

Getting started in endurance

Start off with pleasure rides (known as group social rides or Non Competitive rides) with the minimum and maximum speeds of 8-12 kph (5-7.5 mph). You receive a rosette for completing within the time allowed. At some pleasure rides, if they are run at the same event as EGB competitive classes, you may be asked to trot your horse up for the vet before and after the ride. In a Competitive ride the vet will also check the horse over for 'lumps and bumps' and take the pulse, which must be 64 beats per minute or below. The Farrier will also check your horse's shoes before the start.

Here are some hints and tips to help you prepare to compete in an EGB competitive ride:

Prepare at home:

- Teach your horse to trot up for the vet. If you are unsure of his behaviour – use a bridle
- Practice sloshing at home – it can be a bit of a shock to the horse the first time having water poured on him (we use fabric conditioner bottles to pour water over the neck)
- Practice taking the pulse with either a stethoscope or pulse monitor
- Get him used to drinking out of the lidded buckets your crew will be taking to the ride (this means your crew can put them back into the car boot with the lid on & drive to the next meeting place without spills)

Entering a competitive ride:

- Enter the ride in plenty of time – many rides get full soon after the opening date in the schedule
- Get everything ready the day before. Horse & tack should be clean & tidy
- Fill in forms for vetting before you go. Remember to pack log book membership & horse registration cards if a competitive ride
- Read information and maps sent by the organiser. Note compulsory walking sections etc.
- Work out speeds to the checkpoints at your slowest, mid-way and fastest time allowed to the finish. Write this on a sticker on your map so you can judge your speed on the way round (give a copy to your crew)

At the ride:

- Arrive approx 30 mins before vet time
- Walk horse around
- Offer horse & rider a drink
- Collect bib from secretary – take your paperwork, log book, membership cards etc.
- Check notice-board for route changes etc.
- Horse should not have saddle or boots on for the vetting. English weather usually needs a rug though
- Wear your bib for the vetting and if you have a friend/crew with you take them to hold forms/rugs
- Novice horse should wear a green ribbon in its tail, red ribbon for kicker, blue ribbon for stallion (plus tags on bridle)

If you need help just ask organiser, another rider or crew

On the way round:

- Don't feel you have to ride at the speed of someone you started with or met on the way round (they might be in a different class)
- If you need to pass another horse – ask
- Always look for markers – don't follow the horse in front of you (they sometimes go the wrong way)
- Give your number to the check point stewards
- Thank the stewards on the way round

At the end of the ride:

- You must be mounted as you cross the line
- Timekeeper will advise you of your finish time and the latest time you can present to the vet
- Present to the vet anytime up to 30 minutes after finishing

Before vetting

- Loosen girth, put on head-collar
- Put rug on quarters
- Offer horse a drink constantly
- Take horse's pulse, tie up haynet
- Pick the feet out
- Sponge horse down neck/inside back legs
- Take pulse at 10 minute intervals (should be going down)
- If weather is cold do not use too much water (shivery horse's pulse goes up)
- Take saddle off after 15 mins (helps to prevent pressure lumps)
- Pulse must be under 64 beats per minute
- Depending on weather, rugs may need to be pulled back or added
- Walk horse around a couple of times
- Stop horse eating 5 minutes before vetting

If you have a pulse monitor strapped to the horse you can learn what makes the pulse go up or down and experiment with what suits your horse

Vetting:

- Arrive at the vetting area a few minutes before 30 mins to give horse's pulse time to come down & settle
- Keep your bib on
- Be careful not to walk close to other horses

After vetting:

- Rug horse to keep warm
- Give hay net & get ready to travel
- Completion of paperwork sometimes takes time – please be patient
- This is a good chance to chat to other riders whilst you wait
- Return bib & collect rosette
- Thank the secretary!