

GETTING STARTED IN ENDURANCE RIDING



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INTRODUCTION

What is endurance riding?

Endurance horse riding is a marathon sport where you select a distance to suit you and your horse, whether it be a 5km 'fun run' or a challenging 160km championship. There is also the lure of several special multi-day marathon events held each year, such as the 400km Shahzada.

The Motto of endurance riding in Australia is '*to complete is to win*'. This means that you ride at a distance and pace that challenges you, with the goal of finishing safely within set time limits with a horse that has been passed by the vet team as '*fit to continue*'.

Types of rides

Introductory Rides: distances from 1km up to 30km, speed limited

Intermediate Rides: distances from 40km to 60km, speed limited

Endurance Rides: distances from 80km to 160km, timed and competitive

Marathon Rides: at least 80km each day for 3 or more consecutive days.

Location of rides

Rides are organised by various clubs throughout most of the eastern half of NSW. Some rides are long established and have run from the same location for decades. Other rides may be one-off events. Ride bases can be on private land, regional showgrounds, or government reserves. Courses may be run through State Forests or National Parks, on private land, along Council roads, or a combination of these.

Who can participate?

If you are over 4 years of age, you can enter a ride! But you do not need to ride to become part of the endurance family – there's a range of fun and interesting volunteer opportunities for everyone!

ESSENTIALS

Horse

It is a horse sport so there must be a horse. But you don't need to own a horse to compete. If you are a capable rider there are often opportunities to ride for other people. The best way to get started is to attend rides as a volunteer or strap for someone you know, so you can start to make contacts and become known.

Any breed of horse can do endurance, even mules compete on occasions. Most people start endurance on the horse they currently own. Generally the lighter-muscled medium-sized breeds are more successful, such as Arabians, Thoroughbreds, Stockhorses, Standardbreds and Appaloosas.

There is no doubt that this is a sport where the Arabian horse excels. So if you are buying a horse specifically to be *competitive* in endurance, then it is advised you consider an Arabian or Arabian derivative.

There are minimum age limits for horses to compete in endurance.

Introductory rides: min. age 3 1/2yrs and with central incisor teeth erupted and in full wear and middle incisors erupted.

Intermediate rides: min. age 4 1/2yrs and with a full mouth of permanent teeth erupted.

Endurance rides: min. age 5 yrs and with a full mouth of permanent teeth erupted and permanent incisors in wear.

There is no maximum age providing the head vet considers the horse capable of travelling the distance entered.

Stallions may be entered in any ride, but must be handled and ridden by a person 18yrs or over.

Horses must have a logbook (blue or yellow) and current annual or lifetime registration with the AERA to enter rides of 80km or more.

Equipment

There is no uniform or compulsory dress code for endurance. However, riders are expected to wear clothing that is neat, safe and tidy. Equipment rules are generally based on safety.

You must wear on your head a fastened protective equestrian helmet in accordance with current international equestrian competition standards.

You must wear your allocated number bib (this will be provided when you register at the ride office at the event) on the outside of your clothing when riding, and when presenting your horse for the vet inspections.

If you choose to ride in joggers or other low-heeled shoes, it is recommended that you have cages over the front of your stirrups to prevent your feet slipping through.

Breastplates should be considered if your saddle is likely to slip when going up hills. You may not know whether this is necessary for you if you mainly ride flat work. A test ride on hills is recommended.

Spurs, crops, whips, standing martingales and ear plugs are not permitted in endurance in Australia. It is prohibited to whip a horse on any occasion. Compression hoods and blinkers are permitted, but must not restrict the forward vision of a horse.

You may ride in a halter, hackamore, bitless bridle or bridle, as long as you are deemed by the Chief Steward to be in control of your horse. You must have reins connected to tack on the head of the horse.

You may choose to ride in whatever saddle best fits you and your horse. You may also choose to ride without a saddle, or to use a bareback pad.

Your horse may be shod with your choice of shoe, or ridden booted or barefoot, as long as the Vet judges that the feet are adequately prepared for the ride entered.

Makes sure you train in the same gear that you plan to compete in, to ensure that it fits well and does not rub.

MEMBERSHIP

Become a member

There are four membership categories available:

Adult Riding: Full membership with voting rights, required for adult entry into rides of 80km or more.

