



MY FIRST ENDURANCE EVENT

***A GUIDE FOR RIDERS CONSIDERING THEIR VERY FIRST
ENDURANCE RIDE***



www.aera.asn.au

WELCOME:

Welcome to the exciting and challenging world of endurance riding! Whether you aim to participate a few times per year or become an international star, you need to start somewhere.

This guide is intended to give you some very basic first steps and some important information BEFORE you attend at your first endurance event.

There are a variety of websites, magazines and books dedicated to the training, feeding and management of endurance horses so this guide will only address the very basic areas you may wish to know about. At every Endurance ride there experienced riders and ride staff who are very willing to answer questions and share their knowledge. Endurance events are very family oriented and offer a wonderful opportunity to experience riding through some magnificent parts of our country.

ORGANISATION:

Australia is well regarded for having one of the world's most comprehensive systems of administering the sport of endurance riding, putting the safety and enjoyment of our riders and the welfare of our equine partners uppermost at all times.

Endurance riding in Australia is organized and controlled by the Australian Endurance Riders Association. (AERA). Each state has its own division with the Victorian Endurance Riders Association (VERA) being responsible for running the sport in Victoria. Equestrian Australia (EA) and the Federation Equestrienne Internationale (FEI) also have input to the administration of some aspects of our sport including Medication Control and organization of international events.

Individual clubs, associations and groups run each event under an affiliation with VERA and are responsible for the actual planning and execution of each event.

Many are run as charitable events and attract much community support.

The rules of the sport are National and it is strongly advised you read and familiarize yourself with the Members Handbook which you can access at www.aera.asn.au

GETTING INFORMATION:

In the modern day much of the information about endurance riding is accessed via the internet. Not only does AERA and each state division have its own website, but many individual clubs and rides have a website also. State division websites include contact information, committee news, latest updates, ride results, rules of the sport and the ride calendar. Whether you are planning your first actual event or just want to find out something about the

sport it is a good idea to look at the websites. www.aera.asn.au is the starting place.

Financial members of VERA also receive a bi-monthly newsletter but as a newcomer you will need to access latest information via the VERA website www.aera.asn.au/vera

You may have friends, family or other local riders are involved in the sport and will be a valuable source of information.

The VERA Management Committee encourage enquiries from new riders and they are only a phone call or email away.

CHOOSING A RIDE:

Once you have decided you would like to attend an endurance event, you will need to look at the website ride calendar. The ride calendar will tell you the name of the event, the location, the events/distances being offered, the starting times and who to contact for more information.

Most events will require that you pre nominate: This is often a simple phone call around 2 weeks before the event to give your name and the distance you want to enter. Some rides require a written nomination and a small fee. No matter the method of pre nomination it is always advisable to contact the Ride Organiser (RO) well in advance of attending the ride. The things you may wish to know are the type of trails, camping and yarding information, directions, catering availability and any other information that will help you arrive well prepared.

Quite a few people interested in learning about endurance riding attend an event without their horse to get some idea of how everything works at a ride. If you wish to go to a ride the Ride Organiser may even allocate you a small task to help learn from the ground up. This might include penciling for a vet or perhaps assisting with a checkpoint. Please let the Ride Organiser know if you would like to participate in a constructive way.

GETTING READY:

Once you have decided which ride to attend you will need to contact the RO at least 2 weeks in advance to pre nominate and get further information and find out whether or not you will be required to stay overnight. Many training rides (40km-80km) require the horse and rider to check in on the day before the ride (usually a Saturday afternoon) with the actual event taking place on the Sunday morning. This entails being set up to spend a night with your horse at the ride base.

Many Introductory rides or "Social Rides" (usually 5km- 20km) allow entrants to arrive on the morning of the ride and leave later in the day to eliminate the need to camp overnight.

Should you need to spend the night you will need to ensure, as a priority, that you have adequate portable yarding facilities for your horse. Very few ride bases have permanent yards available so please check with the RO.

You need to read and understand the Guidelines for Yarding of Horses which can be found at the end of the Members Handbook/National Rulebook which is available to read and download on the AREA website. Secure, portable metal yard panels, well constructed picket and electrified tape yards or correctly erected nightlines are allowable. It is not permissible to tie your horse up overnight. Which ever yarding arrangements you make it is very important to ensure that your horse is used to being yarded by practicing this from home or on an overnight riding trip.

Naturally you will need to have a warm, dry and comfortable bed for yourself. Many people sleep in the back of their truck or horse float and some pitch a tent. If using a tent it must be very well tied down to avoid the risk of flapping round in the wind and startling horses.

