

## TPR Bay and Vet Ring Etiquette

**Reprinted with kind permission from Yvonne Knight**

I was prompted to write this article after spending some time TPR-ing at recent rides. I also think it is an area that is often overlooked when new members first present at rides.

When approaching the vetting area with your horse, there are often groups of horses walking around and also entering and exiting the area. It is often a good idea to get there a little earlier than you are due. Let the steward on the gate know that you are there and continue walking around in the same direction that the other people are.

When your number is called, walk quietly into the TPR bays, remembering that often there are people having their horse's heart rates taken and you may disturb them if you are loudly talking, flapping rugs about or arguing with your horse. This is truly a QUIET zone!

When presenting your horse to the TPR steward, it is polite to ensure the horse's near foreleg is forward, away from the line of the other leg. This allows the TPR steward to get correct placement of the stethoscope and pick up the heartbeat, without having to make the horse take a step forward or ask you to move its leg.

Whilst the heart rate is being taken - DO pay attention! Too often horses fidget or decide to move around. A quick glance often reveals the handlers not paying attention, the lead is loose and they are watching the other horses being run out, or even have their backs to their own horse. It is also polite to ensure that your horse does not interfere with the horses beside it.

When temperatures are taken, the responsibility to teach your horse to accept the thermometer is YOURS! It is not up to the vets and TPRs to teach them! In the event that a horse is unruly or threatens to kick the TPRs, then you are usually offered the thermometer and allowed to do it yourself. It is amazing how often riders REFUSE to do it, yet the TPRs are expected to! If the horse does not behave, then it may be disqualified.

When the TPR writes the heart rate in the logbook (which you should have open at the correct page), it is nice to accept that this is the accurate count and not declare "but it was only 25 back at camp!" Many factors contribute to the variations in heart rate and it is the TPR's job to count exactly what they hear, not placate you with a lower heart rate count that is more to your liking. What your horse was back at the camp, is not relative to what is presented in the vet ring, however it may indicate that your horse is having problems.

Some vets ask TPRs to pick up hooves and check shoes. Again, pay attention! When the TPR checks the near-side ones, stand at your horse's head and watch what is happening. When they move to the opposite side, you should also move to that side of the horse's head and ensure that your horse does not swing about. You should keep control, in the event that the horse does kick or act resentful.

When leaving the bays and going to the vets, ensure that your rugs (if on) are already undone and ready to remove. Vet rings often become congested and it is frustrating when there are delays due to riders having rugs all clipped up and buckled. These must be removed before the vet can inspect the horse, so do it before you approach them or entering the TPR bays.

Again, stand quietly and pay attention. Answer the vet's questions honestly that he may ask as he is trying to ensure that your horse is coping and remains capable of completing. Hiding or not revealing the extent of concerns may mean that something is overlooked and could prevent your horse suffering needlessly.

When asked to run the horse out, listen to what directions the vet gives you. If he wants you to run around a triangle and there are witches hats or cones, do what he tells you. Too often riders run off dragging their horse behind them and completely ignore the given directions.

The horse should be run on a loose lead. Practise doing this at home as it is not permissible to have someone run behind you, chasing your horse along! The lead should be long and loose, not grasped tightly beneath the horses chin and dragged behind you. Run the horse out as though you are proud of it - and show the vet how keen your horse is to continue on! Don't allow it to shuffle along behind you as though it is a huge chore. A willing, keen to travel horse should display impulsion and interest in his surroundings.

He should not have to be towed along behind you as though he is too tired to care anymore.

When the vet has finished assessing and examining your horse, accept the decision graciously and thank them. If you are concerned about any problems, do not be frightened to broach them (this doesn't mean telling him horsies' life story) but often any concerns that are voiced at this stage - may save your horse undue stress or may even save his life.

Remember also, vets and TPR's are often volunteers. They may be riders themselves, and have decided to put something back into the sport. Either way, they have come along to help you and to help ensure your horse continues to complete many happy and successful rides for a long time. They do not come to vet you out or give you a hard time!

A little courtesy is inexpensive. It adds to the feeling of the weekend and helps allay the tension in a highly emotion-charged area. A smile is free and easy to offer; however rudeness, abuse or a general lack of respect for the decisions being made are costly. If vets refuse to work and TPR's refuse to help - the sport will stop. Don't let it be you, who helps to hammer the nails in the coffin.