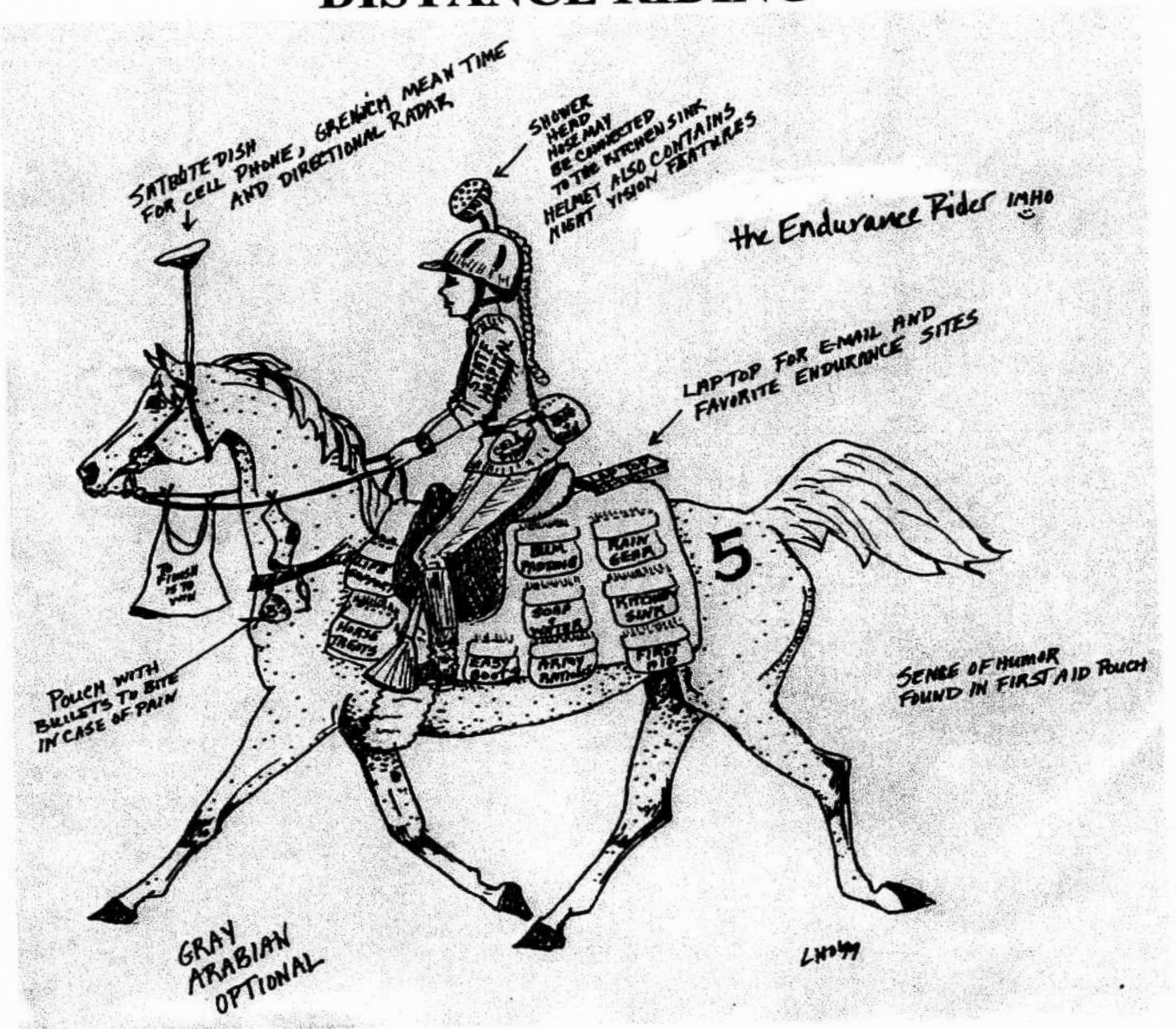


DISTANCE RIDING



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A HANDBOOK FOR RIDERS, VOLUNTEERS
AND RIDE MANAGERS
Middle of the Trail Distance Riders Association (MOTDRA)

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Welcome world of distance riding.

Congratulations on choosing to participate in a sport that will teach you more than you ever thought possible about horses and will offer you hours of fun and challenge with your special horse. The sport requires a lot of hard work and discipline, but the rewards include a tremendous amount of satisfaction in a job well done and in a stronger relationship with your horse.

This handbook has evolved from MOTDRA newsletter articles, the knowledge of many people in this sport, and a desire to help everyone participate in a way that is fun and meaningful for them. The book is divided into three major parts: a handbook for riders, one for volunteers and one for ride managers. A copy of the most recent MOTDRA rules is included at the end of the book, as well as list of resources.

Credits to people who worked on book: Ideas for the book have been kicked around for nearly as long as MOTDRA has been in existence. It got started in earnest in the fall of 2002 when MOTDRA president, Marjorie Vaughn called former and present ride managers to a meeting to make an outline for a handbook. The book was written and formatted by Chris Paus, with editing help and contributions Marjorie Vaughn, Jim and Sandy Burks, Althea Sirridge, Marybelle Cooper, Laura Eddy, Pat Gifford, and Sherry Hill. A special thank you goes to Leslie Henry Owen for providing the drawings.

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Distance riding: CTR versus Endurance

Competitive Trail Riding and endurance riding are similar sports, but have distinctly different rules. CTR is a timed and judged event based on the fitness level of the horse. MOTDRA does not judge obstacles on the trail, nor do we judge the rider. Riders are given a pace to ride, such as 5 miles per hour, and have to complete a specified distance within a few minutes either way of that ideal time.

Endurance riding can be, but doesn't have to be, a race. There is a maximum time to complete a course, but no minimum time. Technically, an endurance ride is an event of at least 50 miles or more in one day sanctioned by the American Endurance Ride Conference. The AERC is the endurance ride sanctioning organization for North America. Rides held in the USA and Canada both operate under AERC rules and bylaws. Most AERC ride managers do offer rides of shorter distances in conjunction with their true endurance rides. But these shorter distances, usually 25 to 30 miles, are called Limited Distance, or LD rides. While some riders do compete at "race" speeds, these rides are intended to be learner rides, not races.

Most MOTDRA rides are competitive trail rides, not endurance. Here are some key differences.

Ride designations:

Under AERC rules, anything less than 50 miles in one day is called Limited Distance, or LD. In MOTDRA, we have "open" rides of 25 miles or more in a day, and Limited Distance, usually 15 miles in a day.

Timing:

In AERC, rides have a maximum time, but no minimum time. You have 6 hours to finish a 25 mile LD ride; 12 hours to finish a 50-mile endurance ride, and 24 hours to finish a 100-mile endurance ride. The mandatory veterinary hold periods (rest stops and vet checks) are deducted from the total ride time. Thus in a 25 mile ride, if you have one 40-minute hold, then you actually have 6 hours minus 40 minutes, or 5 hours and 20 minutes to complete the ride.

