ENDURANCE RIDERS OF ALBERTA

RIDE ORGANIZER HANDBOOK

Rev. February 2024

PREFACE

"Endurance riding is a test of the stamina and fitness of the horse."- *FEI Rule Book*

This handbook has been assembled to help Ride Organizers put on a fair ride that tests the horses and is enjoyable for all participants and volunteers.

This handbook is based on ERA rules, experience of ERA members, the AERC (American Endurance Ride Conference) Ride Manager's Handbook, the OCTRA Ride Manager's Handbook, and a host of other sources.

This handbook was created in the spirit of furthering the sport of endurance riding. If there is anything useful in it for you or your organization, feel free to use and distribute it with the same intent.

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1.0 Introduction

This handbook has been prepared to assist Alberta Ride Organizers to put on a successful ERA ride. It should be read in conjunction with the ERA Rule Book and the ERA Veterinary Handbook. There is also an ERA Rider Handbook.

Ride Organizers should be familiar with the rules, both written and unwritten, and should be familiar with the typical practices of ERA. ERA wants to promote rides with equal opportunity for all members at all levels. This requires striking a balance between the experienced riders who like to ride distances of 80 kilometres (50 miles) or greater (Endurance Rides); those riders who prefer to ride in the Limited Distance events of 40 to 55 kilometres (25 to 35 miles); and novice riders. Many Ride Organizers put on fun rides of approximately 25 to 35 kilometres (12 to 20 miles) to introduce novice riders to the sport.

ERA sanctions endurance rides in Alberta. Ride Organizers need to consider and provide for all types of competitors. Local rides are the grounding for higher levels of competition, although many riders never progress beyond riding just for the fun of it.

2.0 What is an Endurance Ride?

Endurance rides are a race over a trail of 50 to 150 miles. Terrain can be varied and challenging. The events are commonly held over one to three days. Horses are checked by qualified veterinarians and judges before, during, and after the ride.
Shorter rides, called Limited Distance, are organized for riders new to the sport, and for young horses in training. LD rides can range from 25 – 35 miles.

2.1 General Ride Information

All equines are subject to drug testing. ERA has a zero tolerance for performance enhancing substances found in the ERA Drug Testing Policy. Drug testing may be undertaken at any ride at any time. A minimum of two rides per year are tested with at least two horses selected for testing at each tested ride.

All horses must not be medicated within one hour of the finish or face disqualification. All horses must reach a pulse of 64 beats per minute within 30 minutes of completion (unless special weather conditions warrant, and the criteria is changed by head veterinarian).

Junior riders (under 16 yrs.) must be accompanied by a competent adult sponsor throughout the ride, and one adult may sponsor more than one Junior.

All riders who successfully complete will receive a completion certificate. The top four finishers will receive an award (all junior riders will receive an award). The Best Conditioned horse selected from the first ten finishers in each distance and age group will receive an award, provided the veterinary judges feel an award is warranted. Ride Management may also provide other awards such as “Top Vet Score”, “Turtle Award”, “Middle-of-the-Pack Award” etc. at their discretion.

2.2 What Is Important to the Riders?

Number one (aside from having a ride) is to have a well marked trail. This is followed by good veterinarian controls (a given), completion awards and recognition of participants, and camaraderie. The members also expressed their appreciation for the support of the volunteers at vet checks, check in, and at camp. Well selected and safe trails are appreciated. Safety at the start, finish and during the ride should be considered. However, everyone involved in this sport must be reminded that the sport is inherently dangerous given that we are dealing with large, unpredictable animals in an outdoor environment.

3.0 Who can put on an Endurance Ride ... and why would they want to?

3.1 Who?

Any person, club, society or group can request sanctioning for an ERA Endurance Ride. Anyone wishing to put on a ride could apply to the ERA Sanctioning Director for a ride date. The Sanctioning Director will review the application for compliance with the rules. If in compliance, approval will be granted. If not in compliance, required revisions will be noted. If any rules are violated or have been violated in the past, the Sanctioning Director/Committee can withhold the sanctioning of the ride. Sanctioning can also be withheld for poorly organized rides or rides which do not meet other criteria of the Sanctioning Committee. The Sanctioning Committee can remove sanctioning before, during or after a ride for violation of the rules or specified sanctioning requirements.

ERA will sponsor rides and assist new Ride Organizers to organize their rides. ERA sanctioned, but not sponsored, rides may contribute to charitable organizations. To assure ERA members that they are making appropriate commitments, ERA reserves the right to audit charitable rides and publish the results as part of the promotion of the sport. ERA will also assist Ride Organizers in the promotion of charitable rides.

3.2 Why?

Why would anyone want to donate all their time and effort to put on an endurance ride? It can take months of planning, weeks of cutting and marking trails, a lot of organization of veterinarians, food, volunteers and materials, and there is always the risk that bad weather or other circumstance beyond the control of the Ride Organizer could result in cancellation and a financial loss. So why would anyone want to be a Ride Organizer and organize a ride?

Firstly, because our members know that we need to put something into our sport if we want to get anything out of it. Many people ride for years without putting on a ride. Others put on many rides and may ride little, if at all. There is great satisfaction in organizing a successful ride. On the other hand, many of our members lack the organizational skills, drive, or free time to put on a ride (but will often volunteer to help others where and when they can). Our members contribute to the club in many different ways. ERA members should all give great respect and thanks to the members that organize rides. They provide us with the opportunity to participate in a wonderful sport.

Friendship, rider development, horsemanship, recognition, volunteer development, veterinary development and just having fun should be a part of every ride. Good meals, good trails, completion awards and recognition of participants should also be a part of every ride to keep people coming back year after year.

Everyone - riders, crew, volunteers, veterinarians, land owners, ride management and all associated with the ride should have FUN. Create an environment that promotes having a good time, and the ride will be a success.

Thank you for considering the toughest job at a ride.

> “PUTTING ON A RIDE does not have to be defined as STRESS TO THE MAX.
> If you make a checklist, and keep the ride simple, it will work. Lay out a trail that you would like to ride, treat everyone as guests, remember to relax, and try to have FUN, the ride will take care of itself. One thing is for sure, the ride generally reflects the attitude of the Ride Organizer, if you are stressed the ride will be stressed...if you take things in stride, stay relaxed, the ride will reflect that attitude. I think most experienced Ride Organizers will agree that once the ride starts, it kind of develops a life of its own. It is just like raising children, if you provide a strong foundation and support, in the end both children and rides will turn out to be good.” - *Randy Eiland*

There are four "Golden Rules" that as a ride manager you must always adhere to:

- Well-marked trails. (In the rider's opinion this is the heart of the ride.)
- Treat everyone fairly. (This does not mean that you are going to please everyone.)
- Don't make any unnecessary rules. (And what rules that you do make, be sure that you can enforce them, and if the occasion occurs, you do enforce them.)
- You must operate on a budget. If you don't, the ERA stands to lose a considerable amount of money.

Sources of Information: There is no better source than personal experience. If possible, help put on an endurance ride before becoming a ride organizer.

4.0 <u>Comprehensive Guide for Hosting an Endurance Ride</u>

1. **Intention:** Let the Board of Directors know of your intention to host an event well in advance.

   - The ERA ride schedule is, as much as possible, announced/planned at the AGM, but the addition of a ride to the ERA ride schedule is always welcomed.

   - Join the Messenger group "ERA/TRAC Rides" prior to the AGM to plan ride dates with other organizers.

2. **Check List and Organization Chart:** By making a check list and ride organization chart that is specifically tailored to your ride, you will go a long way towards assuring a successful ride for you and the riders. See <u>sample</u> check list at the end of this guide.

3. **First rides:** Should be as simple and basic as possible. Longer miles and multi day events are more complicated.

   - For a first ride, you should plan to host your ride on familiar trail.

   - Don’t be afraid to host a two-day ride, it doesn’t require much more planning than one day.

   - Reach out to the BOD and experienced Ride Organizers

4. **Sanctioned or Sanctioned/Sponsored:** Decide whether you want this to be only sanctioned or also a sponsored event.

   a. Sanctioned: Any person, group, or club may host it. ERA will pay for the 2 vets, if the funds are stated as going to a non-profit organization or another ride, such as a fund to help host the event again next year. Losses are the responsibility of the hosts.

   b. Sponsored: Any person or group may host it. A budget must meet the Board of Directors’ approval. Only basic expenses will be allowed. Toilets, water for officials, volunteers and horses, basic menus, awards as per Rule 6, and accommodations for volunteers and officials. Losses and income are ERA’s responsibility. If ERA sponsors the ride, it will absorb the losses, however, it also takes any profit.

   - ERA only recognizes ERA sanctioned rides in Alberta.

