

ENDURANCE – GETTING STARTED GUIDANCE NOTES

Endurance is an exciting activity for the RDA, with the aim of:

- Providing a different activity, working towards riding outside
- Offering riders a new and different challenge
- Encouraging greater involvement and variety for volunteers (the crew!)

Endurance riding is an activity that can be enjoyed by most riders with virtually any type or breed of equine. When “getting started” there is no need for any special equipment.

RDA Endurance is available for a variety of distances, starting at 1km. This provides for riders a flexible activity that can be adapted to the Group venue and each rider’s ability.

RDA Endurance can be recreational (as well as offering the usual therapeutic benefits), but as riders develop they can progress towards competition and building on their own skills.

What to Consider

Before starting Endurance within RDA sessions, the Group needs to complete the Application Form for Adding Endurance as an Activity, to ensure the Group are registered for the activity and the sessions are insured.

The Endurance Getting Started Checklist highlights the points to consider before starting your Endurance ride. Endurance rides will be determined by the availability of suitable routes. Groups that are already able to hack out would be an ideal venue to hold Endurance sessions, although shorter distance rides can be organised within an arena.

Risk Assessment

Any Endurance rides within existing indoor or outdoor arenas will need to have been assessed in line with normal RDA guidelines.

If you are planning to ride off-site, once you have routes of suitable distances planned, it is necessary to ride or walk them in order to establish the suitability and safety of the ride. This should be done by the Group Organiser and the Group Instructor, using the Risk Assessment Tick Form for RDA Activities.

The primary purpose of the Risk Assessment is to check for unforeseen hazards (such as a difficult gate or road crossing) and plan how to manage them.

Wherever possible, avoid road crossings but when it is necessary it must be to cross only and not to go along the road. A suitably briefed leader, side-walker or steward must be present.

Please remember - If you are riding outside your venue and your Endurance ride crosses private land you must get the landowner's permission in writing.

Mounted leading is not permitted at any time

Mounted leading in Endurance (defined as leading riders, horse to horse) is hazardous, with a number of recorded fatalities. As such, it has been deemed unacceptable practice in RDA Endurance sessions, at any time. Mounted leading is also not permitted by Endurance GB.

Leading on foot is permitted in RDA Endurance 'Getting Started' distances (it should be dictated by the pace and fitness of the leaders) as are mounted escorts.

Distance Levels

For RDA Endurance Getting Started, riders can complete a course distance of 1, 2 or 3 km.

Side walkers and escort riders are permitted to accompany the rider around the course.

A 1km ride within an arena would be approximately 8 circuits (based on an average arena size of 20m x 40m). If riding outside, you can use a GPS or use an Ordnance Survey map to calculate 1, 2 and 3km.

It may be possible to complete 1 or 2 km ride within a 30 minute RDA session.

The Course

A loop would need to be created and this may take place within an arena.

For indoor rides it may make things more interesting to include obstacles such as trotting poles and a gate. Alternatively, you could ask the rider to call out the letters when they ride by or give them specific tasks to do en route; for example, pointing to anything green as they go past. If using an arena/ field, mark up the start, halfway point and finish.

You must ensure there is a safe entry and exit to the route/ venue for both riders and horses.

Timekeeper

An important part of the timekeepers' job is to manage and record the actual times for riders.

If there is more than one rider there should ideally be at least 5 minutes between them, however during a half hour session this may not be feasible and instead it might be helpful

to consider separate timekeepers for each rider. This will help to provide accurate speed/times for each rider.

Calculating Ride Speeds

RDA Endurance Getting Started sessions can be ridden recreationally and with no minimum speed. However, a benefit of this activity is that it gives riders an ability to aim towards a goal time and look to improve ability and stamina. It is therefore recommended that when the rider is able, the RDA recognised minimum and maximum speeds are used:-

Minimum speed = 2km/h

Maximum speed = 12km/h

Work out ride speeds using the formula: speed = distance/time

Examples:

1. A 3km ride takes 45 minutes. First change the 45 minutes to decimal, which is 0.75hr (45 divided by 60 = 0.75), then take the 3 and divide by 0.75 which gives you 4km per hr. This ride would be within the lower level of the recognised minimum but gives the rider higher speeds to aim for!
2. A 2km ride takes 20 minutes. First change the 20 minutes to decimal, which is 0.33hr (20 divided by 60 = 0.33), then take the 2 and divide by 0.33 which gives you 6km per hr. This ride would be well above the minimum and may suggest the rider is ready and has stamina to lengthen their ride!