Competitive trail rides are timed events. The ride manager sets a pace, such as 5 miles per hour or 6 mph, and the rider must complete within a short window of that time. For example, a 30 mile ride at 5 mph would be completed in 6 hours of ride time, give or take a few minutes. In addition, the mandatory hold periods are added to the total ride time. If you have a 5 mph ride of 30 miles with one vet check of 30 minutes, your optimum completion time will be 6 hours and 30 minutes.

Scoring:

In both types of rides, the horse is given a pre-ride veterinary exam and criteria noted on a veterinary sheet. The AERC score sheet notes the horse's physical condition in letter grades, A, B, C, etc. In MOTDRA and most CTRs, every horse starts with 100 points. The vet will record numerical deductions of a quarter point to several points for variances in heart rate, gut sounds, dehydration, soundness, etc.

At the end of the ride, the timing of the finish is key in placement for an AERC ride. The veterinary score sheet is used to determine if the horse is "fit to continue," the criteria for awarding completions. Fit to continue means the horse is metabolically stable and mechanically sound. The horse must meet the heart rate criteria set by the vets, usually 64 beats per minute for 50 mile rides and 60 for 25 mile rides. On an endurance ride (50 miles or more), the finish time is when the horse and rider cross over the finish line. The horse must be fit to continue.

On a limited distance ride (25 to 35 miles), the time the horse meets heart rate criteria is key. If two riders finish a 25-mile ride in 3 hours, the horse whose heart rate reaches criteria first will place over the one who is slower to meet criteria. The first 10 riders to complete the ride are eligible for a special award, called Best Condition. This is based on a separate score sheet, the only time an endurance horse is actually "scored", which combines the condition of the horse with the weight that the horse carried and the actual ride time. These last two criteria are compared to the heaviest rider within the total time and the winning finish time. Many riders value this award more than placing first over the finish line. For all riders not finishing in the top 10, the score sheet simply determines if you and your horse are awarded completion. A horse finishing with A's and B's on his score sheet

and finishing within the allotted time, will have a recorded completion. If the horse finishes in the allotted time, but has C's and D's, or is lame, the vet may determine the horse is not fit to continue and is not awarded completion.

In MOTDRA rides, the horse is given a complete post-ride veterinary exam and the scores are compared to the pre-ride exam scores. For example, a horse may have started with a perfect 100 at the pre-ride exam. At the end of the ride, the vet may deduct a half point for dehydration and a point for a tack gall. If all the heart rates were 44 beats per minute or less (more on that later), then that horse's total score for the day would be 98.5. Vets can deduct points for the horse's attitude, willingness and impulsion at the trot out, metabolics, soreness on legs, back or anywhere, etc. Further, the ride manager has discretion to establish criteria such as picking up tokens along the trail to make sure the trail is ridden correctly. Missed tokens usually result in points deductions. And you lose points for finishing the ride too fast or too slow.

Pulse checks:

In AERC rides, the pulse is taken at all mandatory holds, immediately when the rider comes in, or as soon as the horse meets criteria. The vets usually set a criteria of 60 or 64 bpm. Your mandatory hold time doesn't begin UNTIL your horse reaches that criteria! So it is of utmost important for your horse to reach the criteria quickly by being in good condition and with your help in being cooled down quickly. You have a maximum time of 30 minutes to reach that criteria, or your horse is pulled from competition. The more time you spend at a vet check, the less time you will have to complete the ride!

In MOTDRA, and most CTRs, the pulse is taken 10 minutes after the rider arrives at a vet check. The horse must meet the veterinary criteria to continue, 60 or 64 bpm, but any heart rate over 44 bpm will result in deducted points. If your horse does not meet the criteria in 10 minutes, you will be allowed another 10 minutes to meet that criteria, (20 minutes total time) or the horse will be pulled from competition.

Cardiac Recovery Index (CRI):

The CRI is a test that helps vets determine how well a horse is holding up to the stress of the ride. To do a CRI, the vet takes the horse's pulse and sets his watch for 1 minute. The rider trots the horse out (on a lead) 125 feet and back. At the end of 1 minute, the pulse is taken again. A horse who is doing well, will have a second pulse equal or lower than the first one. If the horse is stressed metabolically, the second pulse will be higher.

In AERC rides, the CRI is done at every mandatory vet check and at the end of the ride to determine fitness to continue. In MOTDRA rides, the CRI is only done at the end of the ride and is only used as a tiebreaker.

Pit Crews:

In AERC rides, riders are allowed pit crews. The crews are people who take care of the horse (and sometimes rider) during the hold times. The crew may strip the horse of its tack, cool it down, feed and water the horse, get it through the vet check, and then tack it back up when the rider is ready to go again. In MOTDRA and most CTRs, no crews are allowed. Each rider must care for his or her own horse. Exceptions can be made for one rider helping another rider mount up, or for people with disabilities, such as help with the trot-out. But the rider cannot have a crew take over care of the horse during the mandatory hold times.

Riding or Running:

On an endurance ride, the rider may dismount and walk or run with the horse as they progress along the trail. In CTR, the rider must remain mounted during forward progress, but may stop and rest at any time.

Leg Wraps and Pads:

In AERC rides, the horses are allowed to have protective leg wraps such as splint boots, or special hoof boots that come up over the coronary band. In MOTDRA and most CTRs, the condition of the legs is one element in scoring the horse. Trail wounds and puffiness are noted and deducted from the horse's score. Thus a horse in protective leg gear would have an unfair advantage over a bare-legged horse. MOTDRA does encourage shoes and allows rim

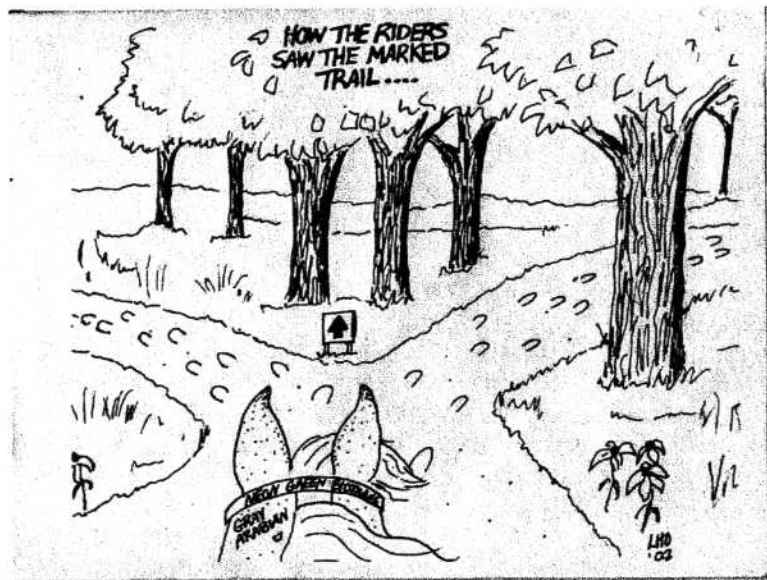
pads or EasyBoots, but hoof wear must not come over the coronary band, or it becomes leg protection. MOTDRA recently eased the rules to allow a rider to use leg protection on a horse, but that team will be given credit only for the miles completed. The team will not be scored for points or other awards on that ride.