   - It is recommended that you have the ERA sponsor your ride, as you may not be able to foresee the costs involved, and end up with a loss, which you would have to cover.

   - It cannot be over-stressed that you should determine your costs and probable donations before determining your entry fee. When you have calculated your total costs and subtracted your donations, you are now able to determine your entry fee. When determining entry fee, it is very wise to include a fudge factor on cost which may be as little as two hundred dollars for a very small ride and up to one thousand dollars for a very large ride. Don't forget to include whatever profit you expect to obtain from the ride in the total cost figure. Go back over your budget, item for item, and you will be surprised what you can do without. Rider entry fees may be your only source of income; therefore it is very important that you accurately predict the number of entries you can get.

- Follow the guidelines on the financial report, which is found on the ERA website under Members – Forms, when planning a budget and preparing the financial statement post-ride.
- Fill out all the requested information on the ERA sanction application. Put estimates of loop distances in if known numbers have not yet been finalized. Email the application to the Sanctioning Director if it will be an ERA sponsored ride. If the ride is sponsored by anyone else or any other club, you can mail a copy with $100 to the Sanctioning Director or use the ERAonlinepay@gmail.com. Please do not leave any lines blank – note as information not yet available. Inform the Sanctioning Director when this information is known or there is a change.

- ERA does not pay for any added fees or expenses associated with other sanctioning, such as EC/FEI/AERC competitions, unless approved by the Board of Directors.

- ERA members should not be responsible for additional fees as a result of dual sanctioning.

5. **Advertising:** This job must be done well or you won't get many entries. The best methods of advertisement are:

   - ERA website and Facebook page
   - Give talks at local horse clubs. This method is very rarely used and can be very worthwhile in generating new entries, particularly if you are putting on a novice ride.
   - Put posters up at tack shops, stables and other places that local riders frequent.
   - Ride Management should try to increase their local participation.

6. **Veterinarians/Line Judges:**

   - It is recommended you begin contacting veterinarians immediately after making the decision to host a ride. The Sanctioning Director has the current list of veterinarians who are experienced, also, veterinarians and vet students who have expressed an interest in vetting endurance rides who can act as your second vet/line judge.

   - The head vet must be licensed and experienced in vetting endurance rides. The selection of the "Head Vet" is extremely important for several reasons. They will have to pass judgment on every horse in the ride at the pre-ride vet check, every vet check in the ride, and the post ride vet check. **If your choice of Head Vet is not on ERA's list of approved/experienced Head Vets, then you must submit a record of endurance rides vetted elsewhere for Board approval.**

- One of your vets must be prepared with a standard kit and fluids, The treatment vet must be licensed to practice in Alberta. A vet clinic for emergencies must be named on the Sanctioning Application, and you need to contact the clinic to ensure they will work with Ride Management in cases of emergencies.

- The vet manual must be made available to the veterinarians/line judges, to keep them up to date on information concerning vetting an Endurance ride.

- The current vet fee schedule can be found through a Quick Link on the ERA website.

- **Pre-ride Evaluation of the Course:** Ride Management selects the vet checks, often limited by terrain and the trails. However, it is imperative to review the trail and proposed stops with the head vet. Ride Management could find itself in a difficult position if the vets do not agree with the proposed trail set up. WATER - it is imperative to have water at vet checks and elsewhere along the trail. Normally trails are selected where there is access to lots of water, and Ride Management has traditionally provided adequate water for the horses. Most people do not expect drinking water. However, food and drinks on the trail is greatly appreciated by horses, riders, vets, and volunteers, if you so choose!

- **Vet Inspection Area:** A specific area should be set aside for veterinary inspection at the base camp and all vet checks. A tent, building, trailer… needs to be provided at vet checks for veterinarians to take shelter from the elements. Choose an area that has a smooth surface and is wide enough to accommodate the number of veterinarians using it, and long enough for a 125 foot trot-out.

- **Length of Vet Coverage:** The veterinary control lasts AT LEAST until one hour after the last rider crosses the finish line. Ride management must be sure to make it clear what the requirements are.

- Not all vets/volunteers have living quarters. Find out in advance if they need a place to stay and help coordinate accommodations. Some riders traveling alone may be happy to help.

7. **Facilities:** Can vary greatly in requirements depending on the size of the ride, weather, trail layout and terrain, also the availability of some of these services locally.

    - **Base Camp:** Must be large enough to handle the maximum crowd that could come to the ride.
    - **Sanitary Requirements:** Toilet facilities must be supplied at the base camp and may also have to be supplied at some vet checks. (ERA NOTE: Toilet facilities at all major stops are a must from an environmental, rider, volunteer, and landowner perspective. Remember that you will have volunteers who will need facilities, food water and shelter all day long at the base camp and vet checks.)

8. **Trail:**

- Try to find a central camp area. Loops back to camp for vetting and rest periods require a lot less work and officials/volunteers. Plan your camp so that the flow of traffic is efficient. Riders first pass the in-timer, go to crew area, go to the pulse area, then into the vet. Have an exit from the vet that doesn't interfere with the horses coming in or waiting in line and takes them back to the crew area. They can go both ways if the area is wide enough. In and out gates should either be different or wide enough to allow horses to come in and to go out without running into each other. Water must be available in the crew area.

- Measure miles accurately. Example: Don't call a half mile fence line a half mile of trail if you weave in and out of trees as you go along it. Please note, GPS will not always be 100% accurate. Not all elevations will record on some equipment, only twists and turns. Quads are more accurate. Try to ensure your mileage is as close as possible to the offered distance, but you may have to apply Rule 1.1.1

9. **Marking trail:**

- Trails are marked with ribbons. Place ribbons on clothes pins if they need to be removed after the event, and for ease of putting up and taking down.

- Try to keep all ribbons on the right side. Riders need to be informed, at the ride briefing, if/where ribbons are placed on the left.

- Colour selection is important. Multicoloured ribbons are best. Light green ribbons are almost invisible in the early spring when leaves are coming out. It is best to ensure that you use colours or colour combinations, so riders will instantly recognize the trail markings. A combination of two colours has proven to be best, i.e., orange with white, pink with white.

- Trail markings should be reasonably close together with "confidence" or "reassurance" ribbons at closer spacing in heavy bush than on roads. As a rule of thumb, riders should be able to see at least one ribbon from the one they are at. Some rides with open country have ribbons spaced at 400 to 800 metres (1/4 mile to half mile) but many riders cannot see the ribbons when they are this far apart and lose confidence that they are on the correct trail. As a general rule, the farther apart the ribbons are, the longer and more visible the ribbons should be. If in doubt, put in extra ribbons.

- You can mark a turn by putting up triple ribbons before the turn, so the riders start to look for the turn before getting to it. The triple ribbons are two ribbons of the of trail colour with a white ribbon on the side of direction of turn. (White ribbon on right side of two coloured ribbons – right turn, white ribbon on left side of two coloured ribbons – left turn. The triple ribbon should **NOT** be right **AT** the turn. By then it is too late, and the riders will already have missed it!) Plates with arrows make good corner markers. Remember these riders are going at speed, so these warnings must begin well in advance before the marked corner. There should be another ribbon just before the turn, at the turn, and a couple ribbons just after the turn, with another ribbon several meters down the trail (confidence ribbons) so riders know they have made the correct turn.

- If common trail, where riders come back on same trail as going out, or, another loop uses the same trail going the opposite direction, mark on both sides, with ribbons directly opposite one another, so these ribbons are viewable going both ways. Where unused trails come onto your trail, always put a ribbon just beyond the unused trail, so riders know to go straight ahead. Then put a confidence ribbon just a short way further on. Even if you know the riders can't leave the trail, have confidence ribbons along it, because they don't know that they may have missed a turn if they have ridden for a time and not spotted a ribbon. A ribbon tied right across an unused trail is an excellent way to deter riders from continuing to go straight.

- Plates on stakes make excellent trail markers for turns, and any area where riders may be confused.

- If possible, have someone who doesn't know the trail ride it at a trot, at least, to see if they can follow the ribbons and markings. (Riding a quad works, too, if trails are accessible by quad.)

- Water on trail should be provided either by tank or natural sources at least once near the midway point in each loop, a good rule of thumb is every 8 – 10 miles.

10. **Volunteers:** The majority of your help will be volunteers. The amount of help required is basically dependent upon three parameters; course layout, number of entries and the type of vet checks.

- **Informed Staff:** The larger the ride and/or the greater the distance between vet checks, the more important it is to have a very well-informed staff. The more written instructions that you can give everyone helping you, the less chance there will be of a foul up. **It is helpful for your volunteers to have a list of other volunteers' phone numbers, particularly Ride Manager.**

- Provide your volunteers with adequate shelter from the elements, a tent for vets and scribes, and a tent for timers and P&R, complete with a cooler of drinks and snacks.

