

PRE-PLANNING FOR 10km/20km NEWCOMERS

DRINKING

- Get your horses used to drinking when you go trail riding at home (TIP: set up a tub of water close to home so that when you return, they can drink there rather than wait until you have put them away in their paddock/yard)
- Try taking them to a dam if there is one available
- Let them relax while they are drinking and have as much as they want, let them have a pick as well
- Another good way of teaching your horse to drink when it is away from home is to add some molasses to a bucket of water, make it a treat when they finish work so that they look forward to it
- Some endurance horses will not drink for the first 20km of a ride so don't panic if your horse is the same when you are out on track

PREPARING YOUR HORSE AT HOME FOR VETTING

Temperature

- Learn to take your horse's temperature at home. This is not only useful for endurance rides but understanding when your horse may be unwell.
- Normal temperature is 37.5 to 38.5 C. A horse with a temp over 38.5 will not be allowed at the Ride Base. A high temp is a sign of a potential infection.
- When establishing a baseline, take the temperature at the same time each day, but not after exercise.
- Approach your horse quietly on the near side (left side of the horse), running your hand along his back until you get to the rump and ensuring the horse knows you are there.
- Stand close to the horse (hip on hip) to avoid being kicked. You can feel if the horse is going to kick and can push backwards off the horse and avoid being kicked.
- Slide your (gloved) hand down his rump to his tail and gently rubbing the soft skin under the tail above the anus. He may clamp his tail down quite firmly, but once you find the soft spot, he will probably raise his tail.
- Lubricate the end of the thermometer with spit, Vaseline or soapy water.
- Lift the tail and gently insert the thermometer into the horse's rectum. Make sure the tip of the thermometer rests against the rectal wall (i.e. make sure it is not inserted into dung).
- Hold the end of the thermometer to stop it disappearing up the rectum.
- Electronic thermometers will 'beep' when an accurate reading is obtained.

Heart rate

- Try taking your horse's heart rate. This can be done with a stethoscope or a heart rate monitor. A horse's resting heart rate is usually anything from 28 to 40 but can go above and below those numbers. The fitter your horse gets, their heart rate will drop quicker. Your horse's final heart rate after your 10km or 20km will need to be under 55 beats per minute or you will be vetted out. [How to Take a Horse's Heart Rate - YouTube](#)
- Make sure your horse is okay with someone other than you touching their girth area on the near side – this will help when the TPR and vets go to take their heart rates

Trotting Out

- Set up a witches hat or the like at approximately a 20 metre distance.
- Practice trotting your horse out to the marker with your horse beside you.
- You want to keep your horse on the right and on a loose enough lead so that they can move out accordingly.
- Don't run in front of them while they drag behind because when you are in the vetting area, the vet will need to see your horse's gait from the front. You may be asked to run again if the vet is unable to get a proper look at the movement.
- When you reach the witches hat, turn your horse around it (at the walk) and then head back to your starting point.
- This is a simulation of what the vet will ask for in the vetting ring.
- The trot out is so the vet's can ensure that your horse is fit and sound to begin the ride
- TIP: If your horse will not trot out in the vetting area, it is against AERA rules to flick them with the lead-rope. You must find another way.

Other

- Open your horses mouth as if you are checking his teeth – the vets will do this at the ride so ensure your horse is used to this practice
- Get your horse used to being hosed or sponged with water after your ride at home.
- Get your horse used to being scraped off after hosing and towel any areas that may be prone to rubbing
- If your horse has white socks be sure to dry off their heel areas thoroughly or they may become prone to greasy heel

TRAINING AND FEEDING BEFORE THE RIDE

Feeding for shorter distances-

Most horses will easily complete 10-20km on their current feed/or pasture. There is no need to increase the energy in the diet unless your horse is visibly starting to lose condition. When intensity and/or distance is increased then energy can be increased. Feed the work and work the feed.

The foundation of any horse's diet is good quality forage in the form of hay or pasture. Vitamins and minerals can supplement or balance the forage. They can be added as a powder in the feed or some people like to buy a mineral block that their horse's can lick and regulate themselves. If your horse requires hard feed, find the feed that works for your horse as an individual. For example, if he isn't doing a lot of work, a high grain diet could be detrimental.

