

PREVENTING TREATMENT

Proper Horsemanship Before, During and After the Ride

This checklist is a tool for the rider in the proper care of the horse before, during and after the ride. Riders should seek more information about each idea. See the AERC rider and vet handbook, volunteer to help at a ride, etc.

Pre-ride

1. Know your horse. As part of training and conditioning learn to do your own “vet check exams”: End workouts with a quick exam including trot out, check for dehydration, pulse, etc. The best riders learn ADR—Ain’t Doin’ Right—a very important parameter although difficult to define. Monitor the horse’s weight. It should be neither too heavy nor too lean. Keep a log book.
2. Maintain a regular deworming program. Endurance riding can exacerbate underlying parasite damage.
3. Bring a healthy horse to ride. Check rectal temp, do a mini-exam before leaving home and after arriving. Longe in circle to check for lameness.
4. Bring the horse into the ride well hydrated. Electrolyte to encourage drinking upon arrival, feed slurries, or even bring water from home for finicky drinkers. For horses accustomed to green grass, hand grazing on grass is excellent.
5. Minimize trailer stress. Provide water regularly. Use fly masks to protect eyes. Horses trailered more than three hours need 12 hours to recover; more than five hours requires a full day. Loosen up muscles after trailering through easy exercise.
6. Minimize feed changes. Make changes long before ride when possible. Make sure horse has plenty of forage.
7. Watch EDPP-MF: eating, drinking, peeing, pooping and moving freely. Know what is normal and observe your horse.
8. Plan your ride carefully; plan a ride time based on past ride times, weather, trail conditions and state of conditioning your horse. Ride to your plan, not to what other horses are doing.
9. Electrolyte starting well before the ride (as long as the horse drinks properly)—at least the day before and the morning of a ride.
10. Maintain proper hoof care. Shoe appropriately for ride to minimize chances of injury and extra stress.
11. Secure horses at the ride site. Make sure your horses are trained to respect your stabling arrangement.
12. Select rides and ride strategy carefully. Base how you ride on vet controls, the number of and distance between holds, etc.

The ride *(Remember the ride vets are there to help you!)*

1. Watch EDPP-MF. All normal, fine. If not, slow down or stop. Consult a vet.
2. Try nothing new on ride day. Keep to what is tried and true unless you hit really unusual circumstances.
3. Hydrate, feed, and rest early (ideally by about 15 miles). Critical electrolyte and water losses in horses occur in the first 10 to 20 miles. Monitor progressive pulse recovery during check. The pulse should continue to drop during the hold period and be 8-20 beats lower than the criteria by departure. If not slow down or check with a vet. Watch weight loss if scales are available.
4. Know your horse and watch for ADR (Ain’t Doing Right). If ADR on trail do a mini-exam and CRI. Consult with vet at check.
5. Watch out for over-excitement. This can cause early tie-ups,

dehydration, etc. Warm your horse up thoroughly and/or wait a couple minutes after the start and use the first couple of miles as a warm-up.

6. Be willing to let early leaders go. Separate into a small group going at your pace.
7. Adjust pace for temperature and footing. Humidity even if cool necessitates slowing down as does heat. Muddy, sandy footing, single track, twisty, side hill, and even slippery grass require far more work as the horse cannot use his natural suspension system.
8. Give horse every opportunity to drink. Wait at water stops, loosen the girth if necessary. Train your horse to drink.
9. Electrolyte regularly and often. Adjust for conditions and your horse’s needs, as much as once per hour if hot, humid or difficult footing while less is necessary in non-humid climates or a slower pace. Electrolyting is an art you need to learn.
10. Feed appropriately. Ensure the horse is getting enough energy (food) for pace of ride.
11. Use a heart monitor. If readings are higher than expected, slow down. Let your horse rest and graze.
12. Learn your horse’s needs and adjust. If in doubt, at a vet check, discuss with your concerns with the vet.
13. Slow down coming to a vet check. Start out slow from check or warm up before leaving vet check. Abrupt changes are hard.
14. Cover your horses on cool or wet/windy days to prevent cramping or tying up at holds. Consider a rump rug.
15. Use body work. TTEAM work and massage at holds can really help.
16. Use the vet as your partner and friend. Discuss any concerns with them. The only stupid question is the one not asked.

Post-ride *(These are steps to avoid treatment and do not include leg care, massage, etc.)*

1. Watch EDPP-MF. All normal, fine; if not, check with vet. Watch EDPP-MF for several days after the ride.
2. Rehydrate. Provide free access to water, offer slurries, etc.
3. Postpone concentrated feed, particularly if pulse stays up. Feed small amounts often. Free access to (wet) hay or grass is key.
4. Monitor post-ride pulse recovery, dehydration level, and gut sounds.
5. Cover if appropriate. Blanket if necessary if weather is cool; use rain sheets to keep dry if necessary.
6. See a vet immediately if ADR or any question of hydration or colic. Do not hesitate to stomach tube or aggressively get hydration to normal through IV if necessary.
7. Do not trailer horse home until adequately recovered and hydrated. Ideally, trailer home the next day so the horse has overnight to recover. Electrolyte for trailering. Stop about every four hours to offer water and allow rest of tired muscles.

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