To further complicate the issue between competitive trail, endurance and limited distance, MOTDRA does sanction CTR and AERC rides. However, a MOTDRA rider is not a true endurance rider unless he or she has completed that magical 50-mile AERC-sanctioned ride!

So what do you do when your friends ask you what kind of riding you do? Many people's eyes will glaze over if you try to explain the difference between endurance and competitive trail. The best euphemism most of us have found for the riding we do is "distance riding." That covers the whole spectrum of the sport in safe language that won't ruffle the feathers of people who have done true endurance rides.

Of course, the best way to understand the difference between an endurance ride and other kinds of distance rides is to do one! Then you will understand that it's not just what's in the name, but it truly is a whole different kind of test for horse and rider.

Rider's Handbook



Getting started:

There are many good books and resources. AERC publishes a monthly magazine called *Endurance News*. AERC's website, available through <http://endurance.net> also has an online guide for "newbies." MOTDRA publishes a newsletter called *Tales From the Trails* and has a website with good how-to information online at <http://motdra.fws1.com>. Both publications come with memberships in those respective organizations. Donna Snyder Smith, a centered riding instructor and distance riding coach, has a good book, *The Complete Guide to Distance Riding*. As does Nancy Loving, DVM, *Go The Distance*. The Arabian Horse Association also has a good guide for distance riding. Once you decide that this is a sport you'd like to do, you might want to visit a ride or two, volunteer, and see how things work. Ride and train with someone who is familiar with the sport. Several MOTDRA members offer lessons and coaching for beginners.

Fitting up your horse:

You need to start with a good horse. Desirable traits in a distance riding horse include: long lean muscles and streamlined body for more efficient cooling; large nostrils for maximum oxygen intake; round barrels for lung expansion; long, low gait to cover more ground with each stride; strong bones and joints to withstand hard work and legs and feet that point and travel straight forward. In addition, the horse must have the attitude and heart for the sport. He or she must also have the mental ability to learn and to tune in to the rider.

The trot out:

An often overlooked training item is the trot-out. Your horse needs to learn to trot in-hand for 125 yards out and back. In a CTR, he also will be asked also to move in a circle, right and left directions. This is to check for lameness and to monitor the horse's attitude and impulsion.

Pace and timing:

Most MOTDRA CTRs allow a 5 to 7 mile per hour pace. The best way to know how fast that is, is to ride someplace where you know the exact mileage. A Kansas gravel road often has intersections at 1 mile intervals. These are great for training and learning time. Ride with a watch. Time yourself at your horse's normal pace. 6 miles per hour is a 10 minute mile. 5 miles per hour is a 12 minute mile. The average, noncompetitive trail rider usually rides at 3 to 4 mph. Be aware that to complete a MOTDRA competitive trail ride, or to earn a completion at an AERC ride, you and your horse need to be able to sustain at least 5 mph pace for the distance of the competition. You both learn to do this by practicing LSD - Long Slow Distance. First work on the distance you can

ride comfortably. If you don't ride much, start out with 2 or 3 miles. If you ride a lot, start out with 4 to 6 miles. Ride every day, or at least every other day. Every week or so, increase the distance you can comfortably ride. You and your horse should be able to comfortably ride a distance of 12 to 15 miles at your targeted pace before you stop for a rest.

Legging up:

If you hang around distance riders long enough, you'll hear people talk about cannon bone measurements. What they are measuring is the circumference around the narrowest part of the horse's cannon bone. Studies done at the Tevis Cup 100 mile endurance ride, show that at a minimum, good distance horses have cannon bones measuring 7.25 inches. Generally, the bigger the better. You cannot make a horse's cannon bone bigger around, but you can increase bone density in the same way that humans increase bone density with exercise. Riding at a good working trot for several miles helps increase bone density. But as with anything, if a little is good, more is not necessarily better. There is a fine line between working and building density and stressing the horse. The constant pounding of working on hard surfaces can lead to stress fractures and to "road founder." Body builders at the gym know that for every day that they spend building bone, muscle and tendons, they need to spend a day of rest. The actual building process requires stressing those tissues, almost to the point of minute injury. As the tissues rest and recover, they rebuild stronger than they were before. But, if you over do it, trauma injury does occur, then you have lost any gains you have made.

Building stamina and lung power:

These go hand in hand with legging up and pacing and timing. Trotting or cantering up hills makes a horse's lungs expand and his heart work harder. Working at 150 beats per minute puts an aerobic challenge on the heart, increasing it's pumping power and stamina. See more about heart rate monitors in this handbook.

Fitting up yourself:

Don't forget that your horse is only half of the team. You need to be able to go the distance also. Many riders incorporate exercise and fitness plans apart from their riding. They may jog, or walk. Many do strength building exercises with fitness equipment and weights. The more fit you are, the less tired you will become. A tired rider isn't helping her horse! A tired rider loses balance and form and has less control of seat and leg aids. This makes the horse's job harder. A note about rider weight. Studies at Tevis Cup have shown little difference in the fitness of horses carrying light weight riders or heavy weight riders. Most distance riders use a rule of thumb of the horse carrying no more than one quarter of its weight.. this means rider and tack. A really sturdy horse with good bone can carry up to one third of its weight. The height of the horse has little bearing on the size of rider it can carry. It's more important that the horse be of good bone. A tall, skinny horse may have a harder time carrying a heavyweight rider than will a shorter, stockier horse.

Tack and equipment:

You really don't need anything special. MOTDRA allows the use of any kind of humane tack. However, there are some things that make distance riding a lot easier and more enjoyable, including:

*A very well-fitted saddle. It can be western, English, Australian or a specially-made saddle. It helps if it has extra D-rings for hanging stuff from. A saddle-fit problem may not be noticeable in the arena, but will show up after hours of distance riding.

*A good bridle. Biothane is nice. Halter-bridles make life easier at the vet checks. Leather or nylon are OK, but require more cleaning.

*Water bottles. These come in containers you can hang on your saddle, or in fanny packs to hang on you. Carry at least one to drink from and one to pour water over your horse.

*A sponge on a string. Dip this into streams and ponds to squeeze water on the horse for cooling.

*A fanny pack, canteen bag or other way to carry "stuff," such as horse and people snacks, a hoof pick, car keys, a pocket knife, horse bandage, map, rider card, compass and whistle.

*A riding helmet. Many ride managers require safety helmets on all riders. MOTDRA requires helmets on junior riders under the age of 18 and recommends helmets for adult riders.

*Riding tights or breeches with no inner seam. If you want your thighs shredded like hamburger, wear jeans. Even the guys wear breeches or tights for distance riding, or they wear pantyhose under jeans.

*Wide stirrups. There are several brands made for distance riding. Width, in this case, refers to the distance from front to back. The wider stirrup allows more area for the rider's foot to rest on and avoid pressure points.

*A cushy saddle cover. Not a necessity, but definitely helps!

*A rain slicker -- we ride in all weather!

*Necktie coolies. These are wonderful inventions that you soak in water and wrap around your neck to keep you cool on hot days.

*A sweat scraper. It is the evaporation process that cools the horse.

*A water resistant watch with a second hand. This is so you can monitor your pace and time.

