



To Complete is to Win

## Getting Started in Endurance

This Handbook is designed to be used by new riders. It provides a general introduction to the sport of Endurance.

This handbook is designed for standard vetting procedures. If you intend to enter into a Vet Gate into Hold ride all aspects of the ride will remain the same, except for the vetting procedures of the horse (see brief notes on Page 14).

The rules governing the sport of Endurance can be found at the following website addresses:

[www.vicera.com.au](http://www.vicera.com.au)

[www.aera.asn.au/national-rules/](http://www.aera.asn.au/national-rules/)

Please make sure that you download and read the rules before competing in an Endurance event.

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## INTRODUCTION

*The following notes are a summary of what is required to participate in endurance riding in Victoria.*

There are three different ride types in endurance:

- An affiliated introductory ride
- An affiliated intermediate ride
- An affiliated endurance ride

“Affiliated” means approved by the VERA State Management Committee (which is the body that manages the sport in Victoria) and the event must be run according to the rules and regulations of AERA.

**An affiliated introductory ride** is an event of less than 40km in distance and is non-competitive. Its purpose is to introduce riders to the sport of endurance and to allow them to experience how affiliated endurance events are conducted. Riders and horses must not exceed the maximum speed set for the ride.

**An affiliated intermediate ride** is a non-competitive ride where all horses and riders must not exceed the maximum speed set for novice riders and horses. Its distance is usually between 40km and 60km in one day.

**An affiliated endurance ride** is competitive in nature and must be a minimum distance of 80kms in one day. Maximum speeds are set for Novice riders and/or novice horses. Endurance riders on endurance horses may travel above the maximum novice speed set.

**APPROVED AUSTRALIAN STANDARDS RIDING HELMETS MUST BE WORN AT ALL TIMES WHILST ON A HORSE AT ANY AFFILIATED ENDURANCE EVENT.**

## HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER OF VERA

If you are competing in introductory or intermediate rides membership of VERA is not required. Compulsory day membership fees will be charged for any non-member entering an introductory or intermediate ride to cover insurance costs.

In order to take part in an endurance ride, i.e. a ride of 80kms or more, a rider must do the following:

1. Become a member of an affiliated endurance association in the state in which you live.
2. Complete 2 (two) affiliated training rides successfully.

To become a member of VERA the rider must complete a Membership Application form. These are available on the VERA website - [www.vicera.com.au](http://www.vicera.com.au) . Navigate to the Forms page and download the Membership Application and Waiver forms, complete the details and send to the Membership Registrar (details contained on the form) along with payment for the appropriate fees.

A fully paid up riding member of VERA is entitled to full coverage under its Insurance Policy, which includes Personal Accident Insurance whilst riding and training. A detailed description of the Insurance Policy and its coverage can be found on the AERA website at [www.aera.asn.au](http://www.aera.asn.au).

Each new member of VERA must read, understand and adhere to the VERA and AERA rules and regulations.

## MEMBERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS FOR RIDERS

There are two types of riding membership – Novice and Endurance.

Novice Riding Membership:

- Novice Riding Membership is the first step in the qualification process and is for those riders who have not successfully completed two affiliated training rides and 240kms of affiliated endurance rides. **Note:** A Novice Rider can only enter an affiliated endurance ride, i.e. 80kms or more, as a Novice Rider if he or she has successfully completed two affiliated training rides.
- Novice Riders are restricted to a maximum riding speed that must not be exceeded and they cannot enter events greater than 120km in distance.

Endurance Riding Membership:

- Once a rider has successfully completed the novice qualification criteria of 2 training rides and 240kms of affiliated endurance rides, they can apply to for an upgrade to an Endurance Rider Membership.
- An Endurance Riding Membership allows riders to ride in endurance events with unrestricted time limits if they are riding a qualified endurance horse. **Note:** All entrants in introductory and training rides must not exceed the maximum speed set for the

ride. If an endurance rider is riding a novice horse, they are restricted to novice speeds.

