



Endurance: an overview



What is Endurance?

“Endurance is a
long-distance competition
against the clock,
testing the **speed and endurance of a horse**
and **challenging the rider over their effective use of pace, thorough
knowledge of their horse’s capabilities
and ability to cross all kinds of terrain.**
Although the rides are timed, the emphasis is on
finishing in good condition rather than coming in first.”

FEI Definition

What is Endurance?

The best hacking
you will ever do

Building a huge
bond with your
horse

Fitness, courage
and long-term
stamina



Off-road, well
signed and
stewarded

Dealing with a
variety of natural
terrains

The closest we
get to a horse's
life in the wild

What do you get from Endurance – apart from fitness?



Relaxation
Mental focus
Motivation



“No hour of life is wasted that is spent in the saddle.”
Winston Churchill

How did it begin?

- From the 1800s onwards, **epic long riding races** (in America and Europe) became famous, sometimes with **prize money** at stake
- Riders (especially cowboys) wanted to prove the **quality and stamina** of their horses before **breeding**: it got highly competitive
- **Horse welfare** quickly became an issue: so the challenge soon became **to win in good condition**, not just to win at any cost
- Endurance started as a formal sport in the USA, where the **US cavalry** tested its horses on a **five-day, 300-mile (483km) ride**, with each horse carrying over 200lbs (91kg). The horses (and soldiers) needed to be fit enough to do this ride and finish ready to fight a battle!
- Endurance became an official competitive sport in the **1950s** when the **Western States Trail Ride (Tevis Cup)** was inaugurated in 1955 (100 miles in 24 hours: still the world's premier race today). Endurance was established in the UK in the **1960s**
- **Endurance became an FEI discipline in 1982**

Nan J. Aspinwall, the "Montana Girl", rode from San Francisco to New York in 1911: 3,200 miles in 178 days (18 miles a day).



President Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) started the US Army Test Ride which grew into the sport of modern endurance.

What do you need to do it?

- **Any ordinarily fit pony or horse**
 - Doing at least 1 hour a day, 5 days a week
- Your **usual tack** (nice and clean!)
- Your **usual correct standard hat, boots /chaps, gloves and riding gear**
- **An escort** (if you are under 13): bring a parent or a friend!

→ It is **CHEAP** to get started, and **ANYONE** can do it!

You do **not** need...

...an Arab!
...Dayglo, plastic or other special tack!
... to wear trainers!
...to trot on the road!
...to be over 40!
...to be an expert on mapreading!

Who is it good for?

A form of ridden enrichment

Endurance is ideal for:

- Improving fitness and balance in horse and rider
- Teaching horse and rider to cope with natural terrain (XC course)
- Relaxing and de-stressing both horse and rider
- Bonding horse and rider together: creating a strong partnership
- Bringing dressage out of the arena and into real life

It's also really useful for:

- Ponies who don't or won't jump
- Ponies who have gone stale or "stuffy"
- Riders who need to develop confidence outside the arena

You can ride
in company or solo: or a mixture!

In PC competitions,
riders 12 & under
must have an
escort (so always in
company).

There are even
lead rein classes.

Skills you need as a rider: Mounted

- **Fitness** and suppleness
- **Balance**: cantering in a raised seat for extended periods of time
- Keeping your horse going **forward**
- **Reading the ground** you ride
- Following **route signs**
- Riding with **confidence** in nature in all weathers
- **Mounting and dismounting**: from both sides, using gates or verges
- **Bridging your reins** correctly
- **Gates!** Opening and shutting



Above all,
you **learn to**
carry yourself:
the horse
doesn't carry
you!

You both need balance!



Horses Inside Out



Tevis Cup, USA

Learning to read your horse right through the race

Testing your
horsemanship
and your
partnership:

To finish
IS
to win



James Dickinson and Magdy, FEI Endurance World Endurance Championship Butheeb (UAE), February 2023: 42nd

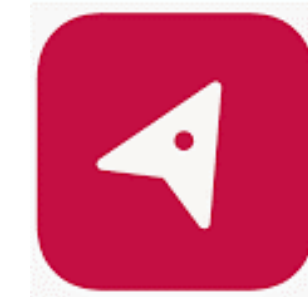
Skills you need as a rider: Dismounted

- **Tack cleaning!** Clean, well-oiled tack is essential
- **Grooming** and washing off
- **Nutrition and hydration:** learning to look after both yourself and your horse throughout the challenge!
 - Using electrolytes
 - Body condition scoring
- **Trotting up correctly** for a vet
- Knowing how to check your horse's **respiration rate, pulse and temperature**
- **Keen observation of your horse at all times:**
“Know your normal!”



