



HELPFUL INFORMATION FOR NEW ENDURANCE RIDERS

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CONTEXT:

This info pack is designed to help riders who are preparing for and attending their first event.

Endurance is a sport for every horse and rider, and all healthy and sound horses are capable of completing introductory and intermediate distance rides. There is no special equipment, breeding or bells and whistles required!

The key ingredients for success are a solid training foundation, gear (particularly saddle) which is comfortable and allows your horse to be free moving, and providing your horse with some mental training.

For many horses things such as:

- being at the potentially busy ride base
 - being checked by the TPR / vet
 - being around, and likely being overtaken by, other horses on course
- can be as challenging as completing the distance! So wherever possible, expose your horse to being handled by strangers, and being around other horses.

That might sound intimidating, but really it's just about understanding what an event might look and sound like for your horse. Endurance is open to everyone, and everyone is encouraged to give it a go! Most horses adapt very quickly to an event, and many love endurance riding.

TIP:

Attend a ride as a volunteer or strapper for an experienced rider. This is the best way to learn what's expected of you and your horse - and you'll meet some friendly people too!

MEMBERSHIP:

You do not need to be a member of the association to compete in distances under 80 kms. You simply pay a small fee for day membership along with your ride entry. If you think you're likely to compete in several rides, becoming an [intermediate member](#) may save you money and give you some benefits.



TRAINING FOR YOUR FIRST RIDE

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO TRAIN FOR A 20 KM RIDE?

You should ride 2-3 times a week in the 4-6 weeks leading up to the ride.

Your most important ride will be your final long ride, in which you should cover around 15 kms in one session. This should be done 1-2 weeks before the ride and completed at around your race pace. Remember, you generally need to take a **minimum** 1 hour 45 minutes on course (*confirm your minimum and maximum ride times with the chief steward*). This could equate to roughly 30% walking, 60% trotting and 10% cantering. So there's no need to train excessively, just enough that you and your horse can comfortably complete the distance.

Your longer rides can be done quite slowly, with shorter rides being speed or hill work sessions. Cross training - riding in the arena or jumping - is also great to include in your routine, as it develops a well rounded and balanced horse, and this counts as training too!

TIP:

There is no one way to train that works for every horse and rider! For more tips and advice, seek the advice of experienced riders and visit AERA and NSW ERA websites for more information.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO TRAIN FOR A 40 KM RIDE:

You should ride 3-4 times a week in the 6-8 weeks leading up to the ride. There are a few different approaches to longer distance training, but generally it's advised that it isn't necessary to cover 40 kms in one hit to be fit for the distance. Rather you can build your distance cumulatively (ie, cover 40 kms over 5 days or so).

So around two weeks before the ride you might have built to a **maximum** training load of:

- 10 km faster session
- 25 - 30 km steady session (competition pace or a bit slower, this is your most important ride to prepare your horse)
- 5 - 10 km quiet ride and / or arena / cross training ride

In the weeks prior to this obviously you'll need to build up to this workload. Don't increase your distance or speed too quickly or you risk injuring your horse.



Slow and steady is the best way to compete, complete, and set your horse up for a long career in endurance. REST is also vital. Rest is when your horse builds muscle and gets stronger - don't be tempted to overdo it.

Your longer rides can be done quite slowly, with shorter rides being speed or hill work sessions. Cross training - such as riding in the arena or jumping - is also great to include in your routine, as it develops a well rounded and balanced horse, and this counts as training too!

Remember, you **can not** travel faster than 3 hours in a 40 km event! This could equate to roughly 10% walking, 70% trotting and 20% cantering (that's the fastest you can go, you can of course travel slower!).

WHAT SHOULD I PACK FOR THE RIDE?

FOR THE RIDER:

- Food, drink
- Riding gear - don't forget your helmet (no helmet, no ride!)
- Cash for entry and food from the canteen
- Any medications or painkillers you may need & basic first aid kit
- If camping then tent, bedding, etc.

TIP:

Don't use your new gear for the first time at a ride - this goes for horse and rider! Make sure you've tested everything so you don't get any nasty surprises.

FOR THE HORSE:

- Saddle
- Clean saddle blanket (important to be clean, dirty gear can rub)
- Headgear (bridle, hackamore, headstall and leadrope)
- Leg boots if usually used
- Hoof boots if usually used / as a spare if shoe is thrown
- Rugs as required
- Sponges, scrapper and clean towel for strapping with
- Hoof Pick
- Grooming brushes
- Stethoscope or heart rate monitor & thermometer
- Feed and water buckets
- Fresh hay
- Horse feed (keep grains or high carb feeds to a minimum prior to the ride and save these for after the ride)
- Any supplements you typically use, the most important being an electrolyte
- If staying overnight you **MUST** bring a yard which will adequately retain your horse. Practice at home first!



I'M AT THE RIDE - WHAT NOW?