High fibre will maintain gut health and water in the gut. Speedi Beet is a great feed for this as there is a high proportion of soluble fibre which is easily digested and makes a great source of non-heating slow release energy. By not over feeding your horse, you are not only avoiding metabolic problems but it helps keep your horse calm and manageable.

Don't give your horse a heavy feed just before riding. If you are doing a 10-30km ride, a biscuit of hay is ample. This puts food into the horse's guts before exercise which helps combat ulcers. Lucerne hay is an acidity buffer. If you wet down the hay, it helps keep your horse hydrated.

It is also important to keep feed in the gut when travelling to help prevent ulcers. Give your horse a feed of hay before they get on the float to travel to the ride.

TIP: Feeding can increase the heart rate so ideally don't feed your horse right before they enter the vetting area. Eating at their yards is fine but use the time it takes to walk to vetting to let your horse relax with no more food. Once they are back in their yards, you want to them to eat at their leisure.

Paying attention to how your horse eats and drinks at home versus how he eats and drinks when you are out on the trail or travelling to an event will help you manage your horse when you get to your first endurance ride.

Electrolytes for the shorter distances

Forage based diets are generally low in sodium and can be easily supplemented by adding common salt. Some pelleted hard feeds will have electrolytes included and if fed correctly to your horse's body weight may be enough for the shorter ride distances.

You usually only need to worry about adding extra electrolytes if you are doing longer distance training and rides. For shorter distances just adding salt will be sufficient and a lot cheaper.

TIP: You should never electrolyte paste a horse if they are not drinking. This can cause more problems including kidney issues.

Offering your horse molasses water or honey over the tongue or sloppy wet hay is a good way of getting them hydrated.

If your horse has a very thick coat, he is going to be harder to cool than a clipped horse or a horse with a fine coat. Consider clipping your horse's neck if they are thick coated in preparation for a ride when you know the weather is going to be hot. A clipped horse is also much easier to strap and cool.

Training for the shorter distances – body

Most horses can easily do 10-20km on very minimal training unless they are very overweight or paddocked in small areas with little riding. Horses living in a herd situation will be moving around more and can do this if ridden sensibly.

As well as cardiac fitness, you also need to be strengthening and conditioning ligaments, tendons and muscle and maintaining bone density. If your horse is confined, you may need to work him a little more to keep him supple and flexible and less likely to strain tendons and ligaments. Lunging and in hand active walking are also good alternatives if you do not have time to ride. Trotting in a sand dressage arena for a lesson can be more demanding than trotting on a hard surface. Dressage sessions are also good to teach your horse to use his body correctly.

Train half the distance per week for the ride you are wishing to do eg if training for a 20km do approx. 10km per week etc. Carry a GPS and measure the distance you do in your riding lesson or next trail ride. Get to know your horses average speed in each gait. A walk is 4-8km per hour, trot is 10-18km per hour and canter 15-25km per hour. Get your horse moving at a comfortable, active speed. Extended gaits are more tiring and wearing on his body than a steady, moderate pace. Two to three days per week is plenty when starting out of long, slow distance walking with a little trotting.

This is a good foundation and develops strength when speed is increased and is really beneficial to building up the whole horse. Remember the faster you work, the more likely you are to have injuries and create problems. Teaching your horse to go slow and steady is easier than having him pulling and wasting energy.

TIPS:

- Train how you plan to ride. You cannot go faster than 14km per hour for the 10km and 20km rides
- Train with 1 or more horses prior to the ride so your horse is used to horse coming up beside and behind
- Encourage your horse to drink from different water sources other than their own paddock
- Do not allow your horse to speed up hills. This can be tough on ligaments, tendons and muscles especially if the ground is hard underfoot.
- Ensure your saddle fits correctly and your horse is well shod before the ride or if you wear boots, check the fit prior to the ride
- Don't change your gear for the endurance ride, ride in what you use at home
- Don't push your horse too hard the week before the ride – it takes time and conditioning to build up a horse's fitness