

FAQ's about The Pony Club Endurance rides for Team Managers and Riders

• *What is an endurance ride?*

It is a ride, usually over open country, along a specified route for a set distance with specific speed requirements. You will be issued with a map of the route a few days before the competition which you will need to study carefully and measure, in order to plan your ride pace and finish in time. There will be checkpoints along the route at which you must ensure the steward records your competitor number. Most competitive rides also require the horse or pony to be vetted before and after the ride.

The main body for overseeing Endurance Riding in England and Wales is Endurance GB (E.G.B), in Scotland it is SERC and in Ireland it is ILDRA

The Pony Club are working closely with these bodies to ensure that Pony Club Members will have access to rides run by all these bodies as well as those run by Pony Club Branches, Centres and Areas.

• *What is a Level 1/2 (Robin/ Merlin) training ride?*

Robin is the name given by The Pony Club to the shortest of their recognised ride levels. It is intended primarily as an introductory training level and is most likely to be organised within your Branch or Centre.

The Robin is a ride of under 10km that needs to be completed at a pace of no more than 12kmph. Merlin is a ride of 10-19km that needs to be completed at a pace of no more than 12kmph. There is no minimum speed but if you are intending to progress to the longer rides then it would be good practice to aim for the level 3 minimum speed of 8kmph. Vetting is not compulsory at this level but if offered can give you a much better idea of how your pony has coped.

• *What are the Level 3-5 (Kestrel/Osprey/Eagle) rides?*

These rides are the three different competitive levels within Pony Club Endurance. The distance of the route you are required to ride will increase as you move up the levels (min 20km – max 50km). **It is not necessary to have completed any Level 1/2 rides before entering Level 3 but many Members prefer to do so. Members/Associates who wish to progress to Levels 4 and 5 will need to have completed a minimum of 2 rides at the previous level.**

(NB. Members/Associates wanting to compete at the Area Qualifiers or Championships must ensure that they meet the appropriate eligibility criteria.)

• *How are results achieved in these rides?*

Graded rides and Pleasure rides run by the governing bodies EGB/SERC/ILDRA are non-competitive but you need to complete between the speeds stated in the current rules. Going too fast or too slow will result in elimination. Rides at these levels will require the pony to be vetted before and after the ride. Failing the vetting will result in elimination so it is important that you prepare your pony properly.

All combinations who successfully complete the course and pass the vet will receive a Completion award. At a Graded ride your Grade will be worked out based on the speed you rode at and the final heart rate of your pony. The idea is that fitter ponies will do better.

At Pony Club events all Levels can be run as non competitive Training rides but Level 3-5 Kestrel, Osprey and Eagle rides can also be run as a competition. In this case the result is achieved by using The Pony Club Performance Formula (Appendix C).

• *Who can participate and how do I know which class to enter?*

Pony Club Endurance is designed for all Branch and Centre Members aged five years and over, and Associates. Anyone with a sound pony/horse can participate in Endurance at Pony Club level, you do not need a particular breed or type of pony or specialist equipment.

Riders may begin at Levels 1-3 – there is no restriction against older members competing at the novice levels. However, if you or your pony have never competed in Endurance before it would not be advisable to begin higher than the Merlin level. First time riders are frequently surprised by the speed required in order to complete within the time allowed at Levels 3 and above and it is easier to practise this on the shorter distances to begin with.

• *How do I enter EnduranceGB, SERC, ILDRA rides?*

Log on to the appropriate website:

EnduranceG.B - www.endurancegb.co.uk ,

SERC - www.scottishendurance.com

ILDRA - www.ildra.co.uk

Schedules for the whole year are available.

Download an entry form. Fill in and write Pony Club in top right hand corner. Send in to ride secretary at least two weeks before the ride.

Maps, starting times and other information will be sent to you approximately one week before the ride.

• *What do I do when I get to the ride?*

- Take your mastercard to the ride secretary
- Check for any route changes
- Collect your number and sticky ID labels
- Walk out and relax your horse
- Have shoes checked by farrier if present. Have him sign your vet sheet
- Take horse (with vet sheet) to vets inspection
- Present fully tacked up horse and yourself in riding gear to Tack Check Steward if present
- Start ride

• *What does the vetting entail?*

At most Endurance rides competitors will be required to trot their horse up for the vet both before they start and within 30 minutes of completing. Failure to do so can result in disqualification. Horses can be trotted up in either headcollars or bridles, but bridles are advised so that he is under control. They should not be saddled nor have boots, bandages or hoof oil on. The leader need not be the rider but must wear the competitor's number bib for identification. The trot up is over 20m - 30m and must be done with a loose rein. The vet will observe the trot up for signs of lameness and pick up the feet. He may also look into the mouth and examine the horse for signs of external injury and dehydration. It is a good idea to ensure that your pony is used to having these things done by a stranger. **At Levels 3-5 and sometimes at Level 2 the vet will also take the heart rate.** In general a heart rate of

over 64bpm will result in disqualification and the lower the heart rate the better in rides where it is used to determine points or qualification.

NB. At rides run by The Pony Club Branches/Centres the vet check may be carried out by a senior Pony Club official with the aid of an electronic heart rate monitor or stethoscope.

• ***What other checks are carried out?***

At The Pony Club Endurance National Championships and most EGB/SERC/ILDRA national rides there will be a Farriery check. Horses should have good, new shoes or, if barefoot, have had their feet trimmed recently - especially for longer distances.