WHEN YOU FIRST ARRIVE:

Firstly, find a space to park your float and offload your horse. Take them for a short walk and offer them food and water to let them unwind after the float trip. If you're setting up a yard, do so now. If not make sure your horse is safe and secure and then head to the ride office.

You will need to pay your entry fee (or just have your entry confirmed if you reentered online), and day membership if you are not a NSW ERA member. You might like to [pre complete these forms](#) and take them with you.

The ride organisers will give you a riding bib with a number on it and a vetting card for your horse. Now you are entered and you can head back to your horse!

TIP:

Before entering trot your horse up and down to make sure they haven't injured themselves on the way to the ride.

PRE RIDE VETTING:

Take your horse and your card over to the vet ring (you will need to be wearing your rider bib). A TPR will check your horses temperature (so your horse needs to be ok with a stranger putting a thermometer up it's bum!), heart rate and respiration.

Then the vet will check your horse quickly all over and ask you to trot your horse up and back on a loose reign. Assuming there are no issues with the vet check you are now ready to start your ride.

Head back to your float and get everything ready you will need now and after the ride. You should have a few buckets of water to cool your horse after the ride and clean water for them to drink, as well as some horse food. Once you are all set up have something to eat, make sure your horse has had enough food and water, and start to get ready to ride!

You should be saddled up about 15 minutes before your ride start time to warm your horse up.



THE RIDE

STARTING THE RIDE:

You will get a verbal briefing before leaving for your ride which will tell you any important information about the course. You must also give your rider number to the chief steward or ride organiser before leaving the ride base.

You can leave up to (but no later than) 10 minutes after the official start time if you are worried your horse will get very excited at the start. But do **NOT LEAVE WITHOUT HAVING YOUR NUMBER CHECKED OFF BY THE CHIEF STEWARD OR RIDE ORGANISER.**

TIP:
You're working hard too!
Don't forget to take care of yourself by eating, drinking and taking electrolytes if needed.
Your horse can only be as good as you are.

FOLLOWING THE COURSE:

A rider should not get lost due to course marking, however you must also be aware that there is a degree of personal responsibility on you to go the right way. It is easy to get distracted and miss a turn, follow other competitors, or become disoriented when tired. If you think you are lost;-

- 1) Consider if there is evidence of other horses having travelled this way. if so, continue for a short distance and check if there is a marker ahead
- 2) If not, consider when you last saw a marker. It is advisable to return to this point and carefully look for the correct way
- 3) If you are at a crossroads and can see no marker, turn around and travel a short distance back, then return, looking again for a marker. If you still can not see a marker, but you are sure you are on the right path, it's possible it has fallen down or been removed. In this case you can backtrack to the last checkpoint to ask for help, call the ride organiser / chief steward, or if safe and obvious which way to go, continue.

It is rare (but not impossible!) to get lost, so please use your common sense and be aware of your orientation in regard to the ride base. Your horse may know more than you and get you home if you are very lost!



RIDER ETIQUETTE

While out riding please be polite and friendly to the volunteers at the checkpoints and gates as they are helping to run the ride for your pleasure.

When giving numbers at a checkpoint call your number out and wait for the number to be called back before continuing. It is the RIDERS responsibility to ensure checkpoints record your number. Failure to do so can result in elimination.

Remember also that checkpoint people can help you – if you or your horse are not able to continue wait at a checkpoint and they will get help to you. If you are unable to make it to a checkpoint ask another rider to pass the message on and stay where you are. Endurance riders look after each other, so don't hesitate to ask for help and don't leave a rider in trouble!

TIP:

All your hard work has paid off -
now don't forget to enjoy yourself!

Horses who may kick should wear a red ribbon in their tail to warn other riders to give that horse plenty of personal space on the trail. Riders who have horses who kick must also manage their horses behaviour. You must not put other people or horses in danger through the behaviour of your horse.

Stallions wear blue ribbons in their tails. Most endurance stallions are extremely well behaved but as a courtesy it's best not to ride too close. (particularly if you have a "sexy" mare!)

If you want to pass a rider or group of riders in front of you, call out to the rider/group that you wish to pass on the left or the right, whichever is most suitable – if there is more than one horse passing call out the number as well, i.e. "*3 horses passing on your left when you're ready*". The other riders should then move to the side and acknowledge your request, so you can pass and move on out of their way.

Ride to road rules – if on a road do not ride in the middle or on the wrong side of the road. This is an important safety note to ensure you are visible to cars.

When at water stops on course, be mindful of other horses. Allow your horse to drink as much as it needs, but move on quickly once done to allow others access.

In essence, have a wonderful time, use common sense and be friendly to volunteers and other riders.



AFTER THE RIDE

So now you are home and perhaps tired, but you have finished the course!