*An E-Z boot for emergencies.

*A stethoscope. This helps you monitor your horse's recovery.

*A heart rate monitor. This helps you track your horse's condition as you ride. This is a helpful item, but NOT a necessary one. A stethoscope is a more cost-effective tool for beginning riders.

*Camping gear. Rides start at dawn. It is a lot easier to arrive at the ride site the day before and camp out than to try to get there the morning of the ride.

*Camping food. Some ride managers offer food the night before the ride, or after the ride. But some do not. Be prepared to feed yourself.

*Buckets. With lids. Lots of them. Many camp sites are primitive. You need to bring in the water you and your horse will use.

*A pooper scooper. Good trail riders clean up after their horses in camp.

*A portable corral or picket line. You may tie your horse to the trailer over night, but at MOTDRA rides, you are allowed to use corrals or picket lines to stable your horse overnight.

Heart rate monitors:

A heart rate monitor is a useful tool for training and fitting up your horse for distance riding, but not the only tool. The most important tool for measuring your horse's fitness is your own ability to tune in to your horse and know how your horse is doing. You need to observe the horse's gait, his eyes, his attitude, and you can use a stethoscope to determine his heart rate before, during and after exercise. The horse's heart rate, and its recovery, is the most important and informative single parameter for measuring fitness and ability to continue work.

Most other parameters will be reflected in the heart rate and the character of the pulse. That's why veterinarians at distance rides always use a stethoscope. It tells the quality of the heart beat as well as the rate. An irregular heart beat (called a labile heart rate) often indicates an electrolyte imbalance. Your horse also will have a poor Cardiac Recovery Index (CRI).

If you want to invest in a heart rate monitor, the following information will help you use it to learn more about your horse. A heart rate monitor shows only what the pulse actually is... that alone does not tell you how fit the horse is. What you are looking for, whether you use a HRM, or a stethoscope, is a progressive recovery. In other words, the pulse keeps going down when work stops.

If you know how your horse usually recovers under normal circumstances (weather, temperature, etc.), and then one day he doesn't come down as expected, or if the pulse spikes at a trot, but is normal at a walk, suspect a problem! It could be impending lameness, an impending illness, or just fatigue that day. Usually, there will be other signs, such as a poor CRI, but not always.

Here's how to interpret the recovery rate: First, note the pulse immediately when you stop the work. Then check it again in 10 minutes. Actually, research has shown that 5 minutes is a bit more accurate, but in competitive ride situations, it is usually hard to do it that soon, so we go on 10 minutes.

If your horse's heart rate is:

72+ : you have exceeded the horse's level of fitness for that day. The work was too fast, too far, or too long. Rest the horse and quit for the day.

60+/-4 : This is a good recovery. The horse is adapting to this level of work.

52/below: The horse is receiving little training or conditioning and is probably not progressing in his level of fitness. You need to work him harder.

If you want to spend more time as you cool the horse, check him again in 30 minutes from the time you quit working. A recovery to the low 60s in 30 minutes means the horse has not been over stressed. This is the main reason for the one-hour vet check after an endurance ride.

Along with the conditioning effect on the heart, some horses also will exhibit a high pulse or poor recovery when there is an impending problem. Muscle pain or intestinal cramps probably are the most common problems to be reflected in the heart rate, but not all horses with these problems will show a high heart rate. Some horses, but not all, may show higher heart rates with lameness. Horses with bad wounds or torn tendons or ligaments have been known to have normal pulse rates. A poor recovery also can indicate a tying up problem as much as 10 minutes before other signs appear. A poor recovery also indicates an electrolyte imbalance.

Using the heart rate monitor for training and conditioning:

Remember the general rules of recovery: 72+ means workout was too hard; 60-64 means it was just right; 52 or less, the workout wasn't hard enough.

Use the HRM on training rides to push the heart rate up to 150 or above for just a short time, then back off and allow time for recovery. This causes the heart and lungs to adapt to the harder work. Continue to monitor the horse beyond the 10-minute standard if the rate is not coming down.

Be cognizant of weather conditions. If temperature and humidity added together total more than 150, do an easy workout, or wait till it cools off. The horse cannot cool itself by evaporation of sweat when the air already is filled with moisture. This also causes high respiration, as there is less oxygen in the air and the horse is trying to cool himself with higher respiration. This is one reason why Midwestern horses who have adapted to these conditions can go to the mountains and do well, but mountain horses seldom do well in our heat and humidity.

While you are conditioning the heart and lungs, be sure to keep an eye on the legs! Lots of extended trotting is hard on suspensories. The problem often shows up on downhill trots but not on the flat. Condition at the level of the horse's weakest link, such as overweight, injury conformational defect, mental state, etc.

Remember, the optimum heart rate strength often is gained at the expense of tendons and ligaments. When you get the horse to peak condition, he won't need so much work. It is easy to over train. Horses can go three weeks without losing condition if they are turned out.

If things are not going right for a planned workout, either skip that day, or do a light work.

Remember, when the pulse goes over 150 bpm, the horse is getting close to anaerobic exercise instead of aerobic. This means that he is using oxygen from his cells instead of from the air. Horses can do this for only a few minutes at a time.

In competition, remember that an uneven pace (i.e., fast, slow, fast) creates more lactic acid, but a more steady pace may actually use some of that lactic acid. A consistent heart rate uses less energy than an irregular one. A high heart rate uses more oxygen.

Coming into a vet check, the HRM can tell you how the horse is coming down and whether you need to slow down even more, or in endurance, get off and lead him in. Once you're in, the HRM can tell you how hard you need to work to get the needed recovery. It also can indicate an urgent need for electrolytes.

OK. So now you've decided to go buy an HRM. You can get a variety of styles from several trail tack suppliers at a variety of prices. The cost is from about \$100 up, depending on what features you want. All include the electrodes and lead wires, a transmitter, and a watch/receiver. Some watches just show the heart rate. Some have settings for high and low warnings, a time of day watch, other timers, computer compatibility, and even night lights. Or you can go to a discount store and get a human version that has a watch/receiver and transmitter that fits on your chest for about \$50. Most of these transmitters are thick enough that they could not be used under a girth. However, the Polar brand models are fairly thin and probably would work all right. You would need to figure out a way to attach the transmitter to the girth so you don't lose it and it doesn't sore the horse.

Some interesting facts about a working distance horse.

(taken from research by Dr. Kerry Ridgeway, a California veterinarian who developed the Cardiac Recovery Index.

A horse in a 2-minute race produces enough heat to bring 8 liters (more than 2 gallons) of water from room temperature to a boil.

At an endurance pace of about 11 mph, the horse sweats about 12 ½ liters an hour and produces about 30,000 BTU of heat. This is enough heat to bring approximately 25 gallons of water from room temperature to a boil.

Evaporation accounts for about 65 percent of the cooling process. That means get the horse WET and do it often!

The lungs account for about 25 percent, unless the horse is badly dehydrated, then it is more.

Keep in mind that what you do on a hot ride is not the same as what you need to do on a cold ride. A chilled horse will have a higher pulse and slow recovery. Even eating can increase the pulse several beats. Feed him after his official pulse check.

