

## SOME DISTANCE RIDING HINTS

Start with a healthy and sound horse.

For full distance rides, the horse should be at least 5 years old.

Have the horse shod properly. Do not go to a ride with shoes that have been on for six weeks. Check them often.

Ride a lot! Know your mileage. Riders often think they are riding many more miles than they actually are.

Use the tack you intend to use in competition. Check it often. DON'T EXPERIMENT ON THE RIDE.

Get a watch and use it. Time your horse's trot for a mile. Do it often to allow for variances. Know how long it takes you at each gait to do one mile, five miles, even ten miles.

Practice taking the horse's pulse and respiration. (Count each for 15 seconds and multiply by 4 to get the rate per minute.) At rest rate should be roughly a 3 to 1 ratio (i.e. pulse 44/respiration 16, or pulse 36/respiration 12). After a  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour trot, check both again. They could be 76/40, or if the horse is very excited or the day is very hot &/or humid, they could be 100/80.

Check again after 10 minutes of rest. Both readings should drop noticeably. It is the DROP that counts. Most rides have a required P/R recovery (drop) at rest stops. If the horse does not drop to the required rate, he can be pulled from further competition. A quick recovery indicates condition.

Check the entire horse regularly. Look for swelling &/or heat in the legs, sores on the girth & back areas, signs of interference or forging on the feet & legs. Follow good grooming & tack care rules.

Be sensible about after ride procedures. i.e. Don't allow the horse to tank up on water when he is hot. Don't allow tired muscles to cool too fast. Don't feed a lot of dry grain to a hot horse.

Do consider a cooler or other type of cover if weather warrants. Do allow horse to munch on grass or some hay during the cooling out period. Do allow a few sips of water off & on during the cooling out period. Also, DO encourage/allow the horse to drink DURING work, as long as he continues working for a while after he drinks.

Train the horse to negotiate any & all obstacles that may be encountered on a trail. These may include steep hills, mud, water, rocks, bridges, etc.

CONDITION YOUR HORSE SERIOUSLY! Remember: the ride can be won or lost before you even cross the STARTING line.