- An Endurance Riding Membership Upgrade form can be obtained from the VERA website. Purchase of a riding bib is compulsory upon upgrade and information is contained on the Upgrade form on how to purchase a bib.

## HOW TO APPLY FOR A LOGBOOK FOR YOUR HORSE

Horses cannot be entered in any affiliated endurance rides without first obtaining a logbook. Where a horse does not have a logbook the horse can only be entered into intermediate and introductory rides. Where a horse has a logbook issued, the logbook must be used at all rides – endurance, intermediate or introductory.

Logbook Application forms can be obtained from the VERA website. The details on the form should be completed and sent to the Logbook Registrar, accompanied by the appropriate fee. The Logbook Application form contains the details of who the Logbook Registrar is and their address/contact details. This information is also available on the VERA website. When applying for a Novice horse logbook, complete the appropriate Novice Horse Logbook section of the form.

When applying for a Novice Horse logbook the ID section of the form can be completed by the owner/person responsible for the horse or it can be completed by a veterinarian. If the horse is registered with an association, e.g. Arabian Horse Society of Australia, a copy of the Registration Papers must accompany the logbook application as proof of registration.

When applying for an upgrade from Novice status, complete the Endurance Horse Logbook section of the form. The owner of the horse

must send in the horse's logbook as proof of the three successful endurance ride completions. An ID form must be completed and signed by a veterinarian. The owner of the horse cannot complete the ID form as is possible for the Novice horse. The ID form must accompany the application and the appropriate fees must be paid.

Microchips can be inserted into the neck of the horse but this procedure must be carried out by a veterinarian and the veterinarian must sign the appropriate section of the logbook.

### **Microchipping is compulsory for new horses entering the sport.**

If a horse is not microchipped, brands that are clearly visible are an acceptable form of identification. These details must be included in the logbook, regardless of whether the horse is microchipped or not. If brands are not clearly visible the horse may be disallowed from entering a ride.

Like riders, there are two types of horse classification – Novice or Endurance.

Novice Horse:

- Has not successfully completed 240kms in affiliated endurance rides
- When entered in an affiliated endurance ride must show a full mouth of permanent teeth erupted and with permanent incisors in wear and the horse must be no less than five years of age on the day of the ride. The horse's age is calculated from the day of its birth. In the absence of an official/registered birth date, the horse must show a full mouth of teeth with permanent corner incisors in wear.

- Cannot be entered into a ride exceeding 120km in length
- Are restricted to a maximum speed or required to ride behind a pace rider (in an introductory or intermediate ride).

Endurance Horse:

- Has successfully completed 240kms in affiliated endurance rides (excluding training rides)
- When entered in an affiliated endurance ride must show a full mouth of permanent teeth erupted and with permanent incisors in wear and the horse must be no less than five years of age on the day of the ride. The horse's age is calculated from the day of its birth. In the absence of an official/registered birth date, the horse must show a full mouth of teeth with permanent corner incisors in wear.
- An endurance horse that has not successfully completed a ride for 13 months must ride as a novice horse until it successfully completes one endurance ride.

## **HOW TO QUALIFY YOUR HORSE**

To qualify your horse and move it from Novice to Endurance status the horse must successfully complete 240km (a minimum of 3 rides) in affiliated endurance rides under novice conditions. **Note:** A novice horse is not required to complete two training rides, only the novice rider must comply with this rule.

A minimum period of 90 days must elapse commencing from the date the horse successfully completes its first affiliated endurance ride. A

maximum of four affiliated endurance rides only can be completed in any 90 day period, retrospective from the date of the ride to be entered.

Once the horse has successfully completed the required distance the application for upgrade from novice to endurance horse can be made.

## **ENTRY INTO AN ENDURANCE RIDE**

Pre-nomination is compulsory for entry into affiliated endurance rides. Contact the ride organiser (RO) shown on the ride calendar and advise details of attendance. If circumstances change and entry into the event will not be possible contact the ride organiser and cancel the pre-nomination.