Horse and rider nutrition:

Teach your horse to eat and drink on the trail. A horse that won't eat well will have poor gut sounds. A horse that won't drink will get dehydrated. Good distance horses learn to take care of themselves. Distance experts shun heavy sweet feeds and go for lots of fiber, such as hay and beet pulp mashes. Grains burn up quickly, leaving the horse with no reserves. Hay and beet pulp burn a long time in the hind gut, giving the horse fuel for the long haul. The mashes also supply valuable liquids.

There is debate about whether alfalfa is a good feed for distance horses. Some riders feed it and others don't. There also are some good extruded feeds that use beet pulp as a base.

No two horses are the same, so nutritional requirements will vary from horse to horse. Susan Evans Garlinghouse has written the most on the subject. Her information is available at her website, listed in the appendix. One basic rule is that long distance horses do not need high protein. A diet of 10 to 12 percent protein works the best.

Rider etiquette:

Following are some trail and camp courtesies everyone should be aware of:

1. **Don't tailgate!** Keep your horse a safe distance from the horse ahead of you. Sometimes our trails are single file trails. Maintaining a safe distance is important. The lead team may find a hazard or obstacle that will require a sudden stop. Tailgating can really upset the lead horse. Even the calmest horse may kick out if a horse behind it is consistently too close.
2. **Tail ribbon.** If you know your horse is a kicker, tie a red ribbon in its tail. That is a warning to all other riders to really keep their distance. Many rides also require yellow ribbons to be tied in stallions' tails.
3. **Passing.** Riders don't mind another rider passing, but pick a safe place with room for two horses abreast on the trail. It is common courtesy to let the rider ahead know that you are passing on the left or right and give that rider time to move aside. And, please, pass at a quiet speed. Some horses are alarmed or become agitated when another horse gallops past them. Galloping past unsuspecting riders is rude and dangerous.
4. **Sudden slowdowns or stops.** If you are leading a group of riders and come to a place where you need to slow down or stop abruptly, signal to the riders behind you by raising your right hand.
5. **Water stops.** It is common courtesy when riding with a group to let everyone's horse get a drink at a water stop before continuing on. If you come to a water stop where other horses are drinking, let those riders know if you are going to pass them and continue on.
6. **Lead riders.** Often, competitors will ride in groups. Don't rely solely on the lead rider to watch the trail markings. It is each rider's responsibility to be aware of where the trail goes.
7. **Trail blocking.** Don't block the trail with your buddy if you are riding two by two. If you know someone wants to get around you, be courteous and let them pass.
8. **Pace.** Set a reasonable pace for you and your horse. If your horse is too fast or too slow for the group you are with, ride your own ride and don't expect others to maintain the same pace. And don't race past others, then slow down, then race past again. It's hard on your horse and exasperating to the horses around you.
9. **Vet checks.** Don't crowd in line. Be patient. Everyone has to wait. Sometimes the lines get long. The vet and volunteers are working as quickly as they can. Train your horse to behave for the vet and volunteers. That's an important part of distance riding.
10. **Watch your horse.** If you are holding your horse in line or in camp and chatting with friends, be aware of what your horse is doing! Don't let your horse get too close to other horses or to people.
11. **Horse food.** At vet checks in camp and away, keep your horse's nose in his own water bucket and own pile of hay. Don't let him eat from other buckets unless the other rider gives the OK. Most riders are willing to share and to help other riders, but don't assume that any food and water out there is fair game. You need to take care of your own horse's needs.
12. **Generators.** Many of us have generators for air conditioning or heat when we are camping. The generators are loud and bothersome to some people. In some camps, you will be required to shut off generators at a certain nighttime hour. Others don't regulate it. It is good manners to ask your camping neighbors if your generator bothers them. Most people will tell you not to worry, enjoy your heat or air conditioning. On the flip side, if you know that certain competitors run generators and you know those bother you, park away from them and carry a set of foam earplugs!
13. **Be aware.** Distance riding is a challenging and fun equestrian sport. But people can and do get hurt when they aren't paying attention. Riding a horse requires the same amount of attention that is involved in driving a car. Most accidents are caused by "operator error".

Ride day:

Several things have to happen when you arrive in camp. You need to set up your camp, visit the ride secretary and pay your entry, and get your horse to the vet for the vet-in. Your horse will get a number on his rear drawn in cattle crayon. You will be given a score sheet where you note any pre-ride nicks and booboos your horse may have. You don't want those to count against you after the ride.

The vet will give your horse a once-over. He'll look at the horse's gums, check for dehydration, check the animal's legs, gut sounds, anal tones, and heart rate. Finally, you will be asked to trot your horse out in-hand, in a straight line and sometimes you'll be asked to circle him right and left.

After that, there is a ride meeting. At MOTDRA rides, these usually coincide with a potluck dinner. The ride

manager gives out maps, discusses the trail, sets times and pace. The vet will offer advice and set the pulse criteria. This is the maximum heart rate your horse will be allowed to have to continue the ride. Be prepared to get up before dawn to feed your horse and get ready to ride.

On CTRs, the ride manager often will send riders out one at a time, 30 to 45 seconds apart, or will send riders out in small groups. In endurance, everyone starts at once when the trail is announced open. Once the ride starts, maintain as steady a pace as possible considering the terrain and weather. RIDE YOUR OWN RIDE. Don't worry about what the speed the other horses and riders are going. You do what is best for you and your horse!

Typically, the trails are done in loops of 10, 15 to 20 miles. You will usually ride a loop, come back for a vet check and mandatory hold time, ride another loop, and come back for the final vet check. On CTRs, the final vet check will include a CRI. This means cardiac recovery index. See previous explanation for CRI.

Also note, on a CTR, you are not allowed to hose down your horse until you have completed the final vet check. There usually is only one hose and faucet and it's simply not possible for everyone to use the hose in the time allotted for the vet check. It's not fair for some horses to be cooled down with the hose and others not because the cold water affects the potential heat and swelling in the legs, which is one criteria the veterinarian will look for.

Following the vet through, is awards, so don't load up your horse and leave too soon!

CTR Volunteer's Handbook



Ride secretary:

This is the ride manager's right hand person! The ride secretary takes each rider's entry and assigns rider numbers. It helps to keep things straight for the ride manager if you staple each rider's entry money (check or cash) to that person's entry form. You write the rider number on the score sheet and give it to the rider. The ride manager may also have you hand out maps or other items at the time of entry. During the ride, the ride secretary hands out time cards to the timers for the vet checks and collects them back again when the riders go out. As riders are out on the trail, the ride manager can start putting the pulse scores on each rider's score sheet.

As riders come in for the final check, the ride secretary makes sure that the vet secretary gets the score sheets for the final vet-in. It helps to have a runner send the completed score sheets back to the ride secretary so points can be added up as horses are vetted in. It reduces the amount of time that riders wait for awards. Also, make sure that the ride manager or another person reviews each score sheet and adds the numbers to double check the math. The ride secretary also writes down a list of the award placings to make it easier for the manager to read the names and placings at the awards meetings, and the secretary makes a list of the volunteers so they can be recognized. The ride manager may ask the secretary to record which prizes riders take, if riders select their own awards from a prize table. That helps the ride manager when he or she sends out thank you letters to sponsors.