Pony Club Rides will also include a tack check after vetting and immediately prior to starting. Failure to present in correct tack and riding gear will result in you not be allowed to start so it is important that you check the rules carefully. This is one area where Pony Club rules do differ from those of the governing bodies.

• ***What happens at a vet gate/hold?***

In Pony Club rides you will only have a vet gate/hold in Level 5 rides. In EGB/SERC/ILDRA rides they usually only incorporate them for distances of 50km or greater, but rules do vary depending on the governing body, so you are advised to check if you are competing at this level.

The vet gate is essentially just a midway vet check to ensure that the horse is coping well and is fit to continue. (*See rules for full details on timing/presentation etc.*) There will usually be a specially designated “hold” area for competitors and their crews near to the vetting lanes but it is not always at the start venue – it is sensible to familiarise yourself with the location before the ride and set up as much as possible of what you will need. Find out where the toilets are, and where the timekeepers and vet gate timekeepers are situated, where the water is if any. Get everything ready for horse and rider.

On arrival you need to work quickly and quietly. Remove saddle and pour water all over horse including the rear end. Wash and walk the horse in a figure of 8, wash between back legs, check pulse and keep an eye on rugs. Know what is normal for your horse. You will need to be quick, quiet, confident and organised. At the vet gate the rider should rest, eat and drink, and after the vetting the horse should do the same. Make sure the rider is cool and drinks plenty of liquids even if they say they are not thirsty. Crews must remember to eat and drink also. Keep an eye on time and be ready to leave the vet hold at the correct time, as the clock will start even if you are not ready to set off.

• ***How will I know the route?***

All competitors will be given a photocopied map on which the route is marked, and sometimes a written description of the main route features. The route is partially marked (usually with spray chalk or fluorescent ribbons) – generally only at major changes of direction. Part of the challenge and enjoyment of Endurance riding is to use your map to navigate the route successfully. You should also always check at the secretaries’ caravan for any last minute route changes.

• ***What’s to stop me from taking a short cut?***

The route will be stewarded at certain checkpoints, at which your number is recorded and relayed back to the secretary. This also helps the organiser keep track of riders in the event

of an emergency. Please note that it is YOUR responsibility to ensure that your number is recorded – if it isn't you could be eliminated!

• ***Can I ride with my friends?***

If you have friends that are entered in the same class as you and you want to ride together then it is usually possible to do so. Just ask the ride secretary when you enter and they will make sure that your vet/start times are similar. It is quite common at Endurance rides to see groups of two to five riders going round together. Larger groups are not generally started together.

• ***What's to stop me simply following the rider in front?***

Each small group of riders will generally be started a few minutes apart, this will mean that riders are less likely to bunch up and will also stop the ponies from thinking it is a race. It is possible that you will catch up with other groups around the route but you should beware of following them blindly – they might be lost, or riding a different route!

• ***Can I overtake riders who are going slower than me?***

Yes. First ask their permission and then pass slowly, leaving sufficient room and always say thank you.

• ***How fast do I have to ride?***

8-12kmph requires that you do most of the route at a strong working trot, with some canter. This will give you enough time to walk or stop to get your bearings. You will be able to canter on some parts of the route if you are running late, however remember finishing too early is as bad as finishing too late, as this suggests that your pony has had to run too fast, and will also lead to a higher finishing heart rate. As a benchmark all riders and ponies should be in a fit state to complete 50% of the ride distance again after they have completed the set ride.

• ***How do I know how fast I am riding?***

Checkpoints will be marked on the route map. Working out the distance between these or other landmarks will give you an indication of how much time it should take you to reach each checkpoint. Using the map provided to plan how you will ride each section according to terrain/speed should all be part of your preparation for the event.

• ***What is my ride Master Card and why is it important?***

Your ride Master Card forms the only acceptable record of your Endurance riding achievements. It is therefore a very important document which it is your responsibility to hand to the secretary at the start of each ride. The secretary will complete and validate your card each time you compete. No awards will be back dated due to loss of a card or failure to present it on the day.

There are two reasons this rule is so strictly adhered to:

- For welfare reasons equines are not usually allowed to compete at more than 10 Endurance rides in a year. The record card allows secretaries to monitor this.
- As riders can compete at events run outside the pony club it is not possible for The Pony Club or ride secretaries to verify results for eligibility, qualification and awards otherwise.

It is imperative that you collect a Master Card from your Branch/Centre Secretary, or request one from The Pony Club Headquarters, in advance of your first ride and you take it to every Endurance Ride that you participate in. You will not be allowed to ride if it is not presented to the ride secretary in advance of the ride.

NB. Pony Club Mastercards are for the pony and rider combination so you will need a new mastercard if you change pony.

• **What do you mean by a team/rider “crew”?**

The team or rider’s crew is the term given to non-riding support personnel. A crew will usually meet riders at points along the route to offer drinks to both horse and rider and to “slosh” the pony with water. This will keep its temperature down and thereby reduce its pulse rate (*tip - water in old milk or fabric conditioner bottles are excellent for pouring on top of the horse’s neck*). Routes will often be marked with “good crewing points” where road access and parking are reasonable. Crew will also help with caring for the horse after the ride, with the aim of reducing his heart rate as far as possible for the vetting.

As you can perhaps imagine, for advanced level riders crewing becomes a serious and highly technical affair, however at Pony Club level it is probably only really necessary for rides of 30km plus or if team managers are concerned about particularly novice riders. Ride details will tell you whether