Even if you needed a float ride home, everyone has to present to the vet for a final time. As you cross the finish line your time will be noted and a vetting slip written up. Make sure you pick it up. That will have your finish time and a vetting time 30 minutes later written on it. Most rides allow “early vetting” at 15 minutes but you **MUST** present at the vet ring by 30 minutes or you will be disqualified.

Take your horse back to camp, put on a halter and take all the tack off including any brushing boots or bandages. You can leave hoof boots on if you wish.

If it's hot and even moderate exercise is probably going to raise your horses' temperature and heart rate. Your horse must have a heart rate of 55 bpm or less to pass the vet check. Cooling your horse down to a normal temperature will aid in lowering the heart rate. But if you make your horse too cold the heart rate will go up - so you are aiming for a normal temperature.

Cooling down too much can also cause stiffness or cramping, particularly in the hindquarters. If there is any chill in the air, a towel or light strapping rug over the rump is a good idea.

Water heats up very quickly and gets trapped in the hair of a horse, so you need to scrape water off soon after putting it on. Then put more water on if needed. If the HR is over 55 or your horse is still obviously hot, strap some more. If electrolytes are a routine for you, then now is a good time to administer those.

If you are able to monitor the HR then great, do so, otherwise once you have the temperature right, let the horse relax for the rest of your 30 mins. Offer water, hay (not hard feed as this elevates heat rate) or grass and do some slow walking to make sure your horse doesn't get stiff. Encourage your horse to wee as this also lowers HR.

Watch the time and leave enough so you can slowly walk to vetting. Let the horse pick along the way, and make sure you're still wearing your number bib. Vetting is the same as pre-ride except temperature and respiration are not required. TPRs will record the HR and the vet will do the rest. If you can't run then your strapper or any other helper can trot your horse out. Remember to trot with a loose lead.

Hopefully now you have vetted through successfully and you're all done! Before you leave visit the ride office to hand in your bib and collect your prize.

CONGRATULATIONS!



WHERE DO I FIND OUT MORE?

- [Visit our website](#)
- [Check out the calendar of events](#)
- [Join our facebook page](#)
- [Sign up for the mailing list](#)

SOME AERA RULES TO BE AWARE OF

NB: Please do not assume this is a complete or up to date list. Visit the AERA rulebook for the most up to date and all rules. <http://aera.asn.au/new-site/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/AERA-Rulebook-S1-General-Rules.pdf>

A43 INTRODUCTORY RIDE RIDERS

43.1 Introductory Rides are open to any rider.

43.2 All riders must wear an equestrian standard helmet that complies with the equestrian standard in Australia, the U.S.A. or Europe current at the time of manufacture.

43.5 Whips and spurs are not permitted, nor any equipment that could be used for whipping a horse.

A44 INTRODUCTORY RIDE HORSES

44.1 Any breed of equine may compete in an introductory ride, provided that it is considered by the attending Veterinarian to be capable of traveling the distance of the ride.

44.2 All Introductory Ride horses must be at least 3 years or over on the day of the ride.

45.4 All Introductory Ride riders must attend a pre-ride briefing and will not be permitted to participate in the ride if they have not attended.

45.5 All horses competing in Introductory Rides shall comply with a minimum riding time determined by the ride committee in consultation with the Chief Steward and Head Veterinarian. The minimum riding time shall be calculated by dividing the distance of the ride or leg by 14 kms/hr or less.

2.7 If flat-heeled running shoes are worn, then safety stirrups should be used.

Table 16 Minimum horse age & dentition criteria on the day of the ride

To enter any *ride*, the horse shall satisfy both the minimum age and the dentition criteria for that *ride*. Failure to satisfy both criteria shall render the horse ineligible to enter that particular *ride*.

Ride	Minimum Age ^{1 2}	Minimum Dentition criteria ¹
Introductory	3 ½ years	Must show the central incisor teeth erupted and in full wear with the middle incisors erupted but need not be in wear.
Intermediate	4 ½ years	Must show a full mouth of permanent teeth erupted but the corner incisors need not be in wear.
Micro-marathon	4 ½ years	
Mini-marathon	5 years	Must show a full mouth of permanent teeth erupted and the permanent incisors are in wear.
<i>Endurance</i> ≤ 120 km	5 years	
<i>Endurance</i> > 120 km < 160 km	5 years	
<i>Endurance</i> ≥ 160 km	6 years	
Marathon	5 years	

1. For *introductory, intermediate and micro-marathon rides*, where no *logbook* has been issued for the horse, the date of birth shall be that date verbally advised by the handler. For horses that have been issued with a *logbook*, the date of birth shall be the date of birth recorded in the *logbook*. The head veterinarian's determination of the dentition of a horse shall be final.

2. There is no maximum age for a horse to enter a *ride* providing the head veterinarian considers that the horse is capable of travelling the distance of the *ride* being entered without comprising the welfare of the horse.