Skills you need as a rider: Dismounted

- **Reading a map:** the routes are usually well signed, but this is a skill you will **develop**:
 - Working out **how tough a route is** from the map
 - Working out **your own time plan** for competitions: setting your own goals. *“Ride your own race”*
 - Knowing how to help yourself with a map if you do feel lost
- **Route planning:** Rights of Way, road safety, the Highway Code
 - Using OS Maps
 - Using what3words
- Knowing the **Countryside Code** and being aware of nature all around you, including crops...



Connecting to nature and the countryside: a working place!



*Don't spoil Kaleb's crops
– or leave a gate open
for his sheep to escape!*



Skills your horse or pony needs

Out on the trail

- **Fitness** in a correct way of going
- **Surefootedness** over mixed terrains and hills
- Going through **water**
- **Bravery** in a changing natural environment: traffic, bins, bunting, birds, **cows, deer, pigs** etc
- **Learning to relax in open spaces:** drinking and eating
- Light to dark, dark to light through **woodland**
- **Being overtaken** and not chasing
- **Gates!** Opening and shutting

Above all, you and your horse must learn to trust each other “out in the real world.”





Skills your horse or pony needs

Training at home: ideas

- Hacking out **slowly**: **lots of active, forward walk!**
Working correctly out hacking: **no arena needed.**
“Hours and miles, not miles an hour”
- **Interval training**
- **Puddles**, streams and river crossings
- **Polework** inc raised poles: building correct strength
- **Hill work**, beach work, water treadmills
- Turn on the forehand
- Leg yield
- Rein back
- Half halt
- Loading, unloading and travelling



Did you know?

- All the top Endurance horses do **dressage at least once a week!**
- Encouraging **correct self-carriage** is one of the best things you can do to help your horse cope with the challenge of long distance rides: *“On the bridle, on the bridge, on the buckle”*
- Never stop working on your own position. **The more correctly you ride, the less you will tire your horse (and yourself!)**



Hacking out safely

Non-digital tools

- Always **tell someone where** you are riding – and **for how long**
- Wear **hi vis** and bright colours
- Wear **hat, gloves** and **long sleeves**
- Visible ID: **on you**
 - Engraved hat tag
- Visible ID: **on your horse**
 - Tack tags: on both **saddle** and **bridle**!



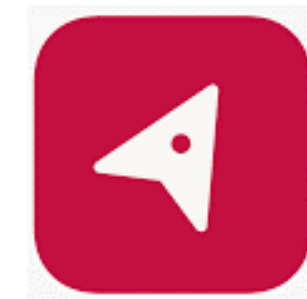
Hacking out safely

Digital tools

- Share your location with family using **FindMy**
- Update your **Health app** with your ICE contacts
- Have **What3Words** – and know how to use it
- Have **OS Maps** to see where you are – and where you are allowed to go!
- Make sure your phone is fully charged before you ride!
- You can add a digital tracker to your horse e.g. **Tractive** (Apple AirTag not so good)



Find My



Health

Hacking out safely

Always in your pocket

- Folding hoofpick
- Fully charged phone with emergency numbers saved
- Piece of baler twine
- Penknife



For longer rides

- Water
- Snacks: not things you will choke on!
- Headcollar and leadrope
- Mini first aid kit: horse and rider (inc survival bag)
- Spare battery pack for your phone
- Emergency whistle
- Compass
- Sun screen
- Fly repellent
- Any emergency medication e.g. inhaler
- Secateurs, wire cutters
- Shoelace, tape (emergency tack repair)
- Hoof boot



The Great Pony Club Hacking Challenge

An opportunity for members to ride out of the arena and explore new areas of the countryside.

Whether you already hack out a lot or want to start hacking more, you just need to sign up to the challenge and track the distances of your rides.

When you hit each milestone (25, 50, 100, 250, 500, 1000 miles), submit your Hacking Tracker screenshots to receive your certificate.

Log 100 miles and qualify for Novice PC Endurance Champs!



100km

250km

500km

1000km

Mileage badges

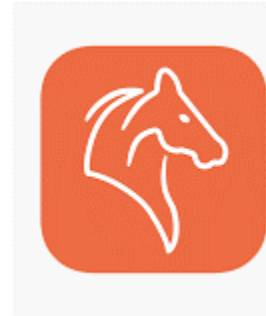
Distance applies to rider and can therefore be accumulated on more than one pony. Members achieving these levels will be included on The Pony Club Endurance roll of honour

Tracking your hacking!