The ride may or may not offer catering. If not you will need to bring your own food and drinks. It is always advisable to bring some clean drinking water.

Your horse will need all his usual riding gear, rugs, grooming gear, feed and hay, buckets and it is wise to have spares of important tack such as stirrup leathers and reins.

You will need your comfortable riding clothes, helmet (compulsory) and other clothes to suit the weather conditions. There are sometimes showers at the ride base but usually you will need to make do with your own makeshift arrangements for washing!

Many rides require that you take home all manure and left over hay so please check with the RO.

Dogs are not permitted at some rides. Please respect this request. Well behaved dogs ALWAYS ON A LEASH are welcome at some rides. Young children must always be in the company of a responsible adult.

RIDE BASE ARRIVAL:

When you arrive it is a good idea to find the RO and check the camping setup. Once you are organised with your yard and personal quarters you will need to enter the ride.

The RO will have appointed a Ride Secretary who will take entries and collate all the information and results of the ride. The Ride Secretary will give you an entry form to complete. If you are a newcomer you may enter the Training or Introductory rides as a "Day Member". There is a nominal Day Member fee, added to the entry fee, which covers insurance requirements. The entry fee for the ride will vary but is generally in the range of \$1 per kilometer so a 20km Introductory ride will usually cost around \$20 entry fee plus approximately \$5 Day Member fee.

You will be required to sign a waiver on the reverse of the entry form. You may not enter unless this is signed. Under 18's will need a parent or guardian to sign this form.

Introductory and Training rides are non competitive so there are no riding divisions as in the open rides.

You will be given a Hi-Vis ride number bib which is to be worn at all times in the ride and at all times in the vetting area.

Unless your horse already has a special logbook you will be given a Vet Card which will have the details of your horse recorded on it such as his name, age, breed and colour.

The Ride Secretary will advise you what time the Vet Ring opens.

VETTING:

The ride base will have an area set aside for the veterinary examinations. The vet ring is under the control of the Chief Steward and the Head Vet.

The Chief Steward is responsible for all operations at the ride and is the person you should speak to if you have a concern or question. The Chief Steward will be clearly identified with a Hi-Vis vest and will be in attendance at the vet ring.

All horses, regardless of which ride they have entered, will be given a thorough health check before being able to commence the ride. This is called the Pre Ride Examination.

When the vet ring is open and not looking too crowded take your horse, with his Vet Card over to the marshalling area and the Chief Steward will direct you to an area where a TPR steward will do a preliminary check. The TPR (Temperature, Pulse, Respiration) Steward will be taking your horse's heart rate, his temperature and respiration (breaths per minute)

The heart rate is taken by stethoscope just behind the left elbow over one minute. It is important that you have a well mannered horse who will stand quietly for this. You should practice this at home and become familiar with what is normal for your horse. The temperature is taken rectally (in his back passage) and it is extremely important that you have trained your horse to accept the thermometer in his anus at home. Horses that misbehave by kicking out or spinning round maybe refused further participation in the ride. The TPR will be an experienced horse person who will do their utmost to perform this task but the safety of ride staff cannot be jeopardized by horses that refuse to have temperatures taken. Practicing taking the rectal temperature every day at home for a week or two will ensure this procedure does not become a problem at the ride.

The TPR will also count the breaths per minute of your horse.

The TPR information will be recorded on the Vet Card and you will be directed to a vet who will conduct a further examination of your horse.

Again, your horse will need to stand quietly for this examination. The vet will check the horse's gums and teeth so ensure he is used to having his mouth examined. The vet will then check the metabolic parameters of your horse including his mucous membranes (gums) capillary refill (along the neck),

hydration (skin at the shoulder), his heart sounds and heart rate, his gut sounds, (stethoscope over the loin area) his body condition and also check for any injuries, rubs or bumps that might indicate a problem.

Once these checks are done you will be asked to trot your horse out so his gait can be checked for any lameness. Your horse will be trotted out in either a large triangle or straight out and back along a straight line.

Your horse will be required to trot along with you on a LOOSE lead rein without being chased or hunted. Again, a bit of practice at home will ensure he will be happy to trot along with you.

At the conclusion of the trot out the vet will advise you if there are any concerns and answer any questions you may have. If all is OK, your vet card is retained and you may return to camp through the exit gate.

