



Government
of South Australia

PONY CLUB ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC.

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40km Ride Guidelines

Purpose

To give riders the knowledge and ability to prepare a horse for a more physical effort than normally required, but not one which requires a very long period of preparation, which could well be beyond the capabilities of the average Pony clubber, especially if they have a school commitments.

Planning the Route

Planning where the ride is to take place is important. Reasonably flat, soft going is preferable to hard, stony ground and this will largely determine how well riders and horses cope with the ride. Consideration must also be made for a suitable halfway point, where horses and riders can take a break, have a drink, and be vet checked (qualified vet not necessary). Ensure that all areas of the ride are accessible by car and float in the event of an emergency.

Organisation

The time allowed for the 40km ride is 4 hours, in addition a break of up to 30 minutes is recommended at the half way point. Although it is not necessary for a qualified vet to be in attendance, a knowledgeable person, able to take temperature, pulse and respiration rates needs to be present to act as 'vet' on the day .

When planning the route, take into consideration suitable places for checkpoints – people on the checkpoints make sure that horses and riders are heading in the right direction and are well enough to continue. Make a map of the ride with distances so the riders can plan how fast they need to go to be at a certain point. Go over the riders intended speed and distances before the ride, giving information about certain areas that might be particularly hard going, where they need to travel slower or soft going, where they can make up time.

Consider the time of year that the ride is to take place. If the weather is going to be hot, then the ride must start early to make sure that everyone finishes before the worst of the heat.

Preparing the Horse for the Ride

A horse which is fit enough to do a 40km ride, should be able to complete an ODE at grade 3 level. To start a horse from scratch takes about 6-8 weeks, and work must be built up gradually. Pay close attention to the fit of the saddle and the fact that the skin may be soft and unused to work, especially around the girth. Make sure that all teeth, worming and shoeing programmes are up to date.

Week 1; consisting mainly of walking, with the occasional trot period, for ½ to ¾ of an hour by the end of the week. Week 2 should include more trotting, still with plenty of walking in between. Weeks 3 and 4 gradually increase the amount of hill work, walking then trotting up hills by the end of the fourth week. In week 5 the work should be including some canter, building up to week 6, with some canter work at 450 mpm can be included twice a week. Make sure you vary the work, including flatwork and jumping. Make sure the horse has one full rest day a week. A test run of 20-25km a week before is often a good gauge as to whether the horse is ready for the 40km.

Feeding

As the work gradually increases, so to the energy content of the feed will also need increasing. This means that more feed in the way of concentrates needs to be fed, depending on the type and temperament of the horse. Remember that a horse needs 1.5 – 3 kg of food/100kg body weight, depending on the type of horse and condition at time of the ride. Electrolytes are also an important part of their diet as they lose these through sweat. Electrolytes can be fed as a pre-mixed supplement.

Safety Precautions on the Ride

Riders should carry with them their map, a watch, hoof pick and anything else they think they might need (i.e. medication). Make riders aware that if they intend on passing another group or rider, don't just gallop past, make the other rider aware of what you are doing and check to make sure that their horse will be ok with you passing. Remind riders that they are classed as vehicles on a road and so must stay to the left, especially on the crest of a hill and around blind corners. Take the surface of roads into consideration when trotting and cantering, a compacted dirt road is just as hard on a horses legs as a surfaced one. Reflector safety vests are strongly recommended.

The Actual Ride

On the day, make sure the horse has had something to eat at least an hour before the start, check his shoes, general condition etc. Before the riders start out, the horses initial temperature, respiration and pulse rate must be taken and recorded. All gear must be checked for wear and in particular the fit of the saddle. There **must** be sufficient clearance between the saddle and the spine (otherwise the rider **must not start**). The saddlecloth must be large enough so as to not cause pressure points. Riders should use the gear they regularly train with avoiding anything unnecessary for the comfort of the horse.

Start riders off in pairs or groups of three. Allow at least 5 minutes between groups and record all times. When riders reach the halfway break point, they must have their horses temperature and pulse rate measured, record the time it was taken. There can then be a break of up to 30 minutes. During this time the horse can be unsaddled, washed down and allowed small amounts of water. Riders should also have something to eat and drink. Ideally there should be plenty of helpers at this point to help sponge and water horses, while the riders take a break. Temperature, respiration and pulse rates are taken again. Pulse rates must drop below 60 beats per minute before they are allowed to continue on.

At the end of the ride, record the time, temperature, pulse and respiration rates. This must then be done again after 30 minutes, and again the pulse rate must be below 60 beats per minute. A trot up is also a good idea to ensure that there are no lame horses.

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Riders should time their ride so they walk the last kilometer home, therefore the horse should not be puffing on arriving at the finish point. Throw a woolen rug over him if the weather is cold. He may be allowed 3 or 4 sips of water at intervals, but no more as this may cause colic. Sponge him off

thoroughly and then rub down well with towels. Remove boots and check all over for any bumps or scratches. Walk him around again until pulse and respiration rates are back to normal. At this stage he can have water and a haynet as normal.

The day after the ride check the horse all over again for any cuts, scratches or lumps on his legs that may have been caused by the ride. Make sure his feed is cut back the night before his day off.

The Vet Check

Horses must be vetted out for the following reasons:

1. Pulse rate not dropping to 60 beats per minute after 30 minutes from being recorded.
2. Horse's respiration rate exceeds its pulse rate at any point in the ride.
3. Lameness of the horse.
4. Horse having saddle sores, girth galls or sore mouth.

Bearing in mind that the care of the horse comes first, the 'vet' on the day has the right to vet out any horse, which in their opinion should not continue.

Steward

The organisers must appoint a steward who is responsible for the overall running of the ride, including welfare of horses. The steward should set a minimum time for the ride, taking into consideration terrain and weather conditions.

After the Ride

Each rider should be given a certificate of completion so they can put them in their certificate logbooks if they wish. A fittest horse award may be given out.

References

Pony Club Association of South Australia Inc "K" Certificate – 40 km Ride

Written by Frank Keach, 1981. Revised by Susan Haese, 2001. Revised by Kate Allen, 2007.