To enter an affiliated endurance ride the rider must:

- Have successfully completed a minimum of 2 training rides
- Have a current year membership card
- Present the horse's logbook
- Ensure the horse's registration status is current – either lifetime or current year registration
- Ensure the owner's name is correctly recorded in the logbook
- Ensure the horse is not under a rest order

Proof/evidence of the rider meeting these conditions must be presented at the time of entering a ride. Entry into the endurance ride may be denied if irregularities are found or mandatory conditions are not met.

An 'affiliated' ride is one that has been approved by the VERA State Management Committee and the event must be run in accordance with

the rules and regulations of the Australian Endurance Riders Association (AERA).

## **PREPARING FOR A RIDE**

### **Before the Ride**

It is a requirement to contact the RO at least 2 weeks in advance (or as advised by the RO) to pre-nominate for the ride. Further information on the ride can be accessed from the VERA website and FB page where flyers are posted by ROs. Most intermediate rides require the horse and rider to check in on the day before the ride (usually a Saturday afternoon) with the actual event taking place on the Sunday morning. This entails being set up to spend a night with your horse at the ride base.

Many introductory rides allow entrants to arrive on the morning of the ride and leave later in the day, eliminating the need to camp overnight.

Should you need to spend the night you will need to ensure, that you have adequate portable yarding facilities for your horse. Very few ride bases have permanent yards available so please check with the RO before arriving at the ride base.

You need to read, understand and adhere to the rules for Horse Containment, which can be found in Section 54 of the AERA Rulebook. Secure, portable metal yard panels, well-constructed picket and electrified tape yards. Ground tethering or the hobbling of horses is not permitted. Only one horse per enclosure is permitted. Horses must be supervised at all times at the ride.

You will need to have a warm, dry and comfortable bed for yourself. Many people sleep in the back of their horse truck or horse float and some pitch a tent. If using a tent it must be very well tied down to avoid the risk of flapping around in the wind and startling horses.

The ride may or may not offer catering. If no catering is available you will need to bring your own food and drinks. It is always advisable to bring some clean drinking water.

Your horse will need all the usual riding gear, rugs, grooming gear, feed and hay, buckets and it is wise to have spares of important tack such as stirrup leathers and reins.

You will need your comfortable riding clothes, helmet (compulsory) and other clothes to suit the weather conditions. Showers are only occasionally available at the ride base so you will usually need to make do with your own makeshift arrangements for washing.

Many rides require that you take home all manure and left-over hay so please check with the RO and make sure you have bags in which to transport these materials home.

Dogs are not permitted at some rides. Please respect this request. Well behaved dogs **ALWAYS ON A LEASH** are welcome at some rides. Young children must always be in the company of a responsible adult.

**TEMPERATURE LOGS AND HORSE HEALTH DECLARATIONS ARE ESSENTIAL AT ENDURANCE RIDES. YOU WILL ALSO NEED YOUR PIC NUMBER TO COMPLETE THE RIDE ENTRY AND HEALTH DECLARATION FORMS WHICH CAN BE DOWNLOADED FROM THE VERA WEBSITE.**

## **Arriving at the Ride Base**

Upon arrival at a ride base find somewhere to park and set up your camp in the allocated camping areas. If you are not sure where to park go to the Secretary's Office / Entry tent and ride staff will be able to direct you to the appropriate camping area.

Water is provided at the Ride Base, either in tanks or mains supply, but be prepared to carry water to your camp. Have plenty of buckets on hand, especially if you are strapping for yourself.

Set up camp as meets your needs, including the set up of yards in accordance with the previously described rules, and be organised for the next day's riding so that you are not hunting for your strapping gear and horse feed when you come in from each leg.

Some rides have catering available and it's always nice to support these canteens as they are usually fund raising for local community groups.