Junior Riding: Membership without voting rights, for Junior entry into rides of 80km or more (Juniors are riders who will attain the age of 17 yrs or less in the year of the ride).

Intermediate: Membership without voting rights, for riders who plan to ride at the introductory or intermediate level.

Associate: Membership without voting rights, for those not planning to enter any rides, but who like to be involved and receive the newsletter.

You can elect to purchase Personal Accident Insurance under the Australian Endurance Riders Association Master Policy with your membership (except Associate). This provides cover for participation at organised endurance events, and also when training for such events. You should read the full policy to confirm it is right for you.

Or not ...

For introductory and intermediate rides you do not need to pay for an annual membership.

However, you will need to pay a small day membership fee on top of your ride entry fee for each ride you enter. Note that this day membership does not provide the same insurance cover as can be taken up with an annual membership.

JUNIOR RIDERS

A Junior Rider is one who will attain the age of 17 years or less in the calendar year of the ride they are entering.

The minimum age to enter an Introductory ride is 4 years (on the day of the ride). The minimum age to enter an Intermediate or Endurance ride is 5 years (on the day of the ride).

Riders less than 5 years of age must be accompanied by an adult pedestrian. The horse may be led. Riders 5 years or older and less than 10 years must be accompanied by an adult either on foot or mounted.

Junior riders are not permitted to ride stallions in official events.



ENDURANCE JARGON

Novice	All riders and horses start as novices. Riders and horses graduate to ' <i>endurance</i> ' status when they have successfully completed three 80km rides.
Elevator	A ride with an optional second leg, such that you can withdraw after successful completion of the first leg and still obtain a completion. In standard multi-leg rides you are not recorded as a completion if you withdraw before the end of the final leg.
Social ride	Outdated term for an introductory ride.
Training ride	Outdated term for an intermediate ride.
TPR	Temperature-Pulse-Respiration, TPR Stewards will assess your horse at the Vet Area prior to your Vet inspection
Vetted Out	General phrase for not having passed a Vet inspection.
Tom Quilty	Australia's National Championship is the 160km Tom Quilty Gold Cup.
Vet-gate-into-hold	An alternate procedure to the Australian standard for finishing and vetting at a ride. Usually used at FEI rides, and at championship events.
Logbook	Logbooks are required for entry into rides of 80km or more (blue for novice, yellow for qualified). Once a horse has been issued with a logbook, this should be used for all rides, including introductory and intermediate rides.
Strapping	Refers to the art of preparing your horse for the vet inspection. Typically it means cooling your horse down to reduce heart rate.

- Riding weight** This is relevant to adult riders in rides of 80km or more. Riding weight determines the weight division you enter, either Lightweight, Middleweight or Heavyweight. Riding weight is the combined weight of the rider and their saddle. Juniors are a separate division without weight restrictions.
- Completion** You have completed a ride when you have finished the distance and successfully passed the vet inspection at the end.
- Wake-up Call** It is traditional at endurance rides that a wake-up call is broadcast throughout the camp 1 hour prior to the start of the main endurance ride on Sunday morning. This may be a car horn, somebody shouting out, or use of a PA system.
- Best-Conditioned** For rides of 80km or more, up to the fastest 5 horses in each division are invited to re-present to the Vets as a group after finishing, to compete for the Best-Conditioned Award. This usually involves a ridden workout, similar to a hack class at a show. This award is calculated on a formula using heart rate, finish time, weight carried and the Vet score.



TRAINING

RIDER

There is much focus on training of the horse for endurance, but it is important not to overlook rider training and skills development.

To help your horse travel efficiently and safely, focus on your balance in the saddle, and understand trot diagonals and canter leads, so you can regularly change them to evenly work both sides of your horse.

Attending an endurance ride as a spectator, or even better, as a volunteer, or a strapper for an experienced rider, will help you prepare yourself and your horse for your first event.

HORSE

MIND

In tests of endurance the mind is equally as important as physical fitness to achieve success. Preparing your horse mentally for an endurance ride will help to reduce their stress, making the experience more achievable and enjoyable for both of you, and safer for everyone.

Preparation for vetting – your horse should be able to stand still while a stranger moves around them measuring heart rate and breaths, inserts a rectal thermometer (you will need to do this at home before attending a ride to complete your Horse Health Declaration), and pulls up their lips to inspect their gums. You will need to run your horse out at a trot for the vets on a *loose* lead – it is a good idea to practise this at home.