There are a couple of important things to remember when in or around the vet ring:

- Wear your ride number bib when at the vet ring
- Whips and crops are not allowed in the vet ring (or at any time whilst riding at an endurance event)
- Badly behaved/dangerous horses may be refused entry
- Ensure any rugging is able to be quickly unfastened and removed for examination
- No bikes, prams or unaccompanied children are permitted in or near the vet ring
- Stallions will be identified with (at minimum) a blue tail ribbon-please keep some space
- Known kickers may display a red tail ribbon-keep well clear (It is advisable to keep well clear of ANY horses regardless of their status)
- Your conduct must be respectful and moderate at all times in the vet ring.
- Horses competing in the major rides are given priority in the vet ring
- Any issues or concerns should be discussed with the Chief Steward BEFORE you depart the vet ring area.
- Your horse's welfare is the vet ring staff's main concern. Please ensure you discuss any concerns about your horse with a vet ring staff member.

RIDE BRIEFING:

It is compulsory to attend the ride briefing for your entered ride. It may be held in the evening before an early morning start or shortly before the start time of your ride.

The briefing will advise you about the course, the arrows you will be following, any hazards such as creek crossings or cattle grids, the location and number of check points and water points and the MINIMUM and MAXIMUM time you

may take to complete the course. A question time is allocated and you should use this time to ask about anything that you are unsure about.

THE RIDE:

10 minutes before the start of the ride you should mount up. Walk your horse round quietly for 5 minutes or so to warm him up and head over towards the starting area. The official will tell you when to start. If your horse is very excited it is a good idea to wait for a few minutes for most of the horses to leave before you head off quietly and in control.

If horses become bunched up in a group at the start, keep a clear distance between you and other horses to avoid a kick or other accident.

Your safety, and that of your horse, is the most important thing on course. Be aware of your horse, other horses and your surroundings. Do not get involved in long conversations that might distract you from riding safely and alertly. Always be mindful of bunching up close to other horses. You may get kicked and you can't see the track in front of you clearly. Where the track is rough or narrow, keep in single file and choose the best path for your horse. If you wish to pass another horse, choose a wide area of track, call out clearly "I would like to pass on your right please" and if all is clear pass carefully. If someone wishes to pass you, move across as much as is as safe to the left hand side of the track and allow the other rider to pass safely. When meeting horses coming from the other direction it is safest to move to the left of the track and allow as much room as possible. Oncoming horses may be in the Open Endurance Ride and might be traveling at trot or even canter. Move well aside and try to keep your horse moving along quietly.

There will be one or more Checkpoints on the course. At these points the officials will be recording the numbers of the riders to ensure everyone is accounted for and is following the right track. When you come to a checkpoint you must stop and call out your number clearly. **DO NOT PROCEED UNTIL THE CHECKPOINT OPERATOR ACKNOWLEDGES HE HAS YOUR NUMBER.** There is usually water for your horse to drink at the checkpoints and sometimes water for you to "strap" or cool off your horse. If your horse is very sweaty and hot you may wish to sponge him off. Offer your horse a drink. If he is excited or a lot of other horses are about he may not drink at first. Try walking a circle or two and return to the trough quietly. Offer him a drink again and then move off quietly. If your horse has had a good drink walk for a few minutes before speeding up at all. If other horses are still drinking it is considered very rude to trot away from the water as the herd instinct of the other horses will usually stop them from drinking as they will want to follow the other horses.

Unless the briefing advises that they are safe, avoid entering dams or waterholes-they may be unstable or be full of debris.

The Introductory and Training rides are not races and it is important not to go too fast. A steady working trot and lots of walking will get you round the course easily in the allotted time so don't rush. Stop to offer a green pick every now

and then and if you get a bit stiff or sore, dismount and lead your horse for a time. This will restore circulation to your legs and feet and give your horse a bit of a break too. A 20km course sees most people taking between 2 and 3 hours to travel around.

If you plan about the middle of the minimum and maximum riding time given at the briefing you should complete comfortably.

If at any time you are on course you have a serious problem, see danger or an accident you, or an appointed rider, should proceed immediately to the nearest checkpoint operator who will advise you what to do. In these cases it is permissible to use your mobile phone to call for help. If you have a serious problem a horse float and vehicle will be sent to assist you. **DO NOT LEAVE THE COURSE** if you experience a problem. You can always be found on the marked course.

FINISH LINE AND FINAL VETTING:

When you reach the finish line call out your number and a member of the Secretarial and Timing staff will write out a time slip for you. Dismount and collect your slip-putting it away safely in dry pocket. Loosen your girth and lead your horse back to your camp. At some rides you will also be handed your VET CARD which you must take with your time slip to the vet ring.