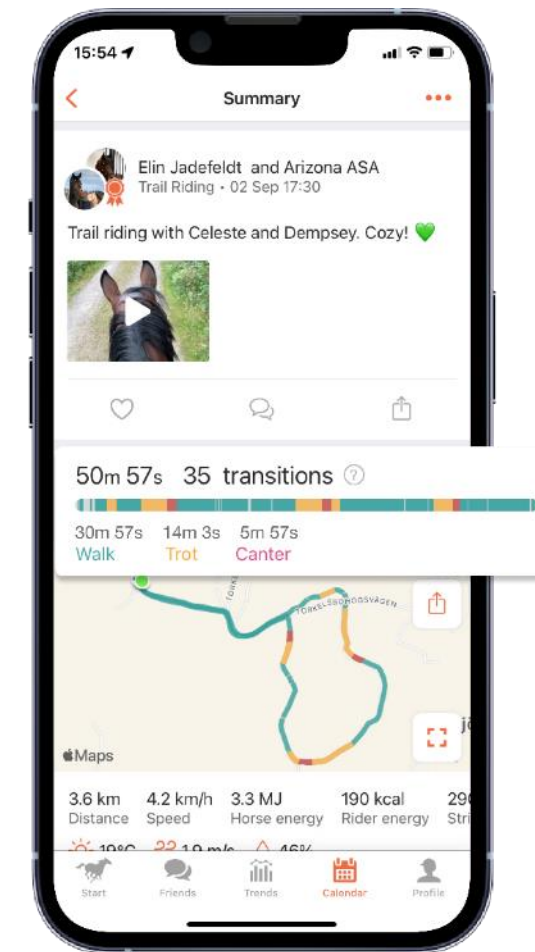
- To prepare for a competition, you need to understand **your horse's average speed** out hacking – and find out **what different speeds feel like over distance**
- **Apps** are the easiest way to discover this
 - Free or paid versions available
 - Compatible with Apple Watch too
- You can also then submit your hacking records to the **Pony Club Hacking Challenge!**
- Make sure you use an **equestrian-specific app**: it will help you analyse your average pace etc. Don't use Strava!



Horse Riding Tracker



Equilab



Getting ready for an Endurance competition

1. Choose your target level

Level 1 & 2 are training rides

Level 3: If you are capable of riding for two hours or more at a time, and you ride at least three times a week including some canter work

Levels 4 & 5: When you and your horse/pony become fitter, try further distances

PC Rides	Level 1 Grassroots	Level 2 Grassroots	Level 3 Novice	Level 4 Intermediate	Level 5 Open
Distance	Under 10km	10-19km	20-29km	30-39km	40+km
Speed	12 kmph or under	12 kmph or under	8-12 kmph	8-13 kmph	10-15 kmph

2. Find a ride at your chosen distance

- **EGB Pleasure Rides (PRs):** a range of distances (e.g. 16km, 32km)
- **EGB Novice Graded Endurance Rides (GERs):** distances 20km to 50km