- The ride box, which includes paper work (Vet Cards, time sheets, Rules & Regulation binder), a scale, stethoscopes, stop watches, and 2 clocks will be available for the ride organizer and must be returned in the same condition it was received.

A. **Ride Secretary:** The ride secretary should be willing to work with you throughout the entire ride, and is responsible for setting up on-line registration, processing entries, handling the majority, if not all, of the correspondence for the ride; e-mailing rider info/ride packages to entrants, vets, and volunteers, answering many varied questions regarding the ride via the telephone, and in writing, and completing ride results and Completion Certificates.

- **Rider Packet/Info Sheet:** Should contain ride and camp rules, rider and crew rules, ride map, rider crew map (crew maps required to provide information to crews on how to get to vet checks and crewing areas along the course of the race, food and drinking water situation (is the water for horses potable?), any meal tickets, time of awards presentation, time of pre-ride "vet" check and pre-ride briefing. **Phone number of the Ride Manager.** (ERA recommends that the hold times at vet gates, type of gate and other trail information be included. This information can be included on the ride map if possible, on the reverse of the ride map, or on a separate card that can be put in a pocket or fanny pack for reference.) If you have included the ride start time, distance between vet checks, time of mandatory holds at vet checks and the P&R requirements, you will be asked very few questions by the riders

- ERA ride results must be submitted to the ERA in electronic form. No other format will be accepted. The ERA has purchased a ride computer that will be at rides, complete with programs for the Ride Secretary to record and submit results. The ERA also has a printer used to print Completion Certificates.

B. **Trail Boss/Ride Organizer:** Responsibilities would include: trail layout, obtaining permission of right of ways, course timing, procuring water if needed, marking trail, and drawing up rider and crew maps. This person should also be an experienced endurance rider.

-The trail boss often gives the briefing on the trail at the pre-ride briefing. At the ride briefing the trail boss should go over the trail in detail for all distances, outlining the direction and order of the loops, landmarks, hazards, watering points, tips on where to ride, land management issues, distance markers or warnings, vet checks, and vet check and crewing procedures as appropriate.)

- Having a trail boss and drag riders can be beneficial. If there is a problem with the trail i.e. someone has removed ribbon, or taken signs down, or trail markings are not clear or are confusing riders, the trail boss can go out and deal with the problem. This job may fall to the ride organizer if you are not riding.

C. **Volunteer/Base Camp Coordinator:** This position is very helpful to fill, particularly if the ride organizer plans to ride. This person makes sure the volunteers are where they need to be, when they need to be there, and helps to instruct them regarding their position. They can also fill in when volunteers need to take a break or fill in for volunteers who fail to show up for their job.

- The base camp and each veterinary control check point should have one person in charge. This person is responsible for procuring the help and coordinating the activities at their site. (Our rides are small, so we do not necessarily have separate people fulfilling these functions. Nevertheless, someone must be responsible for these activities.)

- The Volunteer Coordinator must train, (or assign someone able to do it) the P&R volunteers. Train, train, train. There is nothing more frustrating to an endurance rider to know their horse is 'down' and to have an inexperienced P&R person, who cannot find or hear the heartbeat. Teach the volunteers before the ride, or ensure they are experienced.

D. **Ride Manager:** Your Ride Manager needs to be very familiar with the ERA Rules and Regulations, be personable, strong-willed, able to make decisions, have good communication skills to discuss Rules etc. with riders, and be fair. Your Ride Manager is required to be on site and accessible at all times during the ride event.

E. **Vet Scribes:** You will need a vet scribe for each veterinarian, for each portion of your ride: Vet-In, Day 1, Day 2. At many rides, the vet scribes for Friday Vet-In are riders. A call out on the ERA Facebook page for Vet-In volunteers always results in volunteers.

F. **Food and Refreshment Chairperson:** This position is sometimes filled by your Volunteer Coordinator. Their responsibilities would not only include the procurement and preparation of the food, but also the distribution. This may mean that they would have to haul food and drinks to different vet checks throughout the ride. (The advertising for the ride should indicate what food will be provided, so riders and crews can plan.)

- You must provide food for Volunteers and Vets. Volunteers and veterinarians are always fed, every meal. Ensure the Vets and Volunteers have a constant supply of water, as well as snacks throughout the day.

- If you are offering food, be sure that you can deliver. It is the ride organizers choice to provide food, or not. Sandwiches, fruit, cookies, granola bars, etc. for lunch. A full meal, meat only with pot luck, salads and desserts, or a true potluck for dinner. Or riders can be responsible for their own lunch, or all meals. If Covid showed us anything, not providing meals has made organizing rides much easier.

G. **Time Keepers**: You will need two time keepers at the Timing Table. Each timer has a specific job.

   a. **Head Timer**: Have an experienced head timer or notify the Sanctioning Director, as either they, or someone with experience will be able to help instruct on the evening before the ride. The Head Timer should be the only person to record In-times, pulse times, and out times on the official timing sheets. (Blank timing sheets are found in the ride box.) The Head Timer's only concern is the In-time of riders and MUST NOT listen for pulsers calling out horses are "Down". For accurate recording of the In-time, the Head Timer should start by recording the seconds on the clock, followed by the minute, then the hour .

- A Start Timer, usually your head timer, checks off all riders during warm up, prior to the Start. Each rider should call out their number as they are warming up, and before leaving the start area. The Start Timer calls out minutes leading up to the Start. (i.e. Five minutes!) The Start timer also calls, "Trail is open!" at the exact start time. ERA requires that all the riders depart within 10 minutes of the published start time. Not being recorded as a starter may be grounds for disqualification. At remote rides, it is important that ride management know who is out on the trail in case it is necessary to mount a search for missing riders or horses.

b. **Pulse Down Timer**: Does not concern themselves with rider's In-time. The pulse timer needs to stand near the pulsers, with a clock and clip board with paper, in hand, and record neatly, and accurately, the number of the horse and the exact time when a pulser calls out that a horse is "Down". For accurate recording of the pulse time, the Pulse Timer should start by recording the seconds on the clock, followed by the minute, then the hour. In a timely manner, when the timing table is clear of horses, and the Head Timer is able, the pulse down timer gives the recording sheet to the Head Timer, who adds the Pulse times to the official time sheet, at which time, the rider's out times are calculated. (There is a very handy cheat sheet in the ride box which helps timers figure out the Out Times accurately.)

- ERA has a white board easel that travels from ride to ride. The timers need to post the Out Times of riders on the white board, categorized by the Distance and listed according to the Rider's current placing in the ride. This allows everyone to be informed of each rider's status and out-time without interrupting the timers. As riders leave the Out Gate, their number is erased from the board. Only the riders with numbers up are still in camp.

H. **Pulse Takers (P&R):** If possible, try to find volunteers who are experienced taking a horse's pulse, or either you or the Volunteer Coordinator must spend time with them, the night before the ride, or after riders have started in the morning, training them.

- Note, two P&R crews for every vet is a good ratio, but a ride can manage with two, preferably three P&R volunteers. They may use their own stethoscope, or one of the stethoscopes in the ride box. There are stop watches in the ride box, if they do not have a watch with a second hand, or do not want to use the timer on their phone.

- Pulsers must LOUDLY say the **horse's number** and **Down** when the pulse is 64 (16 beats over 15 seconds) or below. Pulsers may "hang" on a horse if it is near pulse criteria, ONLY if there are **<u>no other</u>** horses in the Pulse Lane being pulsed. Otherwise, horses who have not met pulse criteria must go to the back of the line while other horses get their first pulse check.

I. **Water Person:** Someone needs to be responsible for refilling water troughs in camp and water stations out on trail. Often times, that person may be someone's husband/companion who is along for the weekend, or it may have to be the Ride Organizer. Your water supply will last longer, and be more palatable, if you have separate containers for the riders to dip their sponges in.

J. **Transportation Coordinator:** Volunteers, riders, horses may need transport.

- You may need vehicles to transport workers to any outlying vet checks. Note, it may be very desirable to use all wheel drive vehicles, side-by-side or quad.

- Having manned checkpoints on the trail may be very helpful ... if a rider gets lost, you will know where to start looking. This person can also be giving directions at tricky intersections, and his check list will ensure that all of the riders have ridden over the same trail. If you have a gate person, have them recording the riders who go through.

- Volunteer Staging/Parking: It is very important that a specific area be set aside for assembling all of the workers the day of the ride. When selecting this area be sure that it does not interfere with the riders the day of the ride.