Your time slip will give the time you crossed the line and a time 30 MINUTES after this which is your maximum vetting in time. You and your horse need to report to the vet ring within this 30 minutes or you may be disqualified. Unsaddle your horse at camp and if it is cold, pop a rug loosely on him. If he has a yard allow him to go into his yard where he will probably wish to urinate and have a drink. If your water bucket has been out in the sun it should be fine but if it is freezing cold see if a helper can have a bit of hot water ready for you which you add to his bucket to take the chill off the water. Several sips at a time is best. Your horse will probably need a clean down if the course was wet or muddy. Using lots of water on a cold day is not usually a good idea as it can chill and stiffen the muscles. Wipe clean the face, neck, chest, tummy and between the legs with a damp sponge and rub off with a towel. If it is quite warm and sunny and your horse looks and feels hot you might want to cool him gently by sponging his neck and shoulders with cool water and then scraping or toweling him off. Check under the rug every few minutes and if he is very cold add another layer and if he is hot fold the rug back so it just covers his hind quarters. On a hot, sunny day obviously a rug won't be needed. While you strap your horse he will probably enjoy a bit of hay or grass. A full bucket of hard feed is not a good idea straight after the ride. If you have learnt to take your horse's heart rate you can now check it. Your horse will need to have a heart rate of 55 BEATS OR UNDER WITHIN 30 MINUTES to pass. If your horse's heart rate is satisfactory you can choose to go over to the vet. Walk over slowly and walk a couple of slow circles before advising the chief steward you are ready to vet in. You do not have to be at the vet ring until the 30 minute time on your vet slip so if you think your horse is still puffing, tired,

thirsty, hot or not ready, spend the next ten minutes or so just walking him slowly offering a small drink and a mouthful of green grass now and then and checking he is not too hot or cold.

When you report to the Chief Steward he will direct you to a TPR Steward who will check your horse's heart rate. If it is within the 55 beats per minute he will record it on the vet card and direct you to a vet for a final check.

If the TPR Steward has a concern he will call the vet or Chief Steward over. You will be advised if the heart rate is a pass. The vet will do a final inspection the same as the pre ride check and you will again need to run out your horse at the trot on a loose lead rope.

After the trot out you will be advised of a pass or fail. If your horse passes congratulations - You have completed successfully! If, unfortunately, your horse fails the vet check the vet will explain exactly what the problem is such as lameness or a high heart rate. If you have a question it is a good idea to ask the vet so you are completely sure about the problem and what the possible causes are.

You will then be able to depart the vet ring via the exit gate.

AFTER THE RIDE:

You can now return to camp and make sure your horse is comfortable and able to rest and eat.

Quality hay-whatever your horse is used to, along with a small, damp meal of his normal feed is usually the best. Ensure he has drinking water available and is rugged warmly if it is a cold day. You can also give him a bit more of a clean up if he is still dirty and muddy. You will probably want to have a snack and a drink and a short rest yourself but it is not a good idea to leave your horse at camp and go off socializing. After your horse eats he will probably rest a hind leg and doze for a while. You can let him rest quietly but if you notice any strange signs such as discomfort, pawing the ground or anything unusual please report to the vet. If he is resting comfortably and has eaten and drunk and passed urine and manure you will be able to pack up some gear and get organized for the trip home. Your horse usually also appreciates being taken for a walk now and then and after a ride they do need to have a walk and stretch their legs after a rest so don't leave him standing in a yard or tied to the float for too long after the ride.

The Presentation Ceremony will be announced which you can attend to collect your successful completion award. All successful completers in every ride will be given an award-usually a certificate, ribbon or trophy. The place getters in the Open Endurance Ride will receive prizes and the Best Conditioned Horse awards will be announced. There are sometimes special awards for Best Managed Horse or Encouragement Awards. When your name is called out you can accept your prize and hand back your ride number bib. It is polite to thank the officials handing out the awards and to applaud each competitor as they accept their prizes.

After presentations you can finish packing up and take your horse for a final walk to check all is well with him before loading up and going home.

When you get home check over your horse for any rubs, lumps, puffiness or anything else not quite right and if all is well he can go into his paddock with his regular nightly feed and plenty of hay.

It is quite normal for him to be quite hungry after the ride so an extra biscuit of good hay and a little more hard feed is OK tonight. After a good night's sleep you will need to check your horse early the next morning and make sure he is eating and drinking normally and hasn't got any stiffness or sore spots.

If you enjoyed your experience at the ride, the ride organizers love to get a quick email or phone call to let them know!

Remember at all times the Endurance Riders' Motto:

TO COMPLETE IS TO WIN