Timer:

A ride timer has one of the most important jobs. She/he must start each rider and record the precise starting time for each rider (usually 30 second intervals in CTR). The timer also records the finish time of each rider and calculates if any rider has finished too early or too late. This information is turned into the ride secretary or ride manager so they can assess penalties if necessary. MOTDRA has a form that is easy to use and contains the necessary information. In addition, the timer, or an assistant, must be at the vet checks to time in each rider, record the in-time and pulse check time on a card which is handed to the rider upon arrival at the check point. These cards also are used to record the veterinary information. The rider presents the card to either the timer or veterinarian when she leaves the check point. It is the timer's responsibility to be sure that no rider leaves before the mandatory rest time has elapsed. Often it takes two or three people to process multiple riders. They must have synchronized watches. Official ride time is whatever the head timer's watch says. The official time also is set on a large clock that is kept at camp.

Pulse technician:

This is another extremely important job. Rides can be won or lost on pulse alone. Several pulse techs are needed for each ride. They assist the veterinarian at the vet checks by taking pulse of the horses. It is good for the techs to

know how to use a stethoscope or the hand held heart rate monitors that MOTDRA owns. Each checkpoint should use just one kind of pulse checking equipment, either the stethoscopes or hand held HRMs. The pulse is taken 10 minutes after the rider's arrival time. Using a stethoscope, check your watch's second hand and count for 15 seconds. To get the pulse, multiply the number of beats you count by 4 i.e., 10 beats - 40, 11 beats=44, and so on. If you count a beat on the exact start, do not count the last beat on the exact stop. You will get a false high reading. The pulse value is recorded on the rider's time card and returned to the rider. If the rider is not satisfied with the heart rate, he may ask for a recheck. If possible, this should be done by a different technician, but if none is available, the same person may do the recheck. It must be done immediately and the recheck value, whether it is higher or lower, is the one recorded and scored.

Using Handheld HRMs

A handheld HRM will display the full heart rate (pulse). This should not be multiplied. The number on the display will vary along with the horse's attention, such as sniffing, eating, looking around, etc. It is best to allow several seconds for the horse to become accustomed to the transmitter on his side, and then count 15 seconds when the pulse time arrives. The number on the display at 15 seconds is recorded on the rider's time card. Recognize that there will be a few second delay while the transmitter sends the signal to the receiver. It may not always agree with the number a vet gets with a stethoscope. Fractions should be scored as appropriate, such as a 46 pulse = ½ point off.

HRMs need lubrication on the electrode portion of the transmitter in order to pick up the signal. They work best when the horse is wet. Otherwise, some sort of lubrication is necessary. Dipping each end in water usually works, as does applying a glob of lubrication gel. If there is still no signal after several seconds, try turning the transmitter upside down. The polarity of some horses will affect a handheld unit. One should also avoid leaving the receiver in bright sunlight for extended periods. It kills receivers. Some receivers must be physically turned on to pick up the signal. Others are automatic. When the little heart on the display starts blinking, the signal is being transmitted. The blink will be the same as the pulse rate. No signal at all may mean a dead battery in either the receiver or transmitter.

Vet secretary:

The vet secretary, also called a recorder or scribe, assists the veterinarian by writing down the scores on each horse's score sheet as the vet is examining the horse. You need to be quick and accurate. It's a fun job, but you have to be careful to put the scores in the appropriate places. The score sheets are tallied to determine rider placings. MOTDRA score sheets (see appendix) have a special section for each time the heart rate is taken, i.e., initial vet in, hold times and surprise checks, and final vet-in. The sheet also has columns with check boxes for other criteria. On those, the first column is for the initial vet-in. The second column is generally for the final vet-in. If it is a two-day ride, then additional columns are used. The vet will call out a numerical score for each parameter. Every horse starts with 100 points. The horse who loses the fewest points at the end of the ride is the winner. If the vet says "half point hydration," then you mark ½ point, or 0.5, in the box for dehydration. There is a box in each column for every criteria: head and neck, tack and girth, back, legs, gut sounds, capillary refill, trail wounds. There is another section for the trot out. The vet may deduct points for attitude, impulsion and willingness. Sometimes the vet gets busy and forgets a criteria. As secretary, you need to keep him or her on track.

Veterinarian:

The veterinarian is not truly a "volunteer" as he or she is paid for services, however, most vets can earn a lot more money back at the office than they do judging rides. Vets do this because they like the sport and want to be part of it. MOTDRA requires each CTR to be judged by a doctor of veterinary medicine, licensed to practice in the state where the ride is held. In addition, MOTDRA asks ride managers to have a second vet "on call" in case of a horse injury, accident or illness. If there is only one ride vet, that person should not have to take time out to treat a horse when there are horses to be vetted in. Generally, MOTDRA rides have 15 to 30 entries. If the rides become bigger, then ride managers need to be aware that they should hire another vet, so that each vet has a reasonable number of horses to examine. Remember that each vet examines each horse thoroughly two times... that means bending over and picking up 4 legs x number of horses x two. You can see they work hard for the \$10 to \$12 per horse they charge!

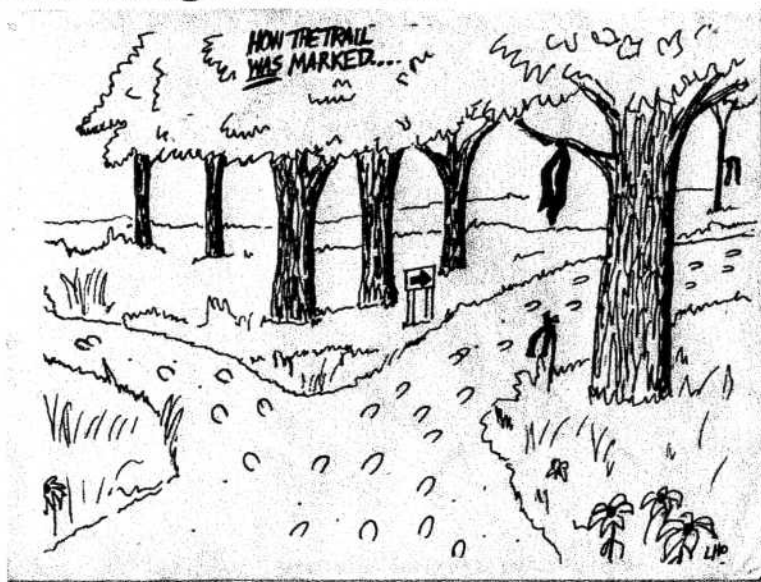
Gofers and other helpers:

Very often children in camp can be given jobs to do, such as run score sheets to the ride secretary. Other useful helpers are trail workers, spotters, and "drag" riders. Some ride managers designate a "trail boss" who is responsible for designating the trail, checking mileage, marking trail and preparing maps. This person also will participate in the rider's briefing. Other ride managers like to do the trail work themselves, but still will need volunteer help marking and trimming the trails and riding trails to make sure the markings make sense.