Preparation for the event – one of the big challenges for novice endurance horses is learning to travel at a steady pace along a trail with horses in sight up ahead, and horses coming up behind and then passing. It can be helpful to practise this beforehand if trail riding with a friend or group of friends.

BODY

There are many differing opinions on training a horse for endurance, and different approaches work better for different horses and in different situations. The following points provide some general guidance:

- The average horse walks at about 4-6kph, trots at about 8-12kph, and canters at about 15-25kph.
- In a 1 hour active dressage session, you are likely to have ridden around 10km. Collection, lateral work and deep sand combine to provide a more strenuous workout than travelling 10km along a trail.
- Many endurance riders recommend training around 2-4 times per week for ride distances of 20km or more, which could include flat work sessions as well as trail rides. It is important to include rest days for muscles to recover and develop in response to the training.
- Do not leave trail work out of your training program, as your horse needs to learn to develop rhythm for long stretches, build bone density on compacted ground, and become used to the various obstacles and sights of the trail.
- At the introductory level, you should aim to travel at around 10kph on the trail, maintaining a steady rhythm and pace. Though most introductory rides will allow you to travel slower. The maximum speed you may travel at a ride is 14kph.
- At the intermediate and endurance level, you should be travelling steady at a minimum of 10kph over your ride distance. The maximum speed for novice horses and riders, and for all riders in intermediate distance events is 14kph.
- Practice checking your horse's heart rate when you finish training and then after cooling down. Recovery time is a good indication of fitness, and this knowledge of your horse will be useful at a ride.
- If your horse is kept stabled or in a confined space, or is kept alone and does not move around much at leisure, you will need to put in more training than if your horse spends its leisure running in a large paddock with a herd.

- If your horse is young or is not currently in any work, you will need to start with long slow distance work, to develop bone density and strengthen tendons and ligaments, which are essential if your horse is to have a long sound career. Cardiac fitness alone is not enough.
- In this situation, a general guide would be 2-4 weeks of just walking, then 2-4 weeks introducing some trotting for short distances interspersed with walking, then start building up the trot distances, and introducing some hills. By 8-12 weeks you should be trotting about 50% of the time, and travelling close to 10kph. At this time you may like to start introducing short canter sessions, to work on cardiac fitness for faster work.
- If you are building up your training for a 40+km ride, you should gradually build up to riding 3-4 times per week, including a 10km faster session (approx 15kph), a 25-30km steady session (approx 10kph), and a 5-10km quiet ride, flat work or other cross training.
- Encourage your horse to drink at every opportunity whilst training, as this will become very important when in competition, and is a good habit to develop.

SOUL

Beware of overtraining your horse. Too much work too soon can lead to a horse becoming depressed or sullen. This may be demonstrated by a change in behaviour when you arrive at the paddock, with your horse turning away from you rather than looking at you or approaching.

If in doubt, give your horse a break, or change your routine – perhaps a walk in hand to graze some fresh grass instead of a ride. Or perhaps a massage or some body work to ease sore muscles and develop your bond.

A successful endurance horse needs to be keen to go.

FEEDING

As for training, there are many differing opinions on feeding. The following points provide some general guidance:

- A high fibre diet of pasture or hay provides a good base diet for an endurance horse.
- You should include a mineral supplement to balance the base diet.
- Depending on your horse and your training program, you may need to add a grain or other feed to increase the energy component. Avoid overfeeding on grains or high energy feeds, you do not want to deal with an overfed excited horse in a new situation. Avoid overfeeding on rest days, as this can result in 'tying up'.
- Do not change your base feed regime just before an event.
- Horses that are in work should be supplemented with electrolytes. Normal table salt (sodium chloride) is generally sufficient during training and for shorter distance rides. You will need to introduce it into your horses feed gradually. You will not overdose a horse on salt, any excess is rapidly excreted from their system. Palatability can be used as a guide to quantity. Do not rely on free range salt licks – some horses will not use them, or will only use them sparingly.
- At the event, it is important that your horse maintains hydration. Fibre in the gut will help with this. Feeding soaked hay or beet pulp will assist with maintaining hydration if your horse is not drinking.
- Your horse may be a fussy eater at events if nervous or excited. In such cases many riders will offer a variety of foods, such as different hays, bran mashes, treats such as carrots and apples, water with molasses *etc*, to entice their horse to eat and drink.
- Bringing drinking water from home may help to ensure that your horse drinks well at the ride base. The horse water provided may vary in taste from what your horse is used to. As a guide to quantity, the average horse will drink around 20L per day.

