.

**12. O** - All weight classes will increase 100 lbs. for the Labor Day weekend events and remain until the end of the season.

**H** - All weight classes will increase by 1% for the Labor Day weekend events and remain until the end of the season.

**13. P** - All owners/ponies must have proof of measuring by the N.E. Draft Pony Association

to pull in a contest. All weight classes shall be under 1200 lbs.; 1200-1400 lbs; 1401-1800 lbs. and over.

**14. H** - Horse weight classes; 1-day events - 3000 lbs. and under; 3001 lbs. - 3300 lbs., 3301 lbs. - 3600 lbs. ; Free-For-All. Two-day event weights will be at the discretion of the fair.

**15. HPO** - Once a team has been weighed in, there will be no switching of horses, ponies, or oxen. Split owner teams will be allowed to compete for premiums. Any claimed owner must remain with his horses, ponies, or oxen for the duration of the contest.

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**16. HPO** - Starting Load: Maximum load of 4000 lbs. for all weight classes and 5000 lbs. Free-For-All classes. Added loads in each class are to be at the discretion of the judges depending on the type of pit. At no time after weight has been increased, may it be decreased.

**17.** Pulling positions to be determined by the drawing of numbers just before starting each class.

**18.** All teamsters to compete in contest shall have their teams ready at the published time and MUST attend driver's meeting. All classes will close at the completion of the first heat of each class.

**19.** There shall be a time limit of five (5) minutes. Time will be taken out while the boat is positioned for the next hitch. The time will be kept by the announcer, or appointed timekeeper.

**20. Method of Pull:** Three hitches with a 5-minute time limit. The boat to be pulled back to the starting pin after any hitch. There will be no heading of horses. Teams to be driven by one teamster only. Starting point of the boat shall be properly marked to indicate the same starting point for all loads. The distance of each pull will be measured from the center of the boat to the most recent pin. All teams will be allowed

three hitches to qualify the load. The boat shall be returned to the starting pin after each hitch. **OPTION:** Oxen pullers may have the option to have 5-hitches from the pin while staying hooked to the boat, with a 5-minute time limit. At no time should the boat begin at 72" or more from the pin. Teamster may request that the boat be set back to the pin. **5-Hitch PULLS MUST BE PUBLICLY PRE-ADVERTISED PRIOR TO THAT DAY .**

**21. P** - Use of reins is prohibited for any purpose other than to guide the team. Hats and hands on the hindquarters only. Hands must be in sight at all times.

**22. H** - One inch or more constitutes a hitch. **O** - Two inches or more constitutes a hitch.

**23. P** - Three inches or more constitutes a hitch.

**24. Breakdown:** An actual separation, breaking or bending of equipment shall constitute a breakdown. In the event the teamster and/or owner wishes credit for the distance the boat moved before the breakage, it would constitute a hitch.

**25. Over the Rail:** If an animal's foot strikes dirt outside the rail, it constitutes a hitch with no credit for the distance pulled. Teams must remain within the rail while hitched to the boat. **The team must be unhooked from the boat if they step over the rail.**

**26.** Any team deliberately driven over the rail will be disqualified from the contest.

**27.** All teams shall remain in the ring at all times until the class is completed unless excused by the judge.

**28.** In case of a tie on the longest distance, the second longest distance already pulled will take the top placing.

**29. Changing Teamsters:** No teamster may be changed after pulling the first load in any class except in an emergency, then only when permitted by judges.

**30. HP** - Interference of Evener Men: No assistance other than hitching. **Evener men WILL NOT go ahead of evener, and are to remain silent and do no waving of arms while a team is being set up or is hitched to the load.**

**31. O** - Hitchers will not be allowed to twist tails or use the chain or any other device to stimulate the cattle. They cannot carry anything in their hands but the chain to hitch the cattle. They then shall stand back of the boat at a distance prescribed by the judge.

**32.** Classes shall be as publicized in the Premium Booklet or by the Fair/Pull.

**33. O** - A twisted whip with a braided lash or a goad stick may be used in the pit or on the fairgrounds. The goad stick must not be over 4 ft. long and must not exceed 1/2 inch diameter on the small end. The goad stick may be taped with black tape, but not weighted. The goad shall have no brad in it. Plastic goad sticks may be used, but must be wrapped with black tape. Any driver causing a welt, swelling or drawing blood with the whip or goad stick will be fined \$100.00 per infraction. Second offenses may include suspensions.

**34. O** - The whip or goad stick shall only be used to guide the oxen outside of the pit area. The whip or goad stick may be used lightly to place the oxen, after being hitched to the boat. The oxen may be touched once only to start the boat and once only while the boat is in motion. Two hits only.

**35. O** - The chain shall not be hitched to the boat while it is under, around or in front of the oxen's legs. (Only when the chain is between the animals.)

**36. O** - No driver shall strike the ox in the face except to guide the animal with an open hand. The goad stick or whip may be used lightly in the area of the animal's ears and horns for steering of the animal only. No use of ropes, halters, nose rings or hands used as a twitch on the nose or in the nostrils, will be allowed.

**37.** The only persons allowed in the pit and ring areas are Fair Officials, drivers, the person hitching the boat, agents of the Humane Society appointed under Chapter 22C, Section 57, M.G. L., and the Bureau of Fairs Inspectors; only pertinent personnel allowed at the discretion of the Judges.

**38. O** - All calves over the age of twelve (12) months must be castrated to show or enter any classes.

**39. O** - Age of oxen and steers should be judged as of the day of the event.

**40. H** - The number or times a horse draws will be left up to the discretion of the fair.

**41. OHP** - No animals will be blind folded. Open bridles will be allowed, but blinders must be properly attached so as to not be free swinging or bent around so that it causes discomfort to the horse's eyes.

**42. H** - In horse pulls the use of reins as a whip is prohibited. The light use of reins on entry to the pit and while the team is making its draw, will be limited to that area from the root of the tail to the bottom of the round - **IN A SIDE MOTION ONLY**. Hands must be in sight at all times. The use of the reins after the boat has stopped or any place on the grounds is prohibited. Lines must be doubled. Reins may be taped together **only if no wider than the width of your hand with a single wrapping of tape**.

**43.** The pit will be covered the day before the draw, when it is possible.

**44.** Participation in pulling events within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has been determined to be a privilege and not a right. Participation in these events is discretionary. Individuals are only permitted to enter these contests if the judges, superintendents and fairs deem it advisable. Individuals who blatantly disregard these rules and regulations and place animals or the public at risk will not be allowed entry to these family events.

**45.** If an incident should arise and warrants a hearing, a majority of the Massachusetts Agricultural Fair Associations Pulling Events Committee can make a decision pertaining to, but not limited to, disciplinary action. **Any infractions are to be made known to the offending party by certified mail within 30 days of the infraction**. The offending party has the right to either pay the fine or appeal the decision within 30 days of receipt of notification. Failure to acknowledge notification will result in suspension from all pulling events until the fine(s) have been paid, or the decision of the Committee has been revoked.

**46. STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP** - The signature on said form verifies that the owner or representative has read, understands and agrees to abide by The Massachusetts Fairs Assoc. Rules Governing Pulling Contests and that the Judge(s) decisions in these competitions are FINAL.

**47.** Any variation of these rules shall be in the spirit of aforesaid rules and at the discretion of the judges.

***(Revised 12-07-08)***