- **Emergency Vehicles:** Vehicles are needed to transport help to a horse and rider and transporting them back to camp. (ERA Note: make sure you have adequate first aid equipment on hand. In addition, make plans for how to treat and transport both people and horses in the event of an emergency.)

- Someone who is familiar with the trail should be in charge of the emergency trailer, which is imperative to have on site for horses, and a 4 x 4/vehicle, side-by-side, or quad for riders. (The emergency vehicle can be someone's trailer that is available to be used should an emergency arise. Preferably an open stock to enable ease of loading a horse.)

K. **Awards Chairperson:** Responsible for getting awards and obtaining donations. You may be lucky enough to have a volunteer collect awards for you, or this responsibility may fall to the ride organizer.

- When selecting your awards do not forget that you must stay within your budget Participants are very appreciative of ‘completion’ or ‘participation’ awards. Simple inexpensive medallions, donations, mugs, photos, small salt blocks, and other simple items of recognition keep people coming back to your ride year after year.

- Awards are provided in all categories 1st to 4th, and Best Condition for all categories. All juniors must receive an award (i.e., any small item such as brushes, leads, etc.).

    a. Completion awards are given to every rider. This need not be an expensive item, may be a selection of several different items, and are often donations of products/items given by businesses.

    b. Plan to have more expensive items for BC/High Vet Score Awards, and a sliding scale for first to fourth place awards; awarded in each age category in each distance.

    c. Purchase of awards as soon as you start planning your ride is a good idea. This will enable you to take advantage of sales/offers.

L. **Clean-up Chairperson:** This is the job that nobody wants, usually ends up being you, but it is very important to do a good job. Note, most endurance riders will clean up after themselves if there is a place to put their garbage. Cover this in your hand out, rider packages, at the ride briefing and at the awards ceremony. Some rides include a large garbage bag for waste in the rider package, or to be handed out at the ride briefing.

5.0 Ride Management Check List

9 to 12 Months Before the Ride

- Select campsite and find trail
- Select ride date and possible alternate
- Contact your Sanctioning Director for confirmation of dates
- Set up tentative budget, including entry fees
- Arrange for head veterinarian needed to receive ERA sanctioning (get both vets booked as soon as possible)
- Begin organizing volunteers
- Consider various options for awards and begin checking prices
- Make sure permission is obtained from land owners, provincial and municipal agencies - more and more frequently they are asking for proof of insurance and a liability waiver, and a copy of the liability waiver the ride will be **requiring** the riders to sign.

2 to 3 Months Before Ride

- Get your Ride Poster done and posted to ERA website and Facebook page
- Continue purchase of completion awards and ride prizes
- Check veterinarians
- Clear trail, trim overhanging branches, etc.
- Arrange to rent or borrow equipment, outhouse, water tanks, water truck, generator, tents
- Determine vehicle logistics and driving times for transporting P&R teams, timers and veterinarians to the check points

1 to 2 Months Before Ride

- Post ride entry forms and information package
- Plan food
- Post flyers in local tack shops, feed stores, barns, stables, veterinary supply stores
- Organize supplies, especially trail marking needs
- Book porta potties

1 to 2 Weeks Before Ride

- Confirm that all veterinarians and key ride personnel are still available
- Check communications and routes to vet checks
- Ensure adequate transportation is available to check points and be sure to know the distance and driving time to all check points
- Start to mark trail
- Buy supplies: toilet paper, extra trail marking material, etc.

1 to 5 Days Before Ride

- Buy food
- Check and complete trail marking
- Transport equipment such as water tanks, tents, etc.
- Check on porta potties
- Post signs to campsite
- Set up or move in ride office complete with supplies
- Set up vet area

NIGHT BEFORE RIDE

- Sign up riders
- Organize vetting-in of horses
- Hold pre-ride meeting
- Organize food, refreshments and shelter for vet stops and other ride workers
- Organize awards

Get good night's sleep!

DAY OF RIDE (These duties are shared by Ride Organizer, Ride Manager and Volunteer Coordinator)

- Early wakeup calls as appropriate, wake up and transport vets and volunteers
- Organize and monitor the start
- Place spotters and ride vet crews
- Start ride
- Deal with all problems as they arise, preferably in a calm, efficient manner
- Organize drag riders, ensure all riders and mounts are accounted for
- Have post-ride meeting, give out awards
- Thank everyone for coming, especially ride workers

AFTER RIDE

- Return rented or borrowed equipment
- Clean up campsite
- Remove markers from trail signs, etc. A marker is a marker the day of the ride, it is an annoyance the day after the ride, and a week after the ride it is litter. Land owners are very sensitive to ribbons and other markings left on their land. Be sure to remove them all immediately after the ride.
- Send thank you notes to landowners and ride workers
- Have Ride Secretary send in ride results to ERA Website/database chairperson
- Finalize your financial statement

CONTINUE READING, IF YOU SO DESIRE. THERE IS MORE GREAT INFORMATION, THAT MAY CLARIFY SOME OF THE POINTS AND INFORMATION FROM ABOVE

6.0 Ride Type and Length

So you have decided you would like to put on a ride. What type of ride do you want to put on and what distances should be involved?

First time Ride Organizers should keep it simple. Remember, the more distances and complexity, the more volunteers, planning and organization required. The more facilities provided to or for the riders, the more effort needed.

6.1 No Frills

Some first time Ride Organizers put on a “No Frills” ride. This generally means there will be a minimum of services provided. This can mean no lunch, no supper, minimal services, and untested trails. The ride poster/information provided should indicate the “extent” of the no frills.

6.2 Point to Point

The first endurance rides were “point to point” rides of up to 160 kilometres (100 miles). These rides are difficult to manage as it requires careful management to ensure services are available to the front runners and to the last riders through the controls. It also requires special “crewing” capabilities since the equine/rider teams do not return to the start. Drivers and trailing capabilities must be available to move rigs or return the equine/rider team to the start point.

6.3 Out and Back Loop

The logistics difficulty with the point to point rides is partially solved by designing a trail that loops out and returns to the start point. This may involve one or several vet checks and crewing points along the route with the finish being at or near the starting point so that there is no need to relocate. However, there is still the logistics of getting crew, volunteers and veterinarians to the “out” vet checks and control points and dealing with the faster and slower riders.

6.4 Cut Off Times

In order to deal with the problem of spreading out riders over too large an area, with the slower riders having little chance of completing the entire course in time, and overextending the volunteers, many rides of the above type establish cut off times at the control points. Riders arriving at a control point after the designated cut off time are obliged to withdraw so that the volunteers may move on to another designated control point. However, no control point should ever be abandoned before all riders and mounts are accounted for. Given the hazardous nature of our sport, risk of injury to rider or mount is high. It is important that Ride Management endeavor to be aware of where participants are on the trail and their status in case veterinary or medical treatment is required. A control point must be maintained until Ride Management is certain the last riders are accounted for. (See also Drag Riders and communication.)

6.5 Clover Leaf or Loop Rides

In order to deal with these logistical issues, many rides are designed as a “clover leaf” so that the ride starts and ends at or near the same point, and all (or most) veterinary checks are at the base camp. Each loop goes out from the base camp and returns to it. There may or may not be crewing points or additional control points on the loops. This allows a ride to be done with fewer volunteers and allows more than one distance to be run over the same trails using different combinations of loops. This is the most common design for our rides in Alberta.

6.6 Distances - One Day Rides

The most common, and **minimum** distance for an Endurance Ride is 80 kilometres (50 miles). Rides of less than this distance are **NOT** considered to be **Endurance Ride**. ERA sanctions **Limited Distance** rides of 40 to 57 kilometres (25 to 35 miles) but ONLY in conjunction with an Endurance Ride. A Limited Distance Ride may not be held on its own. In addition, some Ride Organizers put on shorter “Fun” rides of 15 to 25 kilometres (10 to 15 miles) for new comers as an introduction to the sport. Fun ride activities must not be allowed to interfere with the sanctioned events of ERA including access to trails, veterinary services, volunteers, transportation, emergency response, and other activities related to the Endurance Ride. (Note also to ride management that Fun/Novice riders MUST have an AEF membership for insurance purposes, and may only complete one Novice ride. They should be encouraged to join the ERA.)

Typically, one day rides are limited to 160 kilometres (100 miles).
Rides of any distance between 80 and 160 kilometres are common. Often more than one distance is offered by seasoned Ride Organizers. (e.g. Limited Distance, Endurance of 80, 120, and 160 km on the same day.)

6.7 Elevator Rides

This type of ride is not common in Alberta. It takes special planning to allow for an Elevator Ride. An Elevator Ride can only take place when specifically offered by Ride Management and Sanctioned as an Elevator Ride. An Elevator Ride normally requires that the “different” distances start at the same time and follow the same trails in the same direction and order of loops. A rider may enter a lesser distance, and after completing the lesser distance successfully, may elect to “elevate” to a longer distance. However, once having elevated, they cannot drop back to the lower level even if they are unable to complete. In some instances, where two distances start at different times, riders may be allowed to elevate, but may then only ride for distance with no placing.