Spotters can work by auto or by horse back. They can be positioned at strategic points along the trail, places where riders may have to cross a road, or where they might get confused. The spotters will keep a log of each rider's number as he or she passes by. When all riders have been accounted for, the spotters call back to the ride camp, by phone or walkie talkie, to let the ride manager know the status.

Drag riders are riders who may ride the whole ride, but not get mileage or points credit for it. They generally "bring up the rear," riding behind all the other riders, helping if someone gets lost, catching horses who may get away from the riders, etc. It helps immensely if drag riders are very familiar with the trails. A food chairman also is a good volunteer to have. Ride day can be pretty hectic for the manager. If a person can be designated to keep food coming to volunteers and get it ready for riders, that is a big help.

Ride Manager's Handbook:



Most of the following information is for MOTDRA CTRs. If you are having an AERC endurance ride and want it to be MOTDRA-sanctioned, you need to follow AERC rules for the entire event.

Location and date:

The first order of business is to find a location for a ride and to set a date. Rides generally are held at state or county parks where there are camping facilities and existing equestrian trails. But they may also be held on private property with the owner's permission, of course! Ride managers need to contact park personnel to schedule the area needed, reserve a shelter house, etc. Usually a fee is involved. The ride manager pays this fee and builds that into the ride entry fee for eventual reimbursement. This is one reason why ride fees can vary so much. One park may require a \$25 reservation fee, another park may require a \$200 fee. In addition, there usually are camping fees. The ride manager does not pay those fees for the riders. Each rider is responsible for his or her own camp fees. The ride manager should offer to pay camp fees for the ride secretary or other volunteers who spend the night at the camp. Sometimes ride managers can secure a private ranch or group of private farms on which to hold a ride. MOTDRA does carry event insurance so that private or public places don't bear the liability risk. Dates are a little more difficult. MOTDRA sets its sanctioned ride calendar at the annual meeting in January. We try as much as possible to work our rides around endurance rides and other sanctioned trail rides in the area, so that riders don't have to choose which ride to do. Sometimes it's just not possible to find a weekend when something isn't already going on. It is a good idea to try to schedule a MOTDRA ride at least two weeks apart from another MOTDRA ride, but sometimes that's not always possible. Established rides usually keep the same weekend year after year.

Costs:

The costs the ride manager will bear, and recoup through entry fees are: park fee, vet fees, sanctioning fee, food, completion awards, ribbons, trail marking ribbon and signs. The ride manager can expect to spend several hundred dollars in direct expenses and more in indirect expenses, such as driving back and forth to mark trail. The manager needs to keep those costs in mind when setting the entry fees. The sanctioning fee must be paid before miles and points will be tallied for that ride.

Ride flier:

MOTDRA helps ride managers by distributing ride fliers at EquiFest, Kansas, each year in February, and in rider packets in February or March. The ride is also listed on the web site calendar and on each issue of the newsletter. It is the ride manager's responsibility to prepare a ride flier and have the appropriate number of copies made for distribution through MOTDRA. It is a good idea to make extra fliers and put them out at tack shops and other

equestrian events. It also is the ride manager's responsibility to let the MOTDRA association secretary know if there are changes in ride dates or ride information. Given enough notice, the secretary can let members know through email or via the newsletter.

Distance:

MOTDRA CTRs can be any distance the ride manager wants to set. Typically, MOTDRA rides have a limited distance component of 15 miles and an open component of 30 miles. Some ride managers will set a 25 mile course, or a two-day 50 mile course. It is up to the ride manager to set the distance, mark the trail and make sure the distances are accurate. Accuracy can be determined by a marking wheel, by motorcycle or other vehicle with an odometer, or by GPS. Some MOTDRA managers take advantage of trails that have already been marked and mileages determined in a particular park. Remember when setting mileage, that if you do not include an LD component, you may lose some potential riders who do not feel confident yet in doing the longer distances or who have horses not yet fit enough for those distances.

Timing:

The ride manager and vet judge set the pace, such as 5 or 6 mph. That determines the rest of the timing for the ride. For example, if the ride is 30 miles at 5 miles per hour, riders have 6 hours to complete the ride. You add to that their hold time of 30 minutes for the mandatory hold and 15 minutes for any surprise checks. If you have one surprise, then the ideal time for the riders to finish is 6 hours plus 45 minutes. Limited distance riders will have a 15-minute window. Usually that is set as 5 minutes fast or 10 minutes slow. The open division riders will have a 30-minute window. Beyond that window, any time early or late is penalized at the rate of 1 point per minute. Two-day rides are penalized at ½ point per minute (written in the General Rules as 1 point for every 2 minutes). This is where your timer is essential, as each rider will have a different beginning time, so each rider's ending time, and thus potential penalty time, is different. If you send riders out at 30 second intervals and you have 20 riders, you will have 10 minutes difference in the ideal finish time from the first rider out to the last. Timing really gets tricky when you have to consider vet checks, especially those out of camp, and you have groups of riders riding two different distances (15 and 30 miles). You'll need figure out when to start the 30 milers and the 15 milers so that your vet isn't busy with a vet check for one group when the other group comes in across the finish line.

Vet checks:

It's easiest when the ride manager can take advantage of loops in the trail so that riders go out and then come back to camp for vet checks. You will want them to ride at least 10 miles before their first checkpoint. The 30-mile riders need at least one 30-minute vet check and mandatory hold time during the ride. The 15-mile riders will get at least one 15-minute vet check and mandatory hold time. In addition, you can schedule surprise checks out on the trail. These are for 15 minutes, 10 minutes for the pulse check and an additional 5 minutes of rest time. If you have checks out on the trail, it helps the riders if you can find a way to get hay and water to the check point. Some riders may carry their own electrolytes, but others will put those in buckets along with the water and horse food. The ride manager will haul those by truck to the checkpoint. Your volunteers will come in handy helping to distribute the water and food supplies. Remember that in CTR, riders must care for their own horses and are not allowed "pit crews." Save an area in camp for the vet checks by using plastic trail ribbon, rather than rope. This way, if a horse or rider should bump up against the marking, it won't result in a disaster.

Some ride managers ask that riders not sponge their horses until after the pulse is taken.. this is called "natural cooling." It's not a MOTDRA requirement, but is an option a ride manager can use to help spread the scores. Other options include forward motion for a specific distance, or trotting to the checkpoint for a specific distance.

Trail marking:

As the cartoons depict, there often can be quite a gap between the ride manager's idea of a well-marked trail and the rider's idea. The goal is to bring those two perceptions as closely together as possible. You can use plastic survey ribbon for trail marking ribbon. The best ribbon is parachute cloth, but that's not always easily available. If you use a permanently marked trail, you can tie the ribbons directly to trees and bushes. If you are using a trail that must be unmarked when the ride is over, it helps to tie your ribbon to clothes pins for easy take-down later. Neon colors work the best and are most visible. Long ribbons are easy for riders to see, especially color-blind riders, who can see the ribbons waving in the breeze. Yellow is a universal color for "don't go there," when marking hazards or other places for riders to avoid. It helps to mark the trail with the ribbons all on the same side, especially if you

have "out and back" loops. The riders will, for example, go out with all the ribbons on their right, and return with all the ribbons on their left. The exception to this is turns. It helps riders greatly to mark turns in the direction of the turn, ESPECIALLY if there are intersecting trails. The universal "turn signal" on the trail is double ribbons hung ahead of the turn in the direction of the turn, i.e., on the right side of the trail for a right turn, left side of the trail for a left turn. It helps riders if you put two or three of these double ribbons all the way around the turn if there is any chance they could get confused about where to go.

