



## VICTORIAN ENDURANCE RIDERS ASSOCIATION Inc INFORMATION SHEET

### USE OF ENDURANCE HORSE LOGBOOKS

The validity of an opinion that an endurance horse is 'fit/unfit to continue' has always been assumed to be based on veterinary training.

The concept of metabolic stability is accepted by veterinarians as one of the triad of requirements for horses to compete in endurance rides:

1. Locomotion soundness
2. Metabolic stability
3. Satisfactory welfare requirements

The Australian Endurance Riders Association (AERA) wants to encourage acute observation, instinctive assessment, medical examination and interpretation to achieve the veterinary opinion 'this horse is currently fit/unfit to continue'.

With larger fields resulting from the sport's popularity, increasing competitive pressure from improved knowledge of training, nutrition and genetics, the occasional 'mis-diagnosed disasters' can be reduced in number and individual severity if the instinct method of assessments is supplemented with or replaced by (in the case of inexperienced veterinarians) the metabolic profile method. The AERA logbook has a re-designed metabolic parameter form to achieve this.

The concept of metabolic stability is a series of 'window' views of a horse which permit deterioration to be recognised before it appears by surprise.

The language of A, B, C and D are not defined physiological values. Rather they are a classification which one veterinarian used to communicate their opinion to another colleague at the next checkpoint.

Within endurance this A to D scale represents:

- A and B is normal
- C is worry/caution
- D is clinically abnormal/serious problem exists indicating the horse is unfit to continue

A to B to C to D represent stages in a scale of metabolic deterioration leading from unstressed normality (A) through exercise tolerate stable states (B & C) to metabolically unstable, stressed states bordering on or in collapse or compulsory medical intervention being necessary to prevent collapse (D).

The profile selectively assesses the significant metabolic parameters of endurance exercise which are:

- Oxygenation of tissues (reflected by HR, RR, mucous membrane colour and cardiac index)
- Hydration (mucous membrane moisture, capillary refill and jugular refill times, tissue turgor represented by skin tent recoil times)

- Circulatory integrity (mucous membrane colour, capillary refill time and HR, heart sound and rhythm quality)
- Electrolyte status (gut sounds, anal sphincter tone and gait)
- Energy levels (impulsion, blink reflex, toe elevation)
- Fatigue (CNS signs, muscle tone)
- Thermo-regulation (HR, RR, temperature, sweating ability)

The logbook is there for your use. Please record your findings in the logbook, which becomes a career record of each horse's performance at all of its rides. It is a history and that history is only as good as your veterinary input.

The record works positively to remind yourself, or your colleague, of the horse's previous checkpoint assessment. The record acts positively to keep medical facts up front when the Association's coronial enquiries are held, which occurs following every horse catastrophe.

The system is not unique to Australia, it is routinely used in Europe, USA and Canada where endurance veterinarians devised it a number of years ago to more accurately predict an imminent horse death.

Lameness needs to be established as a definite state. Definitive diagnosis can come later if circumstances and time permit but the essential judgement remains 'is the horse lame or not?'. If you are in doubt, professional discretion comes into play, ie do you let the horse continue onto the next Vet Check or request a re-presentation before the end of the Vet Check or Hold Time for a second assessment prior to the horse continuing on the next leg or act totally conservatively and vet the horse out lame? This grey area exists at every endurance ride. The important thing is that consistency of discretion is to be practised and your impartiality is totally visible.

Welfare issues are highly important in endurance riding in Australia. The rules talk about 'pain and suffering' and 'without compromise to the horse's health and welfare'. Conditions which relate directly to discomfort need to be assessed at every checkpoint. When detected and if permitted to continue the condition must be monitored and when deterioration develops, the horse's welfare must be protected by removal from the ride.

The welfare assessments have their own grey area and consistency in assessment is again essential to establish a competitive level playing field for all entrants in the ride.

Whenever you find an injury, metabolic or welfare unsuitable state that requires time to heal, you can act by ordering the appropriate rest period. Ride Veterinarians have the power to order horses to be rested from endurance competition for up to 6 months. The logbook has a specific space for a veterinarian to issue a Rest Order. Rehabilitation of an endurance horse's injury or compromised metabolic or welfare state is AERA policy but the policy relies upon ride veterinarians being aware of their responsibilities and their power to impose the required rest period. A Rest Order form must be completed when issuing a rest period for the horse.

The logbooks are made of waterproof paper and do not absorb water based ink. Standard ball point biro pens are best as they will write on this paper without running or smudging even in the rain.

**PLEASE PROVIDE A COPY OF THIS SHEET TO THE RIDE VETERINARIAN(S)  
PRIOR TO THE RIDE.**