



[www.erabc.com](http://www.erabc.com)

## Horsemanship

### Preventing Treatment

#### AKA... 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*. Help at ride, record for a vet, etc.

### PRE-RIDE

**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 horse's weight. Should be neither too heavy nor too lean. Keep a log book.

**Maintain regular de-worming program.** Endurance riding can exacerbate underlying parasite damage

**Bring a healthy horse to ride.** Check rectal temp, do mini-exam before leaving home and after arriving. Longe in circle to check for lameness.

**Bring the horse into the ride well hydrated.** Electrolyte to encouraging drinking upon arrival, feed slurries, or bring water from home for finicky drinkers. For horses accustomed to green grass, hand grazing on grass is excellent.

**Minimize Trailer stress.** Provide water regularly. Horses trailered more than 3 hours need 12 hours to recover. More than 5 hours need a full day. Loosen up muscles after trailering through easy exercise. Use fly masks to protect eyes during trailering. Plan trailering to avoid rush hour stop and go before and after ride as this is very stressful on horse.

**Minimize feed changes.** Make changes long before ride when possible. Make sure horse has plenty of forage.

**Watch EDPP-MF;** eating, drinking, peeing, pooping and moving freely. Know what is normal and observe your horse.

**Plan your ride carefully;** plan a ride time based on past ride times, weather, trail conditions and state of condition your horse. Ride to your plan, not to what other horses are doing.

**Electrolyte starting well before the ride** (as long as the horse drinks properly). At least the day before and morning of ride.

**Maintain proper hoof care.** Shoe appropriately for ride to minimize chances of injury and extra stress.

**Secure horses at ride site.** Make sure your horses are trained to respect your stabling arrangement.

**Select rides and ride strategy carefully** .Base how you ride on vet controls, # 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 with 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 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 to 20 beats lower than the criteria by departure. If not slow down or check with 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 warm-up.
6. **Be willing to let early leaders go.** Separate into 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 horse cannot use 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 individual 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 for terrain, etc. slow down. Or let horse rest and graze.
12. **Learn your horse's needs and adjust.** If in doubt at vet check, discuss with vet your concerns.
13. **Slow down coming to 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.** TEAM work and massage at holds can really help.
16. **Use the vet as your partner and friend.** Discuss concerns. 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 EEPD-MF for several days after ride** . All normal, fine. If not, check w/ vet. .
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 vet immediately if ADR or any question w/ hydration or colic.** (Vets not experienced w/ endurance horses should consult with endurance vet if possible); 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 4 hours to offer water and allow rest of tired muscles.

**Acknowledgements:** This article represents the collective input of many riders, veterinarians, and members of the AERC Board. The article is sponsored by the Education Committee of AERC. The author thanks all of those who contributed ideas and edits.

Stagg Newman, the author, is co-chair of the AERC Education Committee. He and Ramegwa Drubin have completed over 30 1-day 100s together.