HOW TO ENTER A RIDE

- 1 Choose your event. You or a riding buddy may have seen a brochure or advertisement for a local ride. Alternatively you can look up coming events on the NSW Endurance Riders Association ride calendar <https://nswera.asn.au/calendar/current-yearly-calendar/range.listevents/- .html>
- 2 Different events will have different requirements for entry. Details will be on the brochure, or you can follow links from the ride calendar to specific websites or information pages for the event you are interested in. Contact details for the ride organiser will be provided on the ride calendar link. Do not be shy to contact them with any queries, although do please try to be organised ahead of time, and avoid lengthy queries in the week before the event.
- 3 There are two typical booking procedures, either:
 - (i) Pre-nominate via email to the ride organiser – provide your name, contact details and the distance you plan to enter. Then turn up at the event and take your completed entry form and payment (cards not usually accepted) to the ride office; or
 - (ii) Follow the link provided to an on-line booking site (usually Try Booking), enter the details requested and pay online using credit card. If you do not have a credit card, contact the ride organiser to make alternative arrangements for booking and pre-payment. Print out your ticket at the end of the booking process. In some cases your printed ticket will be your ride entry form. If not you will need to complete an entry form and bring this to the ride office when you register at the event. The ride organiser may provide additional instructions such as bringing the printed ticket to the ride office as proof of payment when you register.

- 4 Please notify the ride organiser if you need to cancel your booking. Refunds or part refunds will be available according to the refund policy of the ride organiser.
- 5 When completing entry forms, you **must** use the registered name of your horse if it is registered with a breed society.
- 6 If your horse has an endurance logbook, then you should use the logbook for all rides. The AERA horse number printed on the cover of the logbook (next to the horse's name, not the logbook serial number) should be written on the entry form.

BIOSECURITY

Biosecurity awareness has been growing within the equine community, and now plays a role in most equine events.

The sport of endurance unavoidably requires shared water troughs when out on course. This is a risk you must accept to participate in the sport, as withholding water from horses in competition can lead to serious health consequences and perhaps death.

For endurance in NSW, there is not currently a requirement for horses to be vaccinated against Hendra or any other infectious disease.

However, Hendra vaccination is recommended if you live in or are travelling to a Hendra Risk Zone.

It is recommended that horses are vaccinated for Strangles, a significant bacterial infection which can be transferred through shared troughs.

You will need to complete a Horse Health Declaration for each horse for each event you travel to. This requires monitoring your horse's health for the required period prior to the event, and keeping a daily temperature log. You can find more details here:

<https://nswera.asn.au/forms/horses.html>

WHAT TO PACK: THE BASICS

Rider equipment

Riding gear – don't forget your helmet (no helmet, no ride!)

Water pack that you can wear or carry on your saddle

Paperwork – entry form and payment, or online booking ticket

Membership card (if you have one)

Cash for canteen at the ride base

Basic first aid kit for you and your horse

Horse equipment

Horse Health Declaration (one per horse) – have this handy in the car/truck towing the horse, in case you need to show it at the entry gate

Horse logbook (if your horse has one)

Riding gear (eg saddle, bridle, headstall, lead rope)

Red ribbon for the tail for horses that kick. Blue ribbons for mane, tail & tack for stallions. Ribbon minimum length 30cm, minimum width 2cm.

Rugs (your horse may be tied/yarded in a cool and windy spot, so even if not normally rugged, you should plan to rug at the event – bring a variety of rugs so you can choose what suits the conditions best)

Strapping gear: sponges, scraper, towels, stethoscope/heart-rate monitor

Grooming gear (hoof pick, brushes)

Buckets – the more the merrier, for water, feed and strapping

Horse feed and hay, electrolyte supplement (table salt as a minimum)

If camping, you need a yard for your horse, either electric tape or metal frames in accordance with endurance containment rules.