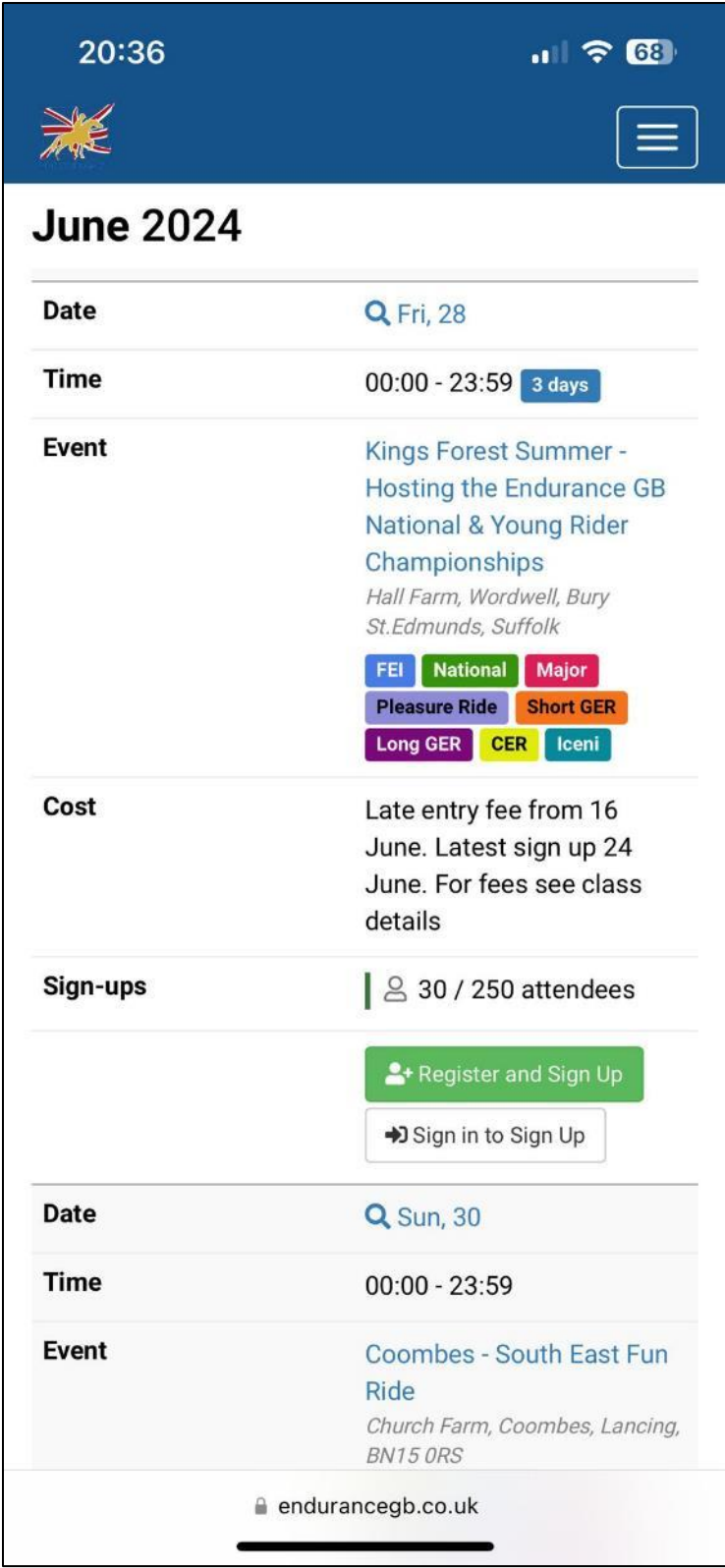
Your PC membership automatically gives you EGB membership.
Branches may also run their own Endurance rides under PC rules.

Riders wanting to take part in The Pony Club Endurance Championships (min 8 years old) must complete a **minimum of two rides at the correct level** before entering.

- Alternative Novice route: gain a 100 mile achievement on the Pony Club Hacking Challenge as a combination

Teams made up of 4 Members from all levels (Novice, Intermediate or Open) and ages: the best 3 scores to count.

For welfare reasons, equines are not usually allowed to compete at more than 10 Endurance rides in a year: so count your rides on your Mastercard.





Before the ride

- Trialling your kit

- Get your Pony Club Mastercard

- Study the route:

 - What will your average speed goal be?

 - When will you get to the crew points?

In the trailer

- Loads of **water!!!** Washing and drinking
- **Slosh bottles**
- **Wash off /grooming kit**
- Selection of **horse food** especially forage
- **Fly spray**
- **First aid kits:** human and equine
- Spare set of **horseshoes**
- Folding **mounting block**
- **Rugs:** cooler, rain sheet
- **Spare tack** in case of emergencies: girth, stirrup leathers, reins!
- Clean numnahs – for rides with vet gates

