

ENDURANCE: START COMPETITION GUIDANCE NOTES (15km)

Endurance is an exciting activity for RDA and having reached this level you will have already experienced some of the many benefits of taking part. "Start Competition" level not only builds on what has already been achieved but has the additional aims of:

- Progressing riders towards a competitive ride and ultimately to Endurance GB (EGB) or SERC (Scottish Endurance Riding Club) or ILDRA (Irish Long Distance Riding Association) participation.
- Increasing horsemanship skills for both the rider and volunteers.
- Creating greater variety and additional challenges for all involved.
- Experience Endurance at competition standard.

RDA Endurance is available for a variety of levels starting at 2km and now up to 15km. This provides a flexible activity for riders, which can be adapted to the Group venue and the rider's ability, but also builds on a rider's skills and stamina.

What to Consider

If not already registered as a Group delivering Endurance, before starting Endurance rides 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 that the sessions are insured.

The **Endurance "Start Competition" Checklist** highlights the points to consider before starting your Endurance ride.

Endurance rides will be determined by the availability of suitable routes. With the distances involved at this level, the use of arenas is not permitted. Groups that are already able to hack out would be an ideal venue to hold these Endurance rides, as routes will already be assessed and available to use. It may also be possible for Groups to look at other off-site routes locally; using bridle paths and private land if the landowner is amenable.

Risk Assessment

All off-site rides will need to first be assessed; 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 Coach, using the [Risk Assessment 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/sidewalker/steward must be present.

Please remember: If you are riding outside your venue and your Endurance ride crosses private land you must obtain 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 'Begin Competition' distances (it should obviously be dictated by the pace and level fitness of the leaders, due to the competitive ride speeds involved) as are mounted escorts.

Distance Levels

At "Start Competition" level side walkers (they clearly need to be very fit) and escort riders are permitted to accompany the rider around the course. You can use a GPS or use an Ordnance Survey map to calculate the length of the route. Alternatively, it may be worth contacting your local running club who may have a local runner with GPS prepared to do this for you.

If the Group has access to a smartphone/android phone, download "Map my Run" app or "Endomondo" which will calculate the distance (and speed) for Groups to measure the route.

The Course

It is best to create a loop so that the start and finish are in the same place.

Mark up the start, half-way point and finish. The course needs to also be marked with grass spray paint, arrow signs, ribbon or tape. Please ensure there is a safe entry and exit to the route/venue for both riders and horses.

A suggested course for a 15km, 3 loops of a 5km or 2 loops of a 7.5km course.

Crew Points

Please allow to have at least 2 points on each loop where the horse and rider can be offered a drink. These should be manned with water available for both horse and rider. Water can be poured onto the horse on a hot day but please practice this first!

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 you should ideally have 5 minutes at least between them. This helps to provide accurate speed/times for each rider.

Calculating Ride Speeds

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. At this level the riders should be riding within the RDA recognised minimum and maximum speeds:-

15km distance:

Minimum speed = 8km/h Maximum speed = 12 km/h

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

Examples:

1. A 6km ride takes 45 minutes. First change the 45 minutes to decimal, which is 0.75hr (45 divided by 60 = 0.75), then take the 6 and divide by 0.75 which gives you 8km per hr. This ride would be well within the minimum time and indicates the rider is ready for competition.
2. A 5km ride takes 20 minutes. First change the 20 minutes to decimal, which is 0.33hr (20 divided by 60 = 0.33), then take the 5 and divide by 0.33 which gives you 15km per hr. This ride would be well above the maximum speed and suggests that the horse may have been ridden too hard, so the rider needs to slow the pace down for optimum riding and improved horse welfare.

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
10	10:00	5:00	3:20	2:30	2:00	1:40	1:26	1:15	1:07	1:00	0:54	0:50
11	11:00	5:30	3:40	2:45	2:12	1:50	1.34	1.22	1.13	1.06	1.00	0:55
12	12:00	6:00	4:00	3:00	2:24	2:00	1.42	1.30	1.20	1.12	1.05	1.00
13	13:00	6:00	4:20	3:15	2:36	2:10	1.51	1.37	1.26	1.18	1.10	1.05
14	14:00	6:30	4:40	3:30	2:48	2:20	2.00	1.45	1.33	1.24	1.16	1.10
15	15:00	7:30	5:00	3:45	3:00	2:30	2.05	1.52	1.40	1.30	1.21	1.15

Optimum Speed

To achieve optimum speed, there is a skill to be learned in riding at set paces; riders can be coached in riding to a set time (kph) at walk, trot and canter over a set distance.