Another helpful marking tool is plastic plates, fondly called "pie plates" by riders and managers. You can mark arrows on these and write instructions, hanging them in strategic places. Make sure you have plenty of "confidence" ribbons on the trail. Even if there is no where else to go, riders get worried when they don't see ribbons. Other ways to mark trail include spray painting trees and rocks or using lime or paint on the ground if there is nothing to tie ribbons to.

If you can, have someone who is not familiar with the trail ride the trail prior to the event. That person can let you know if there are confusing areas that need to be fixed. Also, be aware, that sometimes heavily used equestrian trails are sabotaged on purpose or by pleasure riders who don't know there is going to be a competition and don't understand the markings. If riders have helped you with the trails, they will know which way they are supposed to go and can help others on competition day. Be sure to ride your trail just days before your ride to make sure the markings still are in place.

PLEASE, recruit your veterinarian, secretary, timer, pulse technicians and other volunteers well in advance of your ride date, and double check with them as your ride date approaches. Do not wait until ride day and hope that someone just shows up without a horse to help you.

Scoring:

All horse and rider teams begin with 100 points. Point values are assigned for pulses, metabolic, physical and attitude criteria as well as time. The vet judge determines how many points are deducted for metabolics, back and tack area soreness, trail wounds, lameness, etc. The timer determines if points are to be lost by being over or under time. It is ultimately up to the ride manager to double check everyone and make sure that all the scores are added or deducted correctly. The vet has the final say and will be the tie-breaker. CRIs are used at the end of the ride to offer a tie-breaking score, but sometimes, even the CRIs are the same. It's the vet's judgment call then, which horse places higher.

Ride awards:

Managers need to begin securing awards as early in the ride year as possible. Many managers scour tack shops and other places for bargains. Some write letters and seek sponsorships from tack companies, veterinarians, pharmaceutical companies, camping gear companies, etc. If you seek help from sponsors, remember, they set their sponsorship and advertising calendars early in the year. Don't wait till mid-year to begin sending out letters. It will be too late. Be creative. Ride managers are responsible for obtaining at least completion awards and ribbons. MOTDRA has ribbons available for ride managers to buy, but most managers like to obtain their own ribbons that are designed specially for their rides. Completion awards have included items such as T-shirts, bags of goodies and product samples, halters, stethoscopes, hats, etc. Think outside the box when seeking sponsorships. Remember the big catalog and tack companies may get as many as a dozen sponsorship requests A DAY. Look at start-up companies who are seeking a venue to promote their products. Think about camping gear, clothing, or other items riders will use.

Sanctioning:

MOTDRA requests a \$20 sanctioning fee from each ride, regardless of the number of riders who enter. It is up to the ride manager to determine how to be reimbursed for that fee. Most managers build that into the entry fee. The sanctioning fee must be paid to MOTDRA before Dec. 1, the end of the ride year. Ride managers are responsible for getting the CTR score sheets to the points and mileage secretary. Each contestant gets the white copy of the duplicate score sheet. The yellow copy goes to the points and mileage secretary. If you are managing an endurance ride that is MOTDRA-sanctioned, make sure the points and mileage secretary gets copies of each rider's AERC score sheet. And make sure the point and mileage secretary gets a list of your volunteers.

MOTDRA traveling secretary suitcase

MOTDRA has a suitcase that travels from ride to ride with items needed for the ride secretary. The suitcase, kept by the association vice president, includes a clock, time cards, score sheets, cattle crayons, pens, clipboards, and other essential items. Please check the suitcase BEFORE your ride and make sure it is well stocked. You don't want to find out on ride day that a form is missing! There may be a few entry forms in the suitcase, but rider managers are responsible for having their own supply of those. Ride managers also need to have time sheets on hand for the timer(s). It is helpful if the rider manager does an inventory of supplies in the suitcase before passing it along to the next manager or back to the MOTDRA vice president, who is the keeper of supplies. In this way, the managers and keeper know what is in the case and what needs to be replenished.

Appendix

Glossary:

AERC: American Endurance Ride Conference. The sanctioning organization in North America for endurance rides.

Best Condition: An award given in endurance rides to the horse who finishes in the top 10 time-wise who has the best veterinary score at the end of the ride. Rider and tack weight and ride time are figured into the score.

CTR: Competitive Trail Ride - a timed event with a set pace or speed and distance. For example, a 30 mile ride at 5 mph. Riders would have 6 hours of ride time to complete the ride plus a 30 minute hold for a total of 6.30 hours. A "window" of time is allowed such as 10 minutes fast or 20 minutes slow. There are numerous distance organizations, such as MOTDRA.

CRI: Cardiac Recovery Index - a test done at a vet check. The vet takes the horse's heart rate, then the horse is trotted out for 125 feet and back 125. At the end of 1 minute, the heart rate is taken again. It gives the veterinarians information about the horse's metabolic state. It is done at all vet checks in endurance. It is done in MOTDRA rides at the end of the competition and is used only for a tie-breaker in CTR scores.

Criteria: The maximum heart rate established by the veterinary judge. This is the rate at which a horse will be allowed to continue to compete. Usually 60 or 64 beats per minute.

ECTRA. The Eastern Competitive Trail Ride Association. Sanctions competitive trail and endurance.

Endurance: This is a ride of 50 miles or more in a day sanctioned by AERC. Some riders may actually race. Others will ride more slowly for the mileage credit and for fun.

GLDRA. Great Lakes Distance Riding Association. Sanctions competitive trail and endurance.

Limited Distance: A ride of 25 to 35 miles in a day sanctioned by AERC.

LSD: Long Slow Distance. This is a training method for distance riding, gradually increasing distance as stamina increases, then adding speed work.

MOTDRA: Middle of the Trail Distance Riders Association. A Kansas distance riding club recognized by breed organizations who offer distance riding awards to their members.

NATRC: North American Trail Ride Conference: A CTR sanctioning organization.

OOATS. Ohio Arabian and all breed trail society, sanctions competitive trail and endurance.

OCTRA. Ontario Competitive Trail Rides Association. Sanctions competitive trail and endurance.

Resting Heart Rate: The pulse of a horse at rest. Usually 32 to 44 beats per minute.

Recovery Rate: The pulse of a horse as it comes in from a ride. In CTR, the pulse is taken 10 minutes after timing in to the vet check. If the pulse doesn't meet criteria, it is taken again in 10 more minutes. If the horse's heart rate does not meet criteria within 30 minutes, it will be disqualified. In endurance, the pulse can be taken immediately or up to 30 minutes after arriving at the in-timer. However, longer than 30 minutes and the horse is disqualified if it fails to meet criteria.

SEDRA. South Eastern Distance Riding Association, sanctions competitive trail and endurance.