

USEFUL HINTS FOR YOUR FIRST ENDURANCE RIDE

When you receive your ride information pack from the organiser of the ride, study the route map carefully to familiarise yourself with the terrain over which you will be riding. Read all the other information that is included so that you are aware of any hazards or restrictions on the route. Make sure you also identify any directions to the venue or special instructions concerning your arrival.

Check the speed at which you have to ride and work out how long it should take you to reach each checkpoint and the finish. Make a note of your pre-ride veterinary inspection time and plan to arrive at the venue at least 30 minutes beforehand.

You will have been sent a vet sheet in your information pack. Remember to fill in the details on the top of your Vet Sheet before setting off for the event (sections 1 to 4 inclusive).

On arrival at the event, go to the Ride Office to give in your mastercard collect your number bib (note that mastercards are not necessary for combinations competing in Pleasure Rides). Be sure to read all the information displayed on the noticeboard so that you become fully aware of any route changes and any other last-minute instructions. Also make yourself familiar with the layout of the venue so that you know where the farrier and veterinary inspections are being held. There may even be a diagram of the venue on the noticeboard! The Secretary will usually also issue you with two tags bearing an emergency telephone number, which you should ensure is applied to your saddle and riding hat.

You should make sure that you are wearing your number bib for all the pre-ride inspections during the ride itself and in for the post-ride veterinary inspection. First of all, you should present your horse to the farrier for a shoe inspection. You should then report to the Veterinary Steward in the vetting area about five minutes before your allocated vetting time. For this pre-ride veterinary inspection, the horse must be presented without tack except a bridle or a head collar (and a rug if the weather is cold). The horse's hooves must not be oiled. When called to a veterinary surgeon, please remove your horse's rug if he or she is wearing one. Remember to take your Vet Sheet with you and present it to a veterinary surgeon's assistant (known as a vet writer) as you enter the vetting area.

Combinations entered in Pleasure Rides will be asked to trot their horse forward and back over 30-metres before and after the ride only; no further inspection will be required.

Combinations entered into a Qualifier (Graded Ride) should place themselves in front of the horse, making sure that he or she is standing square to enable the pulse to be taken. The veterinary surgeon will also check for any "lumps and bumps" and will then ask for the horse to be trotted forward and back over 30-metres. If in doubt practice the trot up at home, by trotting away and back again, ensuring that the horse moves freely at a steady trot on a loose rein. All the veterinary surgeon's comments will be recorded on your Vet Sheet that will then be retained for the post-ride inspection when you have completed the course.

Please remember that the veterinary inspection is simply there for the welfare of the horse to ensure that it is fit to start the event. All the veterinary surgeons are friendly and helpful.

After the Veterinary Inspection you may tack up and then you are ready to start the ride. Make sure that you have the map and the route description (if one has been supplied in your ride pack) together with your checkpoint and finish times. You will find that the route is well marked, usually with orange tags at eye level or with spray paint arrows on the ground. Sometimes the markers get moved or even removed altogether, so it is essential to carry the map as well. It is also recommended that you carry a drink with you, especially if it is a hot day.

Do a final check of all your equipment, go to the start (mounted) and report to the Timekeeper at or close to the allocated start time and off you go. Whilst on route, always make absolutely sure that the Steward at each Checkpoint has noted your number as you pass through. This is your responsibility, not theirs! Be patient if there are a lot of horses at the Checkpoint when you arrive.

Whilst riding, if you have not seen a route marker for a while and suspect that you may have gone the wrong way, then check your map. If necessary, go back to the last marker you saw and then retrace your steps until you find the correct path. Also, take a little time to be courteous to other users of the countryside, such as walkers and cyclists who may be using part of the same area. Take care at road crossings and on slippery roads. Always follow the instructions of Stewards at road crossings, remembering that they are not allowed to stop the traffic. Follow the country code whilst riding in fields with livestock.

On completing the ride, report to the Timekeeper again. He or she will give you a slip of paper confirming your finish time and stating the latest time at which you will be able to present your horse for the post-ride Veterinary Inspection. You will be given up to 30 minutes from your finish time to prepare your horse for inspection and may present your horse at any time within that 30 minutes. The inspection procedure will be the same as that followed for the pre-ride inspection. Once again, please make sure that the horse's hooves are not oiled and that the horse is clean.

After all this we hope that your horse has completed the course and passed both veterinary inspections. If for any reason your horse does not pass a veterinary inspection, or you retire on course, then you **MUST** get permission from a veterinary surgeon to travel your horse home before leaving. So, if you retire on course then you **MUST** bring your horse back to the venue (by lorry or trailer if necessary) for inspection. Contact the nearest Checkpoint (who will have communication back to the venue) in the case of a serious injury so that your horse can be treated by a veterinary surgeon on course.

Finally, you and your horse can prepare for the journey home. Remember to return your number bib to the Secretary, collect your mastercard (Qualifiers only) and rosette. However, please be patient as the officials have a great deal of work to do at the end of a ride, so you should allow at least 30 minutes before going back to the Ride Office for your reward!