If firewood is provided take enough to meet your needs and do not squirrel away large amounts as this may mean others do not get a supply for themselves. A good way of meeting people is to share a camp fire.

## **ENTRY PROCESS**

Each horse and rider must be entered into the ride prior to attending the vet ring for the pre-ride vet check and prior to commencing a ride of any length, i.e. endurance, intermediate or introductory ride. Entry takes place at the Ride Secretary / Entry tent or office.

Complete an entry form and all the appropriate indemnity forms. If a rider is 18 years of age or under on the day of the ride then a guardian/parent must sign for that rider.

Present the entry & waiver forms together with your membership card and horse's logbook. You will be presented with a ride number which you must wear as the outermost garment during the ride.

If entering an endurance ride you will be weighed so you need to ensure that you bring your riding gear with you when entering. The rules specify that you must weigh with all your riding gear excluding the bridle. This includes saddle, saddlecloth, girth, breastplate, helmet and anything else that you normally ride with. You will be weighed prior to the start of the ride, during the ride and at the finish of the ride. It is the rider's responsibility to ensure that they meet the weight requirements of their riding division.

After all the entry paperwork has been completed and the entry fee paid you will be handed your logbook (or vet card if competing in an intermediate or introductory ride and your horse does not have a logbook) and you can proceed to the vet ring with your horse. Usually there are standard times when the pre-ride vet ring is in operation and it is the rider's responsibility to present their horse during these times.

## **PRE-RIDE VETTING**

All horses must undergo a pre-ride vet check to ensure that they are fit to start the ride. Riders must present their horses unsaddled to the vet ring and without bandages, leg boots or rugs. The logbook or Vet card must accompany the horse.

The horse's temperature, pulse and respiration will be taken by either a TPR Steward or a vet and these parameters will be recorded in your logbook. It is important that your horse is trained for these procedures, particularly temperature.

Practice taking your horse's temperature and pulse at home. If the horse cannot be examined in a safe and controlled manner, it may not be permitted to start if the pre ride vetting examination could not be completed successfully.

Once the temperature, pulse and respiration parameters have been obtained the vet will check all the other parameters required in the log book and you will then be asked to trot out the horse on a loose rein. Ensure that when trotting the horse out the vet has a clear view of the horse.

Your horse must pass all the criteria that are on the logbook, including being sound at the trot. If the horse does not pass then it will not be permitted to start the ride.

Once these procedures have been completed the logbook is retained by the ride organisers until the end of the ride. You are free to take your horse back to your camp and relax until the pre-ride briefing. Riders often take their horses out for a short ride to settle the horse and to check out the start of the ride.

Once the horse has been entered into the ride it officially comes under the control of the Head Vet. The horse must not be removed from the ride base unless exercising it prior to the ride or competing in the ride. This restriction remains in place until such time as the logbook has been officially signed off by both the Head Vet and Ride Secretary.

## **PRE-RIDE TALK**

At every endurance event there will be a pre-ride talk given after all the entries have been received and pre-ride vetting completed. If you are a novice rider or on a novice horse you must attend the pre-ride talk. Valuable information is provided during this talk and all riders should attend.

A description of the course will be given and any hazards or dangers on course will be described. The ride start time, novice horse time and cut off times will also be given. Official ride time will be announced. Course marking details, checkpoint information and any other relevant information will be passed on by the ride organisers.

Opportunity is given for any questions you may have so speak up if you are uncertain about any aspects of the ride. Don't forget, the Chief Steward will always be there to help and answer any questions you may have.

## **RIDE START**

The start time for the ride and the location will be given during the pre-ride talk. It is a requirement that all riders give their ride number to ride staff to ensure the ride organisers know who has gone out on track. It is essential that you make sure your number has been received by the ride staff. The number will be repeated back to you to confirm that you are starting the ride.