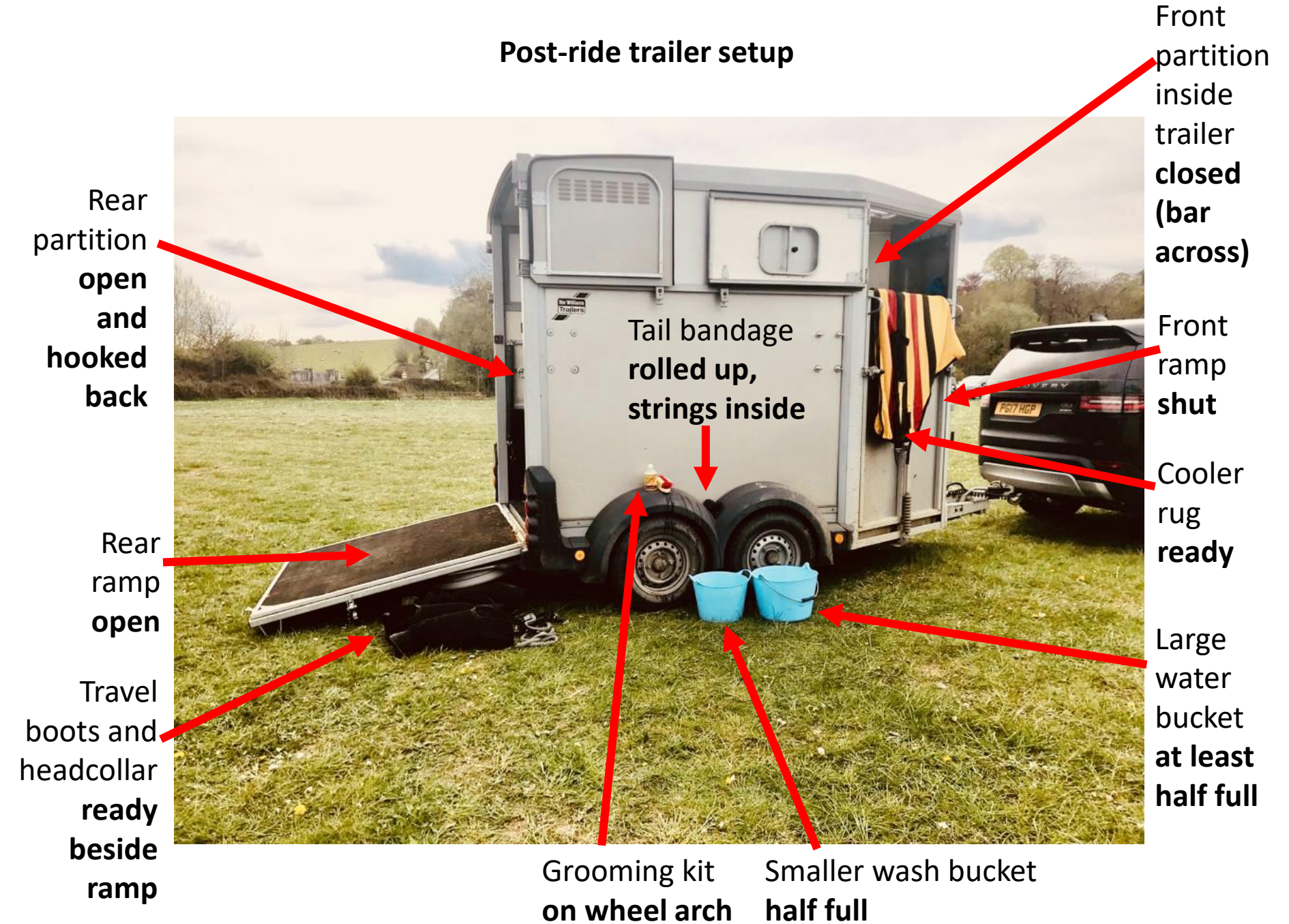


Diagram made for temporary non-horsy crew member to follow!

Kit for your Endurance Ride



What happens at an Endurance ride?

1. **Farrier check**
2. **First veterinary inspection:** trot up: vet measures horse's heart rate and more (up to 9 checks at FEI)
3. **Start to ride** (accompanied if under 12)
4. **Crew points:** offer your horse a drink and snack, and have one yourself! Encourage your horse to drink around the route, and allow your horse to eat grass during the ride
5. **Final kilometre: walk** to bring your horse home calm and quiet
6. **Finish** your ride: clock starts ticking!
7. **30 minutes** to untack, wash off, cool your horse (offer water) and **re-present to vet** with the lowest heart rate possible
8. **Final veterinary inspection:** trot up: vet measures horse's heart rate and more (up to 9 checks at FEI)

If a ride is longer than 40km, there is a Vet Gate every 40km of the ride.

A final heart rate in excess of 64 bpm results in elimination.