AT THE ENDURANCE RIDE

Schedule of tasks

- 1 Park and unload
- 2 Register at the ride office
- 3 Prepare for Vet inspection
- 4 Pre-ride Vet inspection
- 5 Pre-ride briefing
- 6 Start
- 7 The course
- 8 Finish
- 9 Strapping
- 10 Vet inspection
- 11 Rest
- 12 Return bib and collect logbook

Park and unload

Larger events are likely to have separate areas designated for overnight camping and for day parking. In these cases there will usually be someone at the entry to guide you where to park. If not, just drive in to where everyone is setting up camp and find a spot.

Unload, set up camp. Take your horse for a short walk and offer them water and food. If you have travelled a long distance or your horse is a nervous floater, you may like to offer a wet bran mash, or soaked beet pulp, or soaked lucerne hay, to restore/maintain good hydration.

Horse water will be provided at the ride base – either brought around by water carts (*eg* RFS), or placed around the base in large communal cubes.

It is a good idea to check your horse after the float trip, and trot them out to check they are not lame. There are no refunds once you have presented to the vets, even if you are vetted out before you start the ride.

Register at the ride office

Go to the ride office, take with you:

- Completed Entry Form (with all necessary declarations signed – rider, trainer, person responsible, junior guardian, day member)
- Payment (or printed Try Booking ticket)
- Horse Health Declaration (if not collected at the ride base entry).
- Membership card (if you are a member of the NSW Endurance Riders Association or other State division ERA).
- Your horse's endurance log book if they have one. If they do not have an endurance log book, you will be issued with a single use vet card for the ride. Your horse must have a logbook in order to enter the 80km endurance ride.

80km endurance riders must take their saddle and riding gear to weigh-in. Other riders do not need to take riding gear to the ride office.

All riders will be assigned a numbered bib. You should wear this to the Vet Area, and during the ride. *Bibs must be returned to the ride office before you leave the ride base.*

Prepare for Vet inspection

Return to your camp, check your horse and make them presentable.

Put a red ribbon in your horse's tail if it is prone to kicking, or gets nervous with other horses close behind. Put a blue ribbon in your horse's mane, tail & tack if it is a stallion. Ribbons should be highly visible rather than decorative, with a minimum length of 30cm and minimum width of 2cm.

Wear your bib and take your horses log book or vet card to the Vet Area. Wear shoes you can safely run in. It is a good idea to take a horse rug with you – there may be a cool breeze at the Vet Area which you do not feel in your camp.

Vet Inspection

Procedure

It is common to need to queue at the Vet Area. It is quite acceptable to walk your horse around in circles to keep them warm.

At the Vet Area you will be met by the Chief Steward who will direct you to a TPR steward. These are trained volunteers who will take your horses temperature (rectal), pulse (heart rate) and respiration (breaths per minute).

You should have your log book or vet card ready for the TPR to write in. Your horse should stand quietly for these procedures. Make sure rugs straps are undone so your horse can easily be checked underneath any rug. The heart rate is taken over a full minute – please do not chat with the TPR steward while they are counting, and do not allow your horse to walk away, graze *etc*

You will then be directed to a Vet. The Vet will assess your horse and complete the log book or vet card.

You will be asked to trot your horse out to a witches hat (approx 40m) and back so the Vet can assess for lameness. Your horse should be on a free rein for this, and not held tightly to restrict head movement. You can slow down to walk around the witches hat at the end, particularly if the ground is wet and slippery.

There may be a volunteer Penciller standing with the Vet who will record the vet scores in your log book or vet card as the Vet is checking your horse. Your log book or vet card will then be kept by the Vet. You may ask about your horses scores (although please don't expect a full discussion if the Vet Area is busy).

You need to pass the vet inspection to be able to start the ride.

Etiquette

For the safety of Vets, officials, volunteers, other riders and horses, please ensure that your horse does not crowd other horses, has been trained to behave for the vet inspection, and can be controlled throughout. The Chief Steward may disqualify a horse if it can not be safely assessed by the Vets. There is no refund on entry fees in this situation.

Please be conscious of stallions in the queue (blue ribbons in mane and tail), and make life easier for the stallion handler by giving the stallion space, particularly if you have a mare in season.

Pre-ride briefing

Attendance at the pre-ride briefing is compulsory for all Novice riders. This is where you are given important details, covering topics such as min. and max. riding times, course marking, course hazards, procedure for emergencies and withdrawing on course, official time, location of the marshalling area and of timing gates. It is held either the evening before your ride, or for day riders, approximately 30-45mins prior to the start.