If you are new to endurance riding or are riding a young or nervous horse it is acceptable to commence your ride 5 to 10 minutes after the official ride start. This allows the pack of horses to move off and can give you

some valuable breathing space in which to start your ride at a slower and more controlled pace. Advise ride staff if you intend to start later. You must start the ride within 15 minutes of the official start time.

## **VETTING**

There are three different types of vet checks that can be utilised within an endurance ride. These are:

- Standard vetting
- Standard vetting with early present
- Vet gate into hold

Standard vetting provides for an hour of hold time between arrival at the ride base at the end of one leg and commencement of the next leg. The horse is presented to the vet at 30 minutes after arrival to have its parameters checked and an assessment made that the horse is fit to continue.

Standard vetting with early present allows the rider to present their horse earlier than the 30 minutes if the rider is confident the horse will meet the heart rate parameters. Some rides impose a 5 or 10 minute wait period immediately follow return to ride base before the rider can present their horse. This is to allow time for logbooks to be processed and sent to the vet ring. The rider must be sure that the horse is ready to present as only one opportunity is available to get the heart rate parameter correct. The one hour hold period is still applicable.

Vet gate into hold provides the rider the opportunity to present their horse whenever they believe the heart rate of the horse will meet the



heart rate parameter. Until the time that the rider 'calls time' to have the heart rate measured the rider and horse combination is still in riding time. Once the horse passes the heart rate parameter they are then in their hold period, which will have been specified during the pre-ride talk. The rider has the opportunity to re-present their horse if the first presentation results in the heart rate parameter not being met. If the horse fails a second time the horse and rider are eliminated from the ride. At the final vet check the rider and horse only get one chance to meet the heart rate parameters. There is a specified time in which the horse must be presented for the vet check.

## **BASIC STRAPPING KIT**

A basic strapping kit should consist of the following:

- Buckets for washing the horse down
- Sponges
- Scrappers for removing excess water
- Clean towels
- Hoof pick
- Grooming brushes, combs, etc.
- Headstall and lead rope
- Warm rugs, such as kersey or polar fleece and waterproof rugs in case of wet conditions
- Cotton or lighter rugs for those in-between weather conditions
- Stethoscope or heart rate monitor and thermometer
- Feed and water buckets
- Fresh hay (either grass, cereal or lucerne depending on your feeding regime), can be dampened for the horse to eat whilst strapping

- Horse feed for after each leg and after the ride
- Molasses for adding to the water to encourage the horse to drink

## **STRAPPING YOUR HORSE**

### **Standard Vetting**

Upon arrival at the ride base proceed to the timing desk to announce your return to the ride base. Call your number and it will be written down, along with your time of arrival. You may be required to weigh in at this point so you will need to unsaddle your horse (leaving the bridle on the horse) and weigh. The weight will be recorded at this point.

Once the paperwork entries have been completed you will be given a time slip. Make sure you retain this in a safe, dry spot and bring it to the vet ring with you when presenting. Check the time that you need to vet by and ensure you are at the vet ring prior to this time. The time slip will also provide the time that you will depart from the ride base on the next leg.

During the 30 minutes prior to vetting strap your horse to take heat out of its body, remove dirt from the legs and girth and allow the horse to relax prior to vetting.

Have your strapping gear organised so that when you come back to your camp all you have to do is put a headstall on and start washing your horse down to cool it off. If weather conditions are cold you may need to keep the horse warm, rather than wash it down, to avoid it getting chilled.

When washing down your horse it is important to scrape the water off quickly as it heats up. Efficient scraping will greatly assist the cooling down process. Towel the horse down to make it comfortable. You may need to

keep the hind quarters of the horse covered to ensure that it doesn't stiffen up.

Offer some water – either plain or with molasses depending on your horse's tastes – and provide some hay. Walk the horse slowly and offer a pick of grass/hay and provide an opportunity to urinate.

Make sure you arrive at the vetting area at least 5 minutes prior to your vetting time. This allows for any discrepancies in timing between your watch and official ride time. It also allows your horse to relax in the less familiar surrounds of the vetting area prior to having the pulse taken.