6.8 Multi-Day Rides

Multi-day rides started typically as “three-day fifties” totaling 150 miles as referenced in various rule books around the world including ERA’s rule book. (Three days of 80 km totaling 240 km.) There have been multi-day rides held in Alberta of two days of 200 km and three-day rides of up to 250 km. A **true** multi-day ride requires successful completion of each day of the ride and a final post ride veterinary inspection. Failure to complete any segment results in non-completion. For this reason, many people are reluctant to enter true multi-day rides given that they could have a problem on the last leg of the last day and not get any credit for the miles ridden. The plus is that there are usually fewer competitors. Because of this, many Ride Organizers offer several “one day” rides in conjunction with or instead of a “true” multi-day ride. The different days may be on the same trails, different trails or combinations of different loops and trails.

6.9 Historical Rides

In the United States, there has been special sanctioning of “**Historical**” rides of several hundred miles over a period of 5 days - typically 400 to 500 km (250 to 300 miles). These rides are becoming increasingly popular as people can plan their holidays and attend 5 weekends of rides in one week. In addition, many horses seem to thrive on these multi-day rides (which are typically ridden at a lower speed.) These rides are held as multiple **individual** one day rides where riders can use more than one horse and may choose to ride successive or alternative days at their choice or capability. Typically, no alternative distances, Fun rides or Limited Distance rides are held, sanctioned or allowed in conjunction with these rides due to the need to focus. These rides are traditionally point to point rides along historical equestrian or pioneer trails which require a lot of planning and organization.

7.0 Trails

The number one issue from the survey of our members is good, well marked trails.
Our members accept lack of volunteers, lack of food, lack of amenities, and other ride issues with little complaint. The thing they want most out of a ride is well marked trails. However, there are always the night stalking de- ribboners and anti-horse types who not only remove ribbon, but re-ribbon trails to go the wrong way and into dead ends. In addition, there are areas where use of ribbons are not allowed or unadvisable. New ride organizers need to have the issues surrounding trail marking clarified.

“Ribbons - before the ride they are a necessary nuisance, during the ride they are essential, after the ride they are litter.”

7.1 Trail Selection

However, before you can mark a trail, you must have selected it. The different types of rides (point to point, clover leaf, etc.) have been discussed previously. Trails should be selected with the type of ride in mind. If you have a ride with less than an 80% overall completion rate, maybe the trails were too difficult for the participants. Remember, the experienced riders who regularly compete at 160 kilometres have a very different perception of the trails than the newbies doing their first 40 kilometre ride. While many rides have common trail for different distances, make sure the shorter distance has the easier trails.

Also, if all the trails are all easy, add vet checks to slow the pace down to prevent over riding. Many of our rides with high pull rates have been on easy rides where high speed caused problems. The saying, “Speed Kills!” applies to our sport. Many or more injuries and metabolic problems tend to be on the “easy” rides than on the more difficult rides. On rides with hills, bush trails, and difficult terrain, riders tend to be careful and pace their horses. On four track trails and lots of road and open fields, and good visibility, riders seem to have difficulty maintaining an even pace. They see other riders and speed up to catch up and pass. They have what looks like good footing and they may run into hidden obstacles, or not realize the toll that miles of hard gravel road can exact on an equine.

However, the type of trail is often not an option. It depends on your location. Your ride plan should take the type of terrain in your area into consideration.

Remember, riders do appreciate lots of well groomed off road trails. If a primary trail must go through a bog, down a slippery hill, through dead fall, or other obstacles, consider putting in an alternate trail for the less adventurous riders. Where possible provide corduroy roads (riders and horses hate this stuff but if nothing else is possible ...), bridges, and cut out the dead fall. If creeks have a good bottom, they should be tested and marked on each side to show riders where the safe place to cross is. If a creek (bog, or low spot) has poor bottom, go around. If the trail has steep sections that could be difficult or impassable during rain or snow, have alternate trails. If a river, creek, bog or low spot is subject to flooding in wet weather, plan ahead for alternate trails.

Remember - a good guideline is to lay out a trail that YOU would like to ride.

7.2 Trail Making

In Alberta we are blessed (or cursed depending on your point of view) with multiple use of our lands by snowmobilers, ATVers, hikers, outfitters, and the ever-present forestry and oil industry. The multiple use of the land results in development of a lot of trails that can be adapted for equestrian use. It is always desirable to make use of existing trails. It can take months or even years to develop equestrian trails on ride specific trails in heavily treed country. In our region, we are also fortunate to have many local equestrian clubs that have not only developed some superb equestrian trails but are willing to sponsor or help to put rides on.

When clearing trail, overhanging branches should be cleared. People should not have to duck under heavy branches that can clear them out of the saddle. Small branches that could take an eye out or stab someone should be trimmed back as far as possible. There are places where we have had rides where there are large branches just above wither level that are very dangerous and for environmental or land owner restrictions, they cannot be trimmed. The same goes for small branches. In those circumstances, mark as a hazard, and riders should be warned at the ride briefing. Ride management may not be able to remove all obstacles, but they can give the riders a warning.

Logs and dead fall that cannot be stepped over at a walk or trot should be cut out. Bridges should be preferably one metre wide. Riders should be cautioned about narrow bridges. Many riders do not like to ride freshly slashed trails due to the potential of “spikes” that may cause lower leg injuries, or that may jab a horse or rider when passing. Many trail developers have had access to bush hogs to mow the brush. Others do the work by hand. Riders should be briefed to ride according to the condition of the trail, and ride management should be aware of these concerns.

Ride management should put up caution ribbons or pie plate signs to warn riders of difficult sections of trail or obstacles. White or yellow ribbon have traditionally been used in Alberta to warn riders of hazards.

7.3 Permission

Obtaining permission to ride on private land is an absolute necessity. Without the concurrence of the land or leaseholders of the land, including the municipal, provincial and federal governments, we will soon run out of places to ride. It is important to obtain permission to ride on the land, make trails, carry out the marking, and do appropriate cleanup. It is important to understand the land or leaseholder conditions for use of their land. Many land owners will not allow use of ribbon where cattle are grazing due to their propensity to eat them where they can reach them. Some provincial agencies have the same concerns with respect to elk, moose and deer. Alternative trail marking methods may be required. In addition, some agencies require immediate removal of markings after the event. (The ERA has a Land Owner’s Agreement posted on our website.)

It is good practice to invite land owners tothe ride awards meeting and thank them. In addition, they should be well thanked after the ride. Ride management should check that all landowner issues have been dealt with after the ride, including the sending out of thank you notes to landowners and other ride sponsors.

At times, it is necessary to get permission for use of municipal lands or other private groups. When using private forestry or oil roads, permission and coordination with these groups is needed. Similarly, when using multi-use trails, whether they are equestrian trails, motorcycle, mountain bike, hiking or other use, ride management should check with other groups. It could create some problems for ride management if another club scheduled an event for the same date, or if the group responsible for certain access roads or facilities had them tied up or under construction for the ride date. Often, these groups will offer assistance when contacted. Most people love horses and will be more than willing to cooperate when contacted. Conversely, not contacting them can have long lasting negative consequences.

7.4 Measuring

Many riders get very frustrated when a trail is significantly longer or shorter than advertised. Most endurance riders ride with a trail app on their phone or GPS device.

The best way to avoid complaints is to measure the trail accurately. There are many ways to do this. It is recommended that all trails be PHYSICALLY measured to avoid any doubt as to distance. (Remember GPS does not take into account the up and down of hills.)

There are many options. On roads accessible by four wheel drive, the vehicle odometer can be used. On roads where survey information is available, it can be used. Many people also use ATV's, motorcycles and mountain bikes equipped with odometers. Once you know the exact length of your trail, there can be no arguments over distance.

7.5 Trail Marking

Trails are most often marked with ribbons. Colour selection is important. Multicoloured ribbons are best. Light green ribbons are almost invisible in the early spring when leaves are coming out. Orange is the common colour for survey ribbon, ATV clubs, motorcycle clubs, hunters, and so on. It is best to ensure that you use colours or colour combinations so riders will instantly recognize the trail markings. A combination of two colours has proven to be best, i.e., orange with white, pink with white. Trail markings should be reasonably close together with "confidence" or "reassurance" ribbons at closer spacing in heavy bush than on roads. As a rule of thumb, riders should be able to see at least one ribbon from the one they are at. Some rides with open country have ribbons spaced at 400 to 800 metres (1/4 mile to half mile) but many riders cannot see the ribbons when they are this far apart and lose confidence that they are on the correct trail. As a general rule, the farther apart the ribbons are, the longer and more visible the colours should be. If in doubt, put in extra ribbons.