For introductory rides at larger events, the pre-ride briefing may consist of a document handed to you at the ride office. You must read this document, and are assumed to have done so when you start the ride.

Start

Aim to be ready to start about 15mins prior to your start time, so you can ride around to warm your horse up. At most rides you are permitted to start up to 15 mins late, if you want to avoid the rush. The Chief Steward will record your bib number as you ride out the gate. Do not leave until your number has been checked off!!

Take care to wear the bib allocated to you - not to somebody else in your camp (number to the front). Wear your helmet. Do not take spurs or whips. It is recommended you carry personal drinking water and snacks.

The course

Most rides in NSW now use a standardised set of course markers, but there may be variations, so pay attention to the pre-ride briefing!:



Each ride (or leg of a ride) will follow just one number/colour arrow. Make sure you know which arrow your ride follows. Some rides which have long sections of shared course use the C arrow to indicate a common trail.

CAUTION means slow down and take care. There may be a wombat hole in the track, or a creek crossing, or a narrow bridge etc.

X means wrong way - turn around and go back to find your correct course.

On all public roads and forestry trails, keep left unless overtaking.

Carefully follow your number/colour markers. Do not just follow the riders in front, as they may be doing a different ride to you. If you see a marker but not your number/colour, or the common C, then you have missed your course. You need to back track and look for it.

If you think you may be lost:

- 1 Look for 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, return to the last marker you saw and look for the correct course.
- 3 If you are certain you are on the right course, but cannot find a marker, it is possible it may have fallen down or been removed. Either go back to the last checkpoint to ask for help, or phone the designated contact, or if it is obvious which way to go, continue.

For introductory and intermediate rides, and for novice horses or riders in all rides, there is a speed limit expressed as a minimum time to complete the ride distance. This is part of the horse welfare policy. These rides are not time competitive. No one wins an introductory or intermediate ride.

You will be advised of the minimum ride time for your ride at the pre-ride briefing. It is usually based on a speed of 12kph or 14kph, depending on conditions.

There will also be a maximum ride time expressed as course closure. If you finish after the maximum time you will be disqualified. The maximum time will not require an average speed faster than 10kph, and is usually quite generous for introductory rides.

There will be distance markers placed every 5km or 10km along the course, to help you maintain a consistent pace. It is a good idea to slow down in the last kilometre before base, to assist with heart rate recovery.

Allow your horse to drink as much as they want at every opportunity on the ride. Avoiding dehydration is one of the biggest challenges for novice endurance horses.

If you encounter difficulties on course and would like to withdraw, it is best if you can do this at a checkpoint. If not, either give a message to another rider to take to the next checkpoint, or phone the emergency number given to you at the pre-ride briefing. A rescue float will be sent to your location to collect you. It is important that you provide as much detail about your location as possible, such as distance markers you have passed, road names or intersections, whether you are in forest or open country etc. It is equally important that you do not keep moving once the rescue float has been called. They will usually take a direct route to your location, and may not be able to follow the course looking for you.

When you pass through a checkpoint, call out your bib number to the checkpoint volunteer, and wait until they have confirmed it by calling it back to you before continuing.

Course Etiquette

Please be courteous to the Volunteers on course and show them your lovely smiles and gratitude. Rides cannot be run without them.

Let people know if you are coming up behind them on the track and plan to pass. Call out '*passing on your right when you're ready*', or '*3 horses passing on your right*'. The rider being passed should acknowledge your request and move to the side when it is safe. Please do not pass and then soon after stop or slow down. This can be irritating to other riders.

Do not canter past a rider who is clearly having difficulty controlling their horse, or who is trying to remount - slow down, ask them if they need you to stop, then pass safely.

Respect red and blue ribbons!

Wait your turn at troughs, and never interrupt a horse that is drinking – dehydration is one the main management issues in endurance, and to cause someone else's horse to stop drinking is a major breach of etiquette. Be aware that even if your horse is happy to drink in close company with others, the horse you are barging in alongside of may not be. Talk to the other riders and check if it is OK to come up along side.

If your horse is not drinking and other riders arrive, please move away to allow them to drink. You can always return to try again. Many horses will not drink in the first 20km of a ride, but it is good practice to offer water at every opportunity.

Do not strap your horse from drinking water in troughs along the track – this contaminates the water for those coming after you (leaving an oily film across the water surface). It can be a significant horse welfare issue.

