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## Endurance Strategies 101

### A Few Simple Strategies

1. Begin adding salt to the feed a few days before the ride to encourage the horse to begin drinking early. (*Make sure the horse has access to plenty of fresh water!*) Assuming the horse drank well the night before the ride, feed electrolytes early the morning of competition.
2. Feed the horse as much hay as he will eat the night before the ride—you want the guts full of forage. Feed grain in small amounts before and during the ride—during the ride, wet the grain with as much water as the horse will tolerate. Since grain is dry, this means the horse will not have to use water already in his system to digest the grain. Allow the horse as much hay and grass as there is time for.
3. Always, but especially in hot conditions, maximize your opportunities to cool the horse. Encourage drinking wherever possible. Whenever you can, especially if the horse is not drinking well, apply water to the horse's neck and legs with a sponge or water scoop, or stand the horse in water. (Every drop you supply for evaporation is one less drop the horse has to sweat). Linger in the shade; make time in the sun. (Open sunny areas are more likely to have a breeze, or you can make one by traveling well. Shady areas are often still and humid; it may be harder for the horse to work in dense woods than in the open.)
4. Any time terrain slows you to a walk, you might as well get off—steep hills, very rocky areas. You will save the horse's energy and legs, and you will ride better afterwards!
5. Come into the vet checks slowly—you may want to dismount a short distance out. Loosen your girth, remove the bit if possible, you may want to scratch the horse's head. Learn what makes your horse relax; think about staying with a 'buddy', for example. Many horses' pulse is elevated by eating; most horses won't pulse down if they have to urinate. Not only does he have to recover from work, he has to relax after the excitement of the trail.
6. Don't get lost! Pay attention to the markers! and above all—remember to have fun!