Try to keep the spacing of the ribbon fairly uniform. If you are putting up ribbons every 200 metres and suddenly change to 500 metres, riders will start thinking they are off trail because they have not seen a ribbon in the distance they have become accustomed to.

In areas where ribbon may be removed, flour, gypsum, chalk or biodegradable survey marker paint can be very useful. They can all be placed on the ground or used to mark trees. Trees, branches and rocks can be marked quickly from horseback. In some areas, permanent markers may be appropriate.

Signs are useful especially at intersections and on common trail. Distance signs to let riders know where they are in reference to the ride map, and warning signs on hazards, or advice on road or stream crossings, distance to the vet checks are very useful. (Stakes, plates/signs, and a staple gun are a necessity.)

At critical points where riders could easily go the wrong way, it is useful to have signs, even people to point out the way.

Also remember, the speed when marking the trail is significantly different than when racing. In addition, the people marking the trail know which way the trail goes. On race day, moving at speed, it is easy to miss a turn. As a safety measure, it is advisable to have people who do not know the trail try to ride it and add additional markings wherever they have difficultly.

As a general rule to help riders, we try to encourage marking only on the right side of the trail where possible. That way, people know they are going in the correct direction. In addition, we traditionally put up triple ribbons before a turn, sometimes of a different colour or combination of colours to make them more visible, so the riders start to look for the turn before getting to it. The triple ribbons are two ribbons of the trail colour with a white ribbon on the side of direction of turn. (White ribbon on right side of two coloured ribbons – right turn, white ribbon on left side of two coloured ribbons – left turn. The triple ribbon should **NOT** be **AT** the turn. By then it is too late, and the riders will already have missed it!) Then there should be another ribbon just before the turn, a ribbon at the turn, a couple of ribbons just after the turn, and another 50 to 100 metres down the trail (confidence ribbons) so riders know they have made the correct turn. In addition, when turning off of roads or into a different sort of trail or terrain, add in pie plates stapled to a tree or stake with a diagram or words to describe the turn and identify the loop or trail as appropriate. (E.g. - Loops A & B turn left going out, Loop C turn right to vet check; Turn left off road; turn right onto 4 track; etc.)

When entering a lane, bush trail or pasture, put a ribbon on both sides of the trail. When passing through a gate into a pasture, put a ribbon on both sides of the gate and a ribbon on a stake in the pasture to ensure people go through the gate. Use signs if appropriate. There is nothing more frustrating than to go 1600 metres past a gate and then find out you are on the wrong side of the fence, with no gate, and you have to go back along the fence to the gate again. If ride management or the trail manager uses the fence to tie ribbons on, then it is very easy for riders to end up on the wrong side of the fence if the turn through the gate is not well marked.

NIGHT TIME:

Glow sticks, glow sticks glow sticks.

Generally speaking, our rides of less than 160 kilometres do not require night time riding. In fact, our more northerly rides held near the June solstice do not need any lighting as there is little darkness. Due to the length of the daylight during most of our ride season, it is usually only the last loop or the last few kilometres of a ride that needs to have glow sticks. In addition, most ride organizers try to arrange for the last part of the ride to be on a road, or in the open, so again there is little if any need for glow sticks.

However, when riding is going into the dark, there should be adequate glow sticks and light coloured trail markings to reassure riders that they are on trail. In addition, drag riders should depart the vet checks after the last riders to ensure no one gets lost on the trail. Roving checkers are also appropriate to reassure riders in the dark. Remember that not all riders, and not all horses have good night vision. As a note - many riders use glow sticks on their breast collars and head lamps. While this is probably self assuring to the riders, it may actually be detrimental to the horses' vision as they cast shadows that can cause a horse to stumble. Lighting is a rider's choice, but it may be worth telling riders to rely on the moon and their horse's natural night vision. Riders should NOT put lighting devices on the tails of their horses or any rearward facing lights as this blinds horses overtaking them.

Ride management planning a 160 kilometre ride should try to schedule it near the full moon to take advantage of the moonlight.

Glow sticks should be spaced often enough to reassure riders that they are on trail. Riders should be advised to ride the last few kilometres of the trail before the ride if they can so that the horse knows the trail before it gets dark. Many "looped" rides make the first loop, or another loop early in the ride the same as the last loop so that the horse and rider will have already been over the loop in the daylight in the event that they do end up riding in the dark.

Battery powered flashers may be of use to mark obstacles or sharp turns.

7.6 Start

Pay attention to the start of the ride. Most accidents happen at the start or the finish. Starts of large rides can have many people trying to get into the same narrow trail. Many start in the dark or low light. Everyone is packed together; the horses have excess energy and may be over excited. People may have forgotten to tighten girths; they may be going in different directions. There may be hazards.

On large rides, it may be appropriate to have a controlled start. This can be done by having a volunteer ride out ahead of the riders at a slow pace for 10 to thirty minutes to keep the ride under control. If the start is on a road, a vehicle can be used to pace the riders at the start.

As with the finish, the start area should be well clear of the camp area.

Some rides start up a steep hill to settle the horses down right away. Unless the horses are warmed up before hand, this can lead to tie up problems with some horses. This should be explained at the ride briefing. Everyone is happy to ride a slow pace and there is no pressure to overexert the mounts early. The hill takes the extra energy out. Then after the hill, some open terrain that allows people to set their pace and pass safely promotes an incident free ride.

7.7 Finish Line

The finish line should **NEVER** be in or near the camp area or vetting area. Remember, there could be several horses racing to the finish at a full gallop. There must be room for three horses abreast to cross the finish line. There must be room to get the horses under control after the finish line. This can take 200 to 400 metres. Remember, we have seen runaways in our club that have gone 2000 to 3000 metres without stopping. Think about that at the finish line. Where will the horses go?

Horses coming into camp will try to go to their trailer or follow a previous route into camp.

The finish should be situated with this in mind. A number of major rides put the finish line 300 to 800 metres up the trail from camp to ensure there are no accidents in camp due to racing horses. (Note: this does not apply to Limited Distance as they have to come into camp and pulse down. There is no reason for them to race, and, in fact it is disadvantageous for them to do so.)

There should be no obstacles, barriers, steep banks, turns or vehicles at or near the finish line. There should be a line across the finish line perpendicular to the direction of travel. All vehicle access, people, pets, trailers should be barred from the finish area. The camp should not be in a position where the horses might try to turn to go to their trailer instead of going to the finish line; and never put the finish or finish run out just past a previous turn into camp. We have all seen the situation where the horse turns and the rider does not. Keep this in mind when setting your trail and your start and finish lines.

Finish areas should not be near camp where children could inadvertently cross the trail or the finish run out. There have been some terrible accidents from vehicles entering the finish area, from spectators being run over, and from playing children running into the path of horses racing in.

Once many equines break to a gallop, they become far less controllable, they cannot be stopped or turned quickly. The finish area should be selected with this in mind. The life you save could be your own, or of your volunteer finish line timer(s) and other officials.

BE SURE TO BAR VEHICLES FROM THE FINISH AREA.

8.0 Maps

There are many sorts of maps that are used as a base for ride maps. County maps can be used. Aerial photography, topographic and most frequently satellite view maps are used. Recently, ride organizers are printing maps from their GPS or App on their phone.

Representation of the trail may be schematic rather than exact. It is often more important to highlight certain landmarks and turns than to have a diagrammatically correct map. High points, landmarks, streams, lakes, watering points, check points, veterinary control points, roads, hazards and so on should be highlighted. If different coloured ribbon is used for different loops, that should be noted on the map.

Some rides have provided diagrams of corners, landmarks and other information on the back of the maps to allow riders to confirm where they are, where they should turn, where vet checks are and so on to provide the riders with assurance and direction on the trail.

Maps should be of a size that they can easily be read. But they should also be of a size that they can be easily folded up and placed in a shirt pocket or fanny pack for easy reference by the rider during the ride. When using "baggies" to hold the "Vet Card", the map should also be able to be folded and placed in the baggy if the rider chooses.

It is useful to provide information on the ride time, various loops, hold times, veterinary criteria and other information either on the map, or in a separate handout that riders can take with them. See samples attached in Appendix B.

If there are out checks or you are doing a point to point ride, you may need "crewing" maps to guide crew to the pit stops and veterinary checks.