Try to avoid contaminating water in dams, pools or creek crossings along the course. Do not allow your horse to pee or poop in water sources. Try not to let your horse play or paw at the water and stir up sediment, especially if other horses are drinking at the same time.

If there is an emergency on track – you must stop and offer assistance. The Chief Steward will endeavour to credit you with time lost, and may extend the course time for you to complete if necessary.



Finish

When you reach the finish line your time will be recorded at the time tent, and you will be handed a paper time slip which tells you your finish time, your vet time, and if you are doing a multi-leg ride, the start time for your next leg.

Remember - you have not completed your ride until you have passed the final Vet check. You must do this even if you came in on the rescue float. You have a maximum of 30 minutes to return to camp, strap your horse, and then be at the vet area. Failure to present to the Vets is a serious breach of the horse welfare policy.

Strapping

When you get back to camp, remove all riding gear from your horse, offer them water (as much as they want – walk them for a bit if they have a big drink) and assess their condition. Check hooves for stones or loose shoes.

Learning what strapping your horse requires is part of endurance riding. Your aim is to present your horse to the vets with a heart rate below 55bpm, with an alert expression, a desire to eat, soft and supple muscles, and with a free sound trot. Most riders like to present their horses in a tidy manner, with mud and sweat cleaned off.

If your horse is hot and sweaty, apply water using either a hose, or buckets, or bucket and sponge until they feel cool (not cold). Water is best applied to major blood vessels such as on the neck, shoulders, and inside the hind legs. Avoid putting cold water on muscles over the rump and back as this can cause cramps. Scrape excess water off and check the heart rate. Repeat this process until the heart rate is stable below 55bpm.

If conditions are cool and windy, you may only need to do a quick clean up and then rug to prevent a chill. If your horse gets too cold this will raise the heart rate. It can be a good idea to ask someone at camp for their opinion of the weather conditions, as your judgement may not be reliable if you are hot and tired yourself. Have a look at what other people are doing.

Once your horse feels to be a normal temperature and the heart rate is comfortably below 55bpm, walk your horse for a minute and then re-check. Then allow your horse rest with constant access to water (tepid is best) until vetting. It is often a good idea to place a towel or light rug over the loins to avoid a chill.

Many riders will walk their horse around gently to keep them limber so they are not stiff in the trot out, and to also provide opportunity to pick on fresh green grass. It is a balance between keeping them limber, letting them relax to lower the heart rate, and letting them graze to re-fuel.

Chewing hay will increase the heart rate by up to 10bpm, so make sure your horse has finished eating before presenting to the vet.

Monitor your horse closely until the vet inspection.

If you are concerned about anything, stay calm and ask for assistance. Most people are very happy to offer advice.

Vet Inspection

Return to the vet area *within 30 mins* of your finish time. It is a good idea to plan to be at the Vet Area 10 mins before time, so you are not rushing and so your horse relaxes in this environment.

Wear your bib, and take a rug for your horse. You'll repeat the vetting process. Your log book or vet card will again be kept by the Vet, and can be collected later from the ride office.

Rest

After vetting, return to your camp and let your horse relax for at least 1hr with water and food.

Bib and logbook

Return your bib to the ride office, or other designated return area.

Collect your log book or vet card from the ride office or other designated presentation desk. Please be patient if there is a delay, as the log books go through several checks and must have all data entered into the National database before they are released (again, part of the horse welfare policy). The office volunteers will be working as fast as they can.

You will also be presented with your completion award if eligible.

Please note that your horse is officially under the control of the Head Vet until the Head Vet has signed off on the log book or vet card. Your horse should not be removed from the ride base before this time.

CONTACTS AND LINKS

Australian Endurance	www.aera.asn.au
NSW Endurance	www.nswera.asn.au
Sydney & Environs	www.zone1enduranceriding.com.au
Central West	www.nswzone2endurance.wixsite.com/centralwest
Lachlan	www.facebook.com/Lachlan-Endurance-Riders-Club-LERC-355673674554291/
Snowy	www.nswera.asn.au/members/zones/zone-4-snowy.html
ACT	www.actera.org.au
South Coast	https://www.facebook.com/SouthCoastZoneEndurance/
Southern Highlands	www.highlandsendurance.com
Mid North Coast	www.facebook.com/Zone-6-Endurance-Riders-Nswera-322298471242127/



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