Your horse's log book will be ready for you at the Vetting Area (you may have been given the logbook if it is a VGIH ride) and the Chief Steward will call you when it is time to present and hand the log book to you. You will be directed to a TPR steward or vet and the heart rate parameter will be taken. If the horse meets the pulse rate of 55 bpm you have successfully passed this first step of the vet check. If the heart is above a vet will check the heart rate. If the horse fails to meet the heart rate parameter, you will still be required to complete the vet check but you will be eliminated from the ride.

Once the heart rate is taken the vet will check other metabolic parameters and you will be asked to trot your horse up for the lameness examination. Once again, remember to trot it out on a loose rein and provide a clear and unobstructed view of the horse.

### **Next Leg**

Once you are successfully through the vetting you can return to camp and feed your horse and yourself. Have your gear ready and cleaned for the next leg. Fresh saddle cloths are a good idea for each leg, if possible.

Some riders give their horses electrolytes just prior to going out on the next leg. This is a personal decision and should be based on what suits your speed of riding and your horse's requirements.

Make sure to check the out time on your time slip and be saddled and ready at the start line just prior to this time. Call out your number and the timing staff will give you the ok to ride out. Do not leave without this official clearance.

If you wish to take longer in camp it is permissible to start later than your out time but be aware that the time noted for your start time will be the time that is displayed on your time slip and not your actual time of departure. If you are staying back late in camp, ensure you have sufficient time to complete the leg at a pace comfortable to your horse.

If you believe that your horse is not fit to continue you can withdraw the horse from the ride. You need to notify the Chief Steward of your intention to withdraw. If this notification occurs before the time you should have commenced your next leg there is no requirement for another vet check to be undertaken. If you withdraw after your out time then you must present the horse to the vet for another examination and you can be eliminated if the horse fails this vet check.

### **End of the Ride**

Upon arrival back at the ride base proceed to the timing desk and announce your arrival. After the arrival details have been noted you will be given another time slip that will show your time to vet, which, again, will be 30 minutes after your arrival. You will be required to weigh again to record your final riding weight.

Repeat the strapping procedures of the previous leg(s) and proceed to the vetting area. The vet check following completion of the ride is the same as for the first leg except that the horse's pulse rate must be 60 bpm or under.

The vet will check metabolic parameters and conduct the lameness examination. The criteria 'fit to continue' is used to measure whether your horse has been successful in completing the ride and this means that the horse must be in a state that it can go out and do the leg again.

You will have completed the ride if your horse passes the final vet check. If it fails the vet check it is considered a 'vet out' and you are eliminated from the ride. This happens to every rider in the sport at some stage and it is extremely character building. Take the vet out with good grace and accept it as part of being involved in a competitive long-distance horse sport.

Take your horse back to camp and allow it to eat, drink and relax before your trip home. Make sure your horse has access to good clean water, fresh hay (which can be dampened) and good feed that the horse will enjoy. You may want to take it for a walk to seek out some grass.

Best conditioned workouts are conducted prior to the presentation ceremony and the top 5 finishers in each riding division are involved in this competition. The vets re-examine the horses and a workout (usually ridden) is set to assess how well the horses have pulled up after the ride.

There will be a presentation ceremony after the last rider has vetted. This is the time to thank the ride organisers, sponsors and volunteers and to celebrate your successful completion and pick up your logbook.

## **Standard Vetting with Early Presentation**

The process for Standard Vetting with Early Presentation is the same as for Standard Vetting except for the following variations.

You may present your horse before the 30 minutes is up. If you do so, you still only get one chance at the horse's heart rate parameter being under the 55 bpm requirement for the first leg and 60 bpm for any subsequent legs.

Ride Organisers may provide a strapping area in which you can set up your strapping gear, saving on the time that it takes to walk to your camp and back to the vetting area.

Prior to commencing your ride make sure you have your strapping gear set up in an appropriate area.