9.0 Vet Cards

ERA provides a standardized vet card to ride management. Vet cards are provided in the vet box. The ERA ride registration is done on-line, so the ride secretary will print the vet cards prior to the ride. Most of the ERA rides are "clover leaf rides" where all checks are held in camp, and all the vet cards are kept at the veterinary control points, with the vet scribes, for safe keeping.
These cards can also be carried by the rider and presented to the vet scribe at each veterinary control point. When the horse passes the vet check, the card is returned to the rider to carry to the next check point. If the horse does not pass the check, the card is held by the vet scribe.

10.0 Veterinary Control

The Veterinarian Handbook describes the duties and responsibilities of the Veterinarians. Ride management must select veterinarians/vet students that they can work with. They must have the experience required to meet ERA standards. Ride Management must recognize that every veterinarian has individual ideas and opinions. ERA has produced the Veterinarian Handbook with the objective of having uniform vetting procedures. However, every ride and ride management team is different. Some ride organizers like to have many control points. Some ride organizers prefer fewer control points. Sometimes terrain and trail availability dictate the control points. The veterinarians and ride management must be satisfied that the veterinary controls are adequate and satisfactory during the planning stage of the ride. In addition, the veterinary controls and control points should be explained clearly at the pre-ride briefing by ride management and/or the veterinary staff.

Ride Management should have a clear agreement with the veterinarian staff prior to the ride covering responsibilities, duties, and hours. On a 160 kilometre ride, veterinary services must be available from vet in through best condition judging. This is a considerable period of time that may last from the day before the ride to the day after the ride.

There should be "judging" vets and at least one treatment vet who has agreed to bring meds and fluids to the ride. (Treatment vet is compensated $50 for bringing a kit.) Therefore, ride management is responsible for arranging for emergency treatment services during the ride as well as judging. Be aware that if a veterinarian "judge" is required to also do treatment, additional judges may be needed in the event that treatment of an equine is required. It is also a good idea to notify the closest veterinary clinic to your ride, to ensure they will be available for emergencies that require the horse being taken to a clinic.

ERA traditionally employs two veterinarians/line judges for a ride. More vets may be required depending on the number of riders, layout of the ride, the time to commute from check to check, and the gap time between the leading riders and the tail draggers. In our sport, no allowance needs to be made for "FUN" riders. If ride management wishes to do any vetting or provide any services to this group, it is to be done with no interference to the endurance event and is in NO WAY to detract from the endurance event. Endurance and Limited Distance riders are to be given priority in all areas, on the trail, in the vet checks, and in services by the volunteers.

It is also an unwritten rule, oft debated, that the longer distances get priority service at veterinary checks and other services (within reason). For example, if ride management sponsors a 160 km ride, a 120 km ride, and an 80 km ride as well as a Limited Distance ride, if a rider from each group arrives at the veterinarians at the same time, the priority attention will go to the horse and rider team going the longest distance to the shortest distance, or the rider with the shortest hold time.

To avoid disputes, some rides will assign vets and vetting areas to each distance. That way they are kept separate. However, as there may only be 5 to 10 riders in each distance, separation is not always possible.

Ride management should review hold times and likely arrival times at vet checks to avoid traffic jams and overworking the veterinary staff. This should be reviewed with the veterinary staff at the planning stage and explained to the riders at the pre-ride briefing.

Veterinary control points should be discussed with the veterinarian during the preliminary discussion stages. Some veterinarians are comfortable with less control points than others. Veterinary inspection, support and criteria should be discussed well in advance with the veterinarian staff to ensure there are no misunderstandings.

10.1 Veterinary Control Points

The number and location of control points may be determined by a number of factors. Ride management and the head veterinarian should ensure riders get adequate briefing on veterinary controls. On remote rides with limited veterinary controls, the ride briefing should emphasize the riders' responsibility for their equines.

10.1.1 Limited Distance

ERA rules require one intermediary vet check with a gate into hold in Limited Distance. The holds for Limited Distance are typically one hour, although some rides have shorter holds, subject to veterinary approval.

10.1.2 Endurance

ERA rules do not specify the number of veterinary control points for Endurance Rides. FEI rules require that each day of an endurance competition be divided into at least two phases with an intermediate veterinary inspection and hold of at least 40 minutes. FEI also recommends that 160 km (100 mile) rides have holds totaling at least 120 minutes.

It is common in ERA rides for there to be vet checks about every 20 to 22 km (12 to 13 miles). The earlier checks usually have less hold time with a lunch time hold of 45 minutes to an hour for the typical 80 km ride. The shorter rides may have fewer veterinary controls. Generally, the longer the ride, the higher the risk, and the more veterinary control points required. Similarly, veterinary controls should be considered with respect to the difficulty and speed anticipated. A flat fast course may, in fact, require more veterinary control than a steeper more difficult course in order to protect the equines from over exertion. (Speed kills).

10.2 Layout

Veterinary control points should be laid out with adequate space and amenities. The layout should provide for the rider to pass by the timer controls, and have access to the crewing area. The pulsing area needs to be beside the timing table. The layout and ride requirements should be such that the riders can proceed directly from the pulse down area to the veterinarian check if they so choose.

10.3 Location/Distance

The first timed hold should be <u>at least</u> 16 km, preferably 20 km into the ride (10 to 12 miles or longer, up to 20 miles). This is because many fit endurance horses take at least this distance to calm down. It is not unusual for some of the higher strung horses to have standing pulses of 100 to 200 beats per minute at the start of a ride. Some rides have had pulse and go vet gates at 10 to 12 km into a ride. Typically some of the very best horses take extra time to pulse down when a hold is placed this close to the beginning of the ride. It is recommended that hold type gates are not placed within the first 16 to 20 kilometres. If it is felt desirable to check the horses in the first part of the course, use a “trot by”. In addition, you may want to provide water and the election for riders to stop and review their mount with the veterinarian. It is not normally necessary to check pulses at this stage in the ride. Pulse checking may actually penalize the better horses.

Typically, 80 kilometre rides will have a veterinary control point at about 20 kilometre intervals. This results in 3 intermediate veterinary control points and the finish line.

With 160 km rides, the last control point is usually 8 to 16 km from the finish but there will have been a number of control points at roughly 20 to 30 km spacing throughout the ride. The trot by and pulse and go checks are more common in the longer rides as they reduce hold time.

Note however, that all control points are to be staffed by a veterinarian. It is not appropriate to have a pulse and go to “control” the speed of horses or to “give them a rest” without a veterinarian present. Water and hay and additional crewing spots may be provided along the trail and it will be the rider’s option as to how long they spend at such spots. However, they are not considered ‘veterinarian’ control points.

10.4 Types of Control Points

There are a number of control points. The most common is the “gate into a hold” in ERA rides. The second most used is the trot by. A description of the various types follows.

Fixed Hold - this is traditionally the oldest type of control gate. All contestants are held a specific amount of time after their arrival. The recovery time does not count against the riding time.

Drawbacks to a fixed hold include a greater chance of stiffening up in cold weather, and the fact that less fit horses are not separated from more fit ones in a pulsing down. An over paced horse may pulse down to criteria in the allotted time and leave with more fit horses. Fit horses that would have been ready to go earlier, are held back. A fixed hold of any length early in the ride is unnecessary.

Pulse and Go - with this vet gate, there is no hold time. The rider may leave as soon as the horse meets the required veterinary criteria and is approved by the veterinarian. There may be enough people to pulse all the horses that arrive at the same time. Normally, the rider and crew check the horse and ensure it meets criteria before entering the official pulse area. If the horse does not meet criteria, it may be sent to the end of the line. If the pulse meets criteria, the pulse staff call out the horse number to the timers and the horse must be taken directly to the veterinarian for a check.

In ERA rides we normally just send people to the back of the line. Where there are a lot of riders and insufficient pulse crews at a Pulse and Go, riders and their crews may be allowed to call their down time for their pulses. If the pulse is not at criteria when presented to the vet, the pulse down time will be changed once the horse meets criteria. If the pulse is not down in the necessary 30 minutes, it is removed from competition. Equines are not allowed to leave the vet gate unless they meet all veterinary criteria. A horse may be held even though its pulse and respiration are normal if there are other signs of problems (gut sounds, hydration, membranes, gait). It will be held until the veterinarian is satisfied it is ok to proceed, or the equine is removed from competition.

Gate into a Hold - This is the most common form of timed hold in ERA. This is similar to the pulse and go except that after pulsing down, there is a fixed timed hold. The vet gate should be set up so that the riders enter a timing gate, into a crewing area. They may stay in the crewing area working on their mount, letting it urinate, eat and drink, however they must enter the pulsing area and achieve the established pulse and respiration criteria within 30 minutes of arrival at the timing gate or be disqualified.

This type of hold separates the fit and less fit horses as usually the fit horses pulse down faster and will therefore clear the vet gate sooner. The less fit horse will leave the vet gate after the other horses are out of site and will be less inclined to work over its ability. This type of hold also gives the horse and rider a chance to eat, drink and recover during the ride.