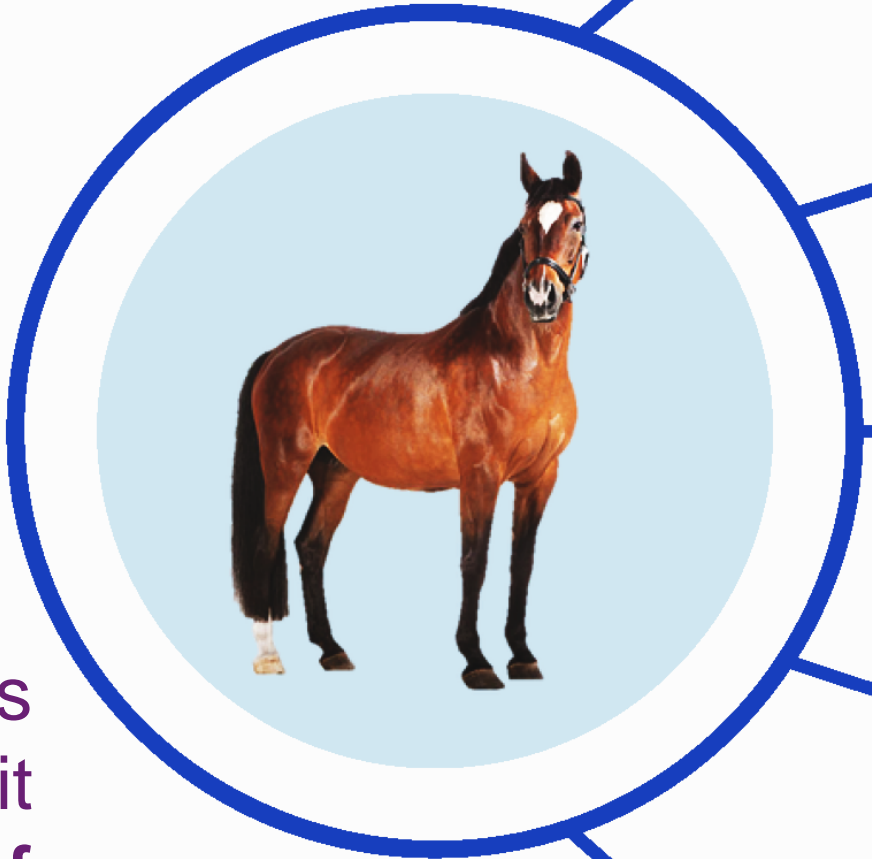
You can also fail if you go **too fast** or **too slow** and if, during the final veterinary inspection, the horse is **lame** or the vet feels the **horse is otherwise not fit to continue**.

Vet checks: (at trot up)

**DEHYDRATION:
skin pinch test**

As a benchmark, all riders and ponies should be in a fit state to complete **50% of the ride distance again** after they have completed the set ride.

EQUINE VITAL SIGNS



1

TEMPERATURE

Normal: 99.0 - 101.5 F
Abnormal: greater than 102 F

37.5 – 38.5 C

2

HEART RATE

Normal: 28 - 42 beats/minute
Abnormal: greater than 48
beats/minute

More than
64 =
elimination

3

RESPIRATION

Normal: 8 -16
breaths/minute
Abnormal: greater than 20

4

CAPILLARY REFILL TIME

Normal: Less than 2 seconds
Abnormal: Greater than 3 seconds

5

MUCUS MEMBRANES

Normal: Pink (Bubble gum color)
Abnormal: White, Red or Blue (Purple)

What do the crew do?



Sloshing!



COOLING



HYDRATION



NUTRITION

ENCOURAGEMENT!

The Performance Formula

$$\frac{(\text{Speed} \times 2 - \text{Minimum Speed}) \times 100}{\text{heart rate}}$$

[speed in kph; heart rate per minute]

- **Created by the Pony Club!**
- A special way of scoring which takes into account the **distance**, your average **speed** and your **horse's finishing heart rate**; all these go into calculating your PF score
- In hot weather /on hard ground, organisers can also designate an **Optimum Time** (so, no competitive benefit in going faster than this)
- Getting the horse fitter and lowering their pulse at the end of the ride **will score you more points** than riding faster
- **You will get more points for riding slower with a low pulse than you will riding faster with a higher pulse**

The trick is to
**ride at the
perfect speed**
that will bring
your horse in at
its **lowest
possible
finishing pulse**
for its level of
fitness

How do I learn more?

- **Volunteer** at an EGB ride:
 - Being a Vet Writer gives you a whole day watching Endurance vettings at all levels – no better way to learn (plus: meet some of the finest vets in the world!)
 - Route stewarding also teaches you a lot
 - Everyone will give you tips if you ask!
- **Groen Equestrian** free Endurance training (online videos)
- Read Endurance books



Let your adventures begin!

GOOD



LUCK!