

ITINERARY FOR AN ENDURANCE RIDE

By Susan Trader

The majority of the endurance rides (and competitive trail rides) follow the same general itinerary. Hopefully after reading this, you will feel more comfortable as you start your endurance riding career. However, each endurance ride will vary with regard to different aspects, so make sure you read the guidelines for each ride.

The day before the ride, go to the registration desk and pick up your ride packet and pay any outstanding money you owe. Most ride packets include an itinerary for that particular ride, a map of the ride, your ride evaluation card, and your meal tickets.

You will need to vet your horse in the evening before the ride. This will include the veterinarian taking your horse's pulse and respiration. He/she will check the horse over, noting any wounds the horse may have, and checking the horse's mucus membranes, capillary refill, jugular refill, skin tenting, gut sounds, anal tone, muscle tone, back withers, and tack galls. You will then do a "trot out", which means you will lead your horse at a trot away from the veterinarian about 50 yards and then turn around and trot back. They will then note the horse's gait, impulsion, and attitude. The vet will then rate your horse on a scale of A through D on each of these parameters, and will give an overall impression of your horse. If the veterinarian notes any problems, he/she can/will pull you from the ride at that point. If your horse passes the pre-ride vet check, the vet will give you your ride evaluation card and you are done until the morning.

Most endurance rides start early in the morning. You will usually get a wake-up call around 1½ hours before the ride starts. Some rides provide breakfast the day of the ride, some not. When it is time for the ride to begin, the timer will usually give you a five minute warning. You will need to check in with the timer before the ride starts to give him/her your assigned number. When it is time for the race to start, you will be given the word, and it is off you go.

Depending on the ride, your vet checks will either be out on the trail or else back at base camp. If it is an "away" vet check, then you will need to have your vet check supplies taken there the night before. These supplies will usually consist of electrolytes for the horse, grain/beet pulp/hay cubes/hay for the horse, drinking water for the horse, water buckets (with water) and sponges to cool down your horse, snacks and drinks for you, possibly a blanket/cooler for the horse, possibly an easy boot or extra shoes for the horse, and anything else you think you might need.

The vet checks during the ride will resemble the pre-ride vet check, except for several things. When you enter the vet check, the in-timer will mark on your ride card the time you entered the vet check. You then need to go to your supplies and get your horse's pulse down to usually 64. Once the pulse is down, you will need to go to the P&R station, where they will check the horse's pulse to make sure it is

down to the required number and will record the pulse on your ride card. Once down, they will send you to see the vet. The vet will then take the horse's pulse, and will do a "trot out" like you did at the pre-ride vet check. He/she will then wait 60 seconds and will take your horse's pulse again. Your horse must be at or below that pulse to continue. The vet will then check the mucus membranes, etc. that was checked at the pre-ride vet check. If your horse passes the vet check, make sure you get your ride evaluation card back from the vet recorder. Once you pass the vet check, take your ride card to the out-timer to get your "out time". You will not be allowed to leave the vet check and continue on the ride, until your "out time". You may leave after that time, but not before.

If the vet feels your horse is not fit to continue, then you will be pulled. If you feel like your horse isn't right, now is the time for you to pull yourself out of the ride. If you are pulled, an "ambulance" trailer is normally provided to take you back to base camp. The vet recorder will keep your ride evaluation card.

Many rides also have "trot bys" which means that a vet will be somewhere along the trail and will watch you trot by. If he/she thinks your horse is lame or not fit to continue, you will be pulled at that point.

At the end of the ride is the completion vet check. It resembles the previous vet checks. Most completion vet checks require that your horse's pulse be down to 60 to complete. You will go through the P&R check and then on to see the vet. You will do another trot out and all the horse's vital signs will be checked. If the vet does not feel like your horse is fit to continue, he/she will pull you at the finish line and you will not receive a completion for the ride. It is a hard thing to take when you have finished 30 miles, 50 miles, 75 miles, and then the vet pulls your horse at the completion vet check and you don't get a completion award. You just have to remember that if the vet does not feel like your horse is fit to continue, then it is their job to pull the horse.

Hopefully after reading this, you will feel more confident going to your first endurance ride. Enjoy and remember the Old Dominion follows the American Endurance Ride Conference motto: TO FINISH IS TO WIN!

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