While riders and crew are responsible for knowing how long they have been at a vet check and for knowing how long the hold time is, ride management usually arranges for the out timers to announce the out times of the riders and usually provide a one or two minute warning call as well.

NOTE - However, it is not mandatory to leave the vet gate when your out time is called. If the rider or mount require more time to rest, urinate, eat and drink, they may take what they need in the interest of ensuring they complete.

With the timed holds, the veterinarians may wish to have a second look at the horses before they leave. Also because there is a timed hold after the pulse down, it gives the veterinarians a bit more time for evaluation.

Trot By - as noted above, a hold early in the ride is not necessary, but it may still be advisable to have a vet control in certain areas to ensure there are no injuries showing up. There are a number of variations on the “trot by” as well. The typical trot by is manned by a veterinarian and support staff. The area is selected so that the veterinarian can observe the equine approaching under saddle, at close quarters as passing and from the rear. The veterinarian has the option of asking the rider to stop for a more detailed inspection, either under saddle or dismounted. Ride management often arranges for the trot by to be adjacent to water and feed so riders can stop and care for their mounts if they wish. Some rides have variations on the trot by that require the horses to be trotted out by hand, ask for circles, or backing up so that the vet can observe the quality of movement of the equine. The simple trot by is recommended.

The trot by is frequently used as the first vet check in a ride where the potential for problems is low, and near the end of a ride where the veterinarians and ride management feel another look at the horses is warranted but a hold, or pulse and go is not. It is also used in areas where access is limited or difficult. A trot by requires less support from ride management and crewing, but does allow for veterinary control for the safety of the equines.

10.5 Veterinary Controls

The responsibilities of the veterinarians is covered well in the ERA veterinary manual. Ride management should be familiar with this manual and ensure that all their veterinary staff have been given a copy of the manual. Ride management and the veterinary staff should be in agreement with the veterinary controls.

10.5.1 Pre-Ride Inspection

The pre-ride inspection is covered well in the veterinary manual. The pre-ride veterinary control area should be roped or flagged off before the arrival of the first participants. A wide open, flat area with good footing and shelter for the veterinary staff should be provided. Two sets of markers, at a distance of 125 ft, app. 20 ft apart, need to be set up. In the pre-ride inspection, as with other inspections, equines of questionable gaits **may** be allowed to go on (a pre-ride trot by in the morning may be requested), equines of questionable metabolism or other concerns should be withdrawn.

10.5.2 Veterinary Control During the Ride

This is well covered in the ERA veterinary manual.

10.5.3 Completion and Best Condition Judging

At the end of an endurance race, and the limited distance event, the equines are required to meet pulse criteria within 30 minutes. Thus, all horses that complete have been pulsed down and checked before they go to see the veterinarian. In ERA rules, all horses must pass a post ride completion examination.

The Post Ride Evaluation is to be done at any time up to one hour after the finish per the rule book. All equines receive an appropriate evaluation.

Best Condition Judging will be done at the time agreed between the veterinary staff and ride management in accordance with the agreed to guidelines in accordance with section 9 of the ERA rule book.

The veterinary judging guidelines are explained in more detail in the ERA Veterinary Handbook in Sections 8 and 9.

In accordance with the rules, it is understood that completion criteria are not necessarily as rigorous as criteria during the ride given that the equine is not continuing on. “Because an equine at the finish line is not, in actuality, going on - and not going into the wilderness far from veterinary aid-the standards for completion need not be as strict as those on the trail,...” Nevertheless, the minimum standards as per the rules, and as outlined for the ride, must be met.

Note that once an equine has passed the final veterinary exam, it may not be removed from competition for veterinary reasons. Prior to the final exam, a veterinarian may remove an equine from competition at any time.

10.6 Cardiac Recovery Index (CRI)

The Cardiac Recovery Index (CRI) sometimes referred to as the Ridgeway Trot, is described in the ERA veterinary handbook. It is a dependable indicator of what is going on with the equines when used properly. A lengthy description and validation of the use of the CRI is contained in Appendix C. Ride management and the veterinary staff should be familiar with the use of the CRI.

10.7 Drug Testing

ERA drug tests at least two rides each year. The Sanctioning Director will order the drug test kits. The Sanctioning Director should advise ride management and veterinarians if the ride has been selected for testing. It is important that the selection of horses to be tested be done early,

The method of selecting the equines to be tested is up to the veterinarian. Sometimes this is done by random draw. Sometimes the first place in each distance is selected, or a combination, depending on the number of test kits. Two horses are to be selected for testing.

Blood should be drawn before the equines are taken away from the post ride evaluation, as a horse that is not returning for best condition evaluation may be given NSAIDS (non steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) or other drugs to alleviate soreness or injuries even though it passed the final exam. It would then be inappropriate and untimely to request a blood sample. A Blood Testing Form needs to be completed by the veterinarian drawing the blood, and signed by the individual responsible for the equine, who witnessed the draw.

10.8 Best Condition Judging

This is well covered in Section 9 of the ERA Veterinary Handbook.

Note - A rider may elect not to show for Best Condition at their discretion.

Best Condition Examination - This examination is to select the horse considered the fittest, freshest, and in the soundest condition at the end of the ride. If no animal is in acceptable condition, the award may be withheld. The evaluating procedures for Best Condition may be more demanding than the routine control procedures but should be sufficient to discriminate between contenders. The examination is usually performed one hour after the finish but may be at such other time as the management may specify.

BE CONSISTENT!

11.0 Pre-Ride Briefing

The Pre-Ride Briefing should include all the information the riders and crews will need to successfully complete and enjoy the ride. You will have some riders who are competitive and some who are out just to enjoy the scenery and the company of other riders and horses. Ride Management should consider the needs of all participants when planning their rides and the ride briefing. There will be people moving at speed, and there will be some that arrive in camp just ahead of your drag riders if you are using them. There are people who intuitively can follow maps and the trails, and there are people who will get lost and disoriented no matter how well the trail is marked. Remember, mark all hazards and explain them to all ... you may think a hazard is off trail, but remember those folks who regularly manage to find the wrong turn in the trail. Think about how people could go wrong. Remember, you know the trails. Many of your participants will not, so they need to know how the trail goes, what the landmarks are, how to tell if they are off trail, how the trail has been marked, what the markers mean, and so on.

Rules and special conditions must be explained. If there are any special landowner issues they should be addressed at the ride briefing. Vet criteria, hold times, start times, vet gate closing times, distances between checks and so on should be explained. Ride Management should introduce the veterinarians and volunteers as appropriate. The details on food and water for equines and riders should be covered. The timing and procedures for the awards ceremonies, meals, and entertainment, if any, should be explained.

Remember to thank your sponsors and if donating funds to a charity, remember to tell the participants where the funds are going. Thank your volunteers. Thank the participants.

12.0 Awards Ceremony

The awards ceremony should be scheduled for a reasonable time. If dinner is included, it should also be scheduled and held when scheduled.

Often this is difficult, especially on longer distance rides. If you have a 120 or 160 km ride in conjunction with an 80 km endurance ride and Limited Distance, it will not be practical to hold up the dinner and perhaps even the awards ceremony for the 160 km riders as some of them may not complete until well into the early hours of the morning. Some rides consider two ceremonies, one for the shorter distances and another for the longer distances. Some also hold over the awards ceremony until the following morning, and have a breakfast the next morning.

One of the issues we run into, and Ride Management need to consider, is that in today’s busy world, many people have responsibilities and commitments. They will commit to get to a ride Friday night for our traditional rides. We see more and more people leaving the ride sites after they complete. Partly this may be due to how long it takes to compile the results, how late the food is scheduled for, and how late the award ceremonies are.

Ride Management may wish to consider how to make the flow of information go quickly, how to keep riders at the ride site with good food and comaradie, and to get completion awards to the riders as soon as possible. A well run ride will keep more people about than one where people are not sure that things will happen on time. However, everyone has to recognize that today, not everyone will be able to stay for all the activities. Ride Management should plan accordingly.

Award ceremonies can be quite simple and still be effective. Try to recognize everyone who participated in the ride - finishers and hard luck participants, crews, volunteers, vets. Recognition keeps people coming back.

Randy Eiland: “Nearly anything is acceptable for an award. Just be sure to remember Juniors as all junior riders want the recognition they deserve. If you want to keep your costs down, give certificates for future entries, or maybe a $5.00 or $10.00 discount on next year's ride. Shirts are especially popular especially if you customize your design."

13.0 Sanctioning

Ready to go? Apply to the ERA Sanctioning Director for a ride date and a ride sanction form.