



New Rider Briefing

New rider briefings are to be held immediately following the “regular” ride meeting. The following ideas need to be adapted for your region and attending riders.

Purpose of New Rider Briefings

- Works best if someone other than the Rider Manager can conduct the New Rider Briefing—the Ride Manager has dozens of other things demanding their attention.
- Takes 30 minutes to an hour, depending on the number of new riders and whether or not the new rider has a mentor.
- The intended audience is **riders new to the sport**, regardless of the distance the new rider will be beginning with. Although new to endurance riding, not all will be new to distance riding and not all are inexperienced with horses.
- Address concerns and answer questions of new riders that are not pertinent to experienced riders during the general riders meeting.
- Proactive step for the ride to be a rewarding experience for the rider and a safe & healthy experience for the horse.
- Emphasize “welfare of the horse.”
- Instill philosophy of “To Finish is to Win” and the cooperativeness of the endurance community (e.g., “The vets are there to help you finish safely. Share your concerns with them”).

Starting the Ride Briefing

- Introduce sanctioning organizations and explain what they are. Encourage membership in local and national organizations to “support your sport” and for access to training articles through publications such as local newsletters and the *Endurance News* from AERC.
- Determine distances briefing attendees will be riding and level of distance riding experience.
- Explain that everyone in the “regular” riders meeting had a first ride—they made it through it and so can you. We hope you will come back after this ride and become a member.
- Emphasize that some of the best equine vets are associated with endurance riding.

- If present, introduce vet or rider with a lot of experience/years and explain it takes multiples of miles in training to be fully prepared for an endurance ride.
- Single most important thing about ride day is **welfare of the horse**. No one knows your horse better than you do. The rider has the ultimate responsibility for the horse.

What to Expect

- There are always **three groups of riders** at any endurance ride:
 1. Those that finish time and placement matter to them.
 2. Those that consider “To Finish is to Win.”
 3. Those that are just praying to get through it.

All three of these groups of riders are on the same trail at the same time.

- There is generally only **one group of horses** at any endurance ride (until the horse becomes experienced).
- The HERD vs. the RIDE. Use BIG BRAIN (rider)/little brain (horse) analogy. Explain the difference between what *humans* see and understand (the big picture) vs. what the *horses* see and feel (HERD safety). The rider’s responsibility is to be smarter than the horse to keep it safe.
- Hints to deal with the little brain include leaving after the start, and pulling off the trail to get out of a bad situation.
- If you want to see what a start is like, go up for the start of a ride that precedes your start time, but be sure your horse is well secured at your trailer.
- Discuss how trails are marked and what to do if you get off trail.
- Difference between competitive trail and endurance, if competitive trail riders are in attendance.
- Trail and water etiquette. Mention that when passing, your speed should be regulated to the speed of the horse and rider you are passing.
- Coming back into vet check: come in slowly to calm the horse and slow the heart rate.

Explain the Administrative Details of the Ride

Start:

- Check in with Out Timer 15 minutes prior to ride start.
- You don't have to be mounted.
- Don't have to leave at the start but must check in prior to start.

Ride card:

- Have ride card out for Arrival Timer when coming into vet check.
- Zip lock bag will keep the card dry – take it out of the bag for the timer.
- Keep the ride card with you throughout the ride.
- Explain what is on the ride card and how it is used by timers and by vets.

Holds:

- 30 minutes after checking in with the Arrival Timer, the heart rate needs be down to pulse criteria to continue.
- Gate into a hold procedure: Hold time starts after the heart rate is officially down to criteria (typically 64 pulse) in the pulse box.
- You may not go back on trail until the Hold Time has elapsed, but you may stay longer if you need more time.
- Check with the Out Timer before going back on trail

Finish – endurance vs. limited distance:

- Endurance: Finish line, plus one hour to meet pulse criteria.
- Limited distance: 60 pulse at finish, order of completion, 30 minutes to meet criteria.
- Explain "fit to continue."
- Explain Best Condition process.
- Explain cardiac recovery index (CRI).
- Point out that the maximum completion time includes hold time or "total elapsed time."

Taking Care of Your Horse

- Traditional care during hold.
- Traditional methods of cooling horses: Discuss thermoregulation simply (e.g., muscles make heat, sweat cools and humidity prevents sweat from doing its job well. In a hot horse the pulse goes up and digestive processes slow down. Cool/

cold water helps, etc.)

- Need to know how to take heart rate and what to expect in P/R box.
- If something seems wrong with horse (including Peeing, Pooping, Eating or Drinking), stop and analyze.
- What to do to get help in camp—seek vet's opinion.
- On trail, send word with passing rider. Make sure the messenger has your horse number/letter to give to ride management. Stay put if help has been sent for.
- Explain the use of electrolytes (more important in heat and humidity).
- Explain the traditional post-ride care.

Wrapping Up

- If you are not an AERC member, join and call a mentor when you get home.
- For AERC members, pass out common handouts (found on the AERC website, www.aerc.org):
 - * Frequently Asked Questions
 - * Conditioning for Your First Endurance Ride
 - * Preventing Treatment: What Riders Can Do *a.k.a.* Know Your Horse
 - * The Art of Pacing the Distance Horse
 - * Preventing Pre-Ride Dehydration
 - * The Importance of Hydration in the Endurance Horse
 - * Coping with Heat and Humidity
 - * Basic Advice for a Newbie
 - * Local and national membership applications
- There is always a "Smile Check" during and after the ride.
- Ask the new riders to communicate back to you if they encounter something that wasn't discussed or invite them to let you know how the ride went.
- Ask the Ride Manager to "recognize" the first time riders at the awards meeting.



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