Alternatively use the table below, denoting: Distances in Kilometres, Speed in Km/Hour,

Time shown Hr:Min:-

Speed (Km per Hour)		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Distance (Km)	1	01:00	0:30	0:20	0:15	0:12	0:10	0:08	0:07	0:07	0:06	0:05	5
	2	02:00	1:00	0:40	0:30	0:24	0:20	0:17	0:15	0:13	0:12	0:10	0:10
	3	03:00	1:30	1:00	0:45	0:36	0:30	0:26	0:22	0:20	0:18	0:16	0:15

Equine Welfare

When planning your Endurance ride there are a few points to consider for the welfare of your horses and ponies.

- No horse or pony of any age should be used immediately after the previous rider has dismounted; a minimum break of 20 minutes is advisable to allow muscles to return to normal.

- Please ensure the saddle is fitted correctly. This is even more important with endurance because of the increased distance and uneven pressure on the muscles of the horses back must be avoided.
- The group must appoint a dedicated person to be responsible for equine welfare during RDA Endurance sessions. Prior to the start of any Endurance session, the group's responsible person should judge the suitability of the horse or pony to undertake the activity.
- Particular attention should be paid to inspecting the horse or pony's back for surface lesions or soreness which might make the animal unsuitable for use.
- The RP should also check that the tack is suitable and it fits correctly before every ride.
- Great consideration must be paid to the age and fitness of the pony, particularly if using an indoor/ outdoor arena. Where possible, Groups are encouraged to organise their ride in a field or outdoor track as it will reduce the stress/ work riding in a straight line rather than continually turning in a school. Following the Endurance ride please ensure your pony is "fit to continue."*
- If you have an unbalanced rider, please be aware of the implication it has on the pony. The maximum distance ridden in an arena by a rider (adult or child) should be considered. After the rider has dismounted, the saddle must be removed and the horse rested for a minimum of 20 - 30 minutes to allow the stressed muscles to recover. A rider with the same/similar requirements of needing 2 helpers should not be the next to ride that particular horse.

****Heart rate***

Vet stops, during which the heart rate and the horse's wellbeing are assessed, should take place throughout the ride. It's worth bearing in mind that these stops are taken 'off the clock' and can also constitute a short rest period for helpers and rider. Crew stops, for sponging/ cooling the horse down and enabling it to drink, are included in the overall time of the ride and the clock remains running for these.

The horse's heart rate should be 64 beats per minute within 30 minutes of the end of the ride. The horses must be fit at the start of the ride and at the end.

Consider the rider: position and comfort

Endurance riding provides an opportunity to stretch a rider's ability by adding in concepts of distance travelled, time measurement and horse welfare.

Whilst Endurance riding is a great way of improving fitness, increasing stamina and tolerance of increased time in the saddle, it needs to be stressed that this can only be achieved with the best possible riding position. Riding for longer and possibly at an increased pace in a poor position can only put more stress on joints and muscles and can lead to discomfort and fatigue. Endurance riders should need only light support from a sidewalker and should have good independent balance and trunk control.

The same contraindications and precautions apply as to a riding session. Particular care should be taken in pressure care and an appropriate seat saver may make a difference.

Preparation for Endurance riding needs to be in incremental steps; selecting riders who will enjoy the challenge and will gain benefit by gradually increasing the distance and speed to work towards Endurance targets. This advice is not only for the rider but also the supporting team of leader, sidewalkers and especially the horse.

Recognising Achievement

There are different ways in RDA that the speed time can be used to motivate the rider during Endurance sessions. For example, a rider can over a period of time aim to beat their own ride speeds and have a personal goal to aim for, or if you have a group of riders they could have a 'league' and compete against each other.

Certificates

There are individual certificates available for those riders who have achieved the 2 and 3km distances within the recognised min/max time limits (2 - 4km/h and 5 - 12km/h). These can be ordered on the RDA Group Order Form.