Optimum speeds will be announced for competitions, however Groups can work out optimum speeds for individual riders dependent on their ability.

Example:

A 5km ride is completed in 50mins which, looking at the table above, provides a speed of 6 (km/hr). A Group could then support the rider to look at doing the same distance at an optimum speed of 8 (km/hr) and complete the course in 37 minutes. The Group would work with the rider to think of ways to quicken the course without exceeding the optimum speed.

Horsemanship

At this level of Endurance, the aim is to provide the riders and helpers with the skills to move onto Endurance competitions. This means that there are aspects to the care of the horse/pony that need to be included as an integral part of the ride:-

- **Equine Heart Rate:** This must be kept under 64 beats per minute. Use a stethoscope or heart monitor (available from Performance Equestrian Tel: 01933 624624) at the start, middle and end of the ride.

- **Trot up:** This will be undertaken in front of a vet at competitions. The horse or pony should be presented without a saddle during the trot up and their back must be checked thoroughly. Afterwards it must be ensured that the saddle and tack are checked and fitted carefully. When riding at the Group the rider can learn how to trot up with the Group Coach. It is important to carefully inspect the gait of the horse or pony before and after the ride etc. As a rule, the equine should be seen to be moving in the same manner before and after the ride.
- **Dehydration:** It is important to ensure equines do not dehydrate, especially as riders build up their distances. During Endurance sessions, teach the horse to drink out of buckets or even puddles (it's great fun to practice!). Water must be available to the horse throughout the ride and they should be encouraged to drink at every opportunity. Learn the safe use of Electrolytes.
- **Feeding:** Over typical RDA session distances, the horse's normal feeding levels should apply. However, as distances increase, it may be necessary to adjust the feed amounts and times (but don't be tempted to overfeed). Your local feed company will be able to offer advice.

Don't forget! Rider hydration and nutrition are also very important. Make sure riders have adequate food and drink to provide energy before and during the ride. EGB coaches should be able to suggest suitable snacks to keep energy levels up.

Equine Welfare

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

- The group must appoint a dedicated, knowledgeable 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.
- **No horse/pony of any age should be used more than once at "Start Competition" level.**
- Great consideration must be paid to the age and fitness of the pony. 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".
- 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.

Endurance Vet Sheet

Below is an example of what an Endurance Vet Sheet should look like:

Rider Name	John Smith	
Horse Name	Bobby	
Group Name	Warwick RDA Group	
	Start	Finish
Heart Rate (bpm)	39bpm	59bpm
Trot Up	Fit to Ride? Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	Fit at Finish Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>
Speed Min 10km/h – Max 12km/h	Start time: 10.00am	Finish Time: 11.23am (averaging just over 11km/h)

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.

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 e.g. optimum speeds, or if you have a group of riders they could have a "league" and compete against each other.

If there is a group of riders aiming for the same optimum time you can see who gets closest to the optimum time in a session and acknowledge that rider, similar to a competition.

Useful resources

An Cumulative Riding Record and RDA Endurance Rider Time Card are available to download from the Endurance page of the [RDA website](#).

Certificates

A certificate for achieving a 15km distance within the 'competitive' minimum 10km/h and maximum 12km/hr time limits is also available. These can be ordered on the RDA Group Order Form.

What Happens Next?

If your riders are consistently riding to this level within the minimum/ maximum limits they may want to look at riding as part of EGB, SERC or ILDRA events. For more information please contact the Endurance Co-ordinator, Lottie Dronfield at the RDA National Office.

In addition, we are pleased to be able to offer a list of EGB Coaches who have kindly offered to support their local RDA Groups in setting up their own RDA Endurance rides. The list of useful contacts is available to download from the RDA website or by contacting Lottie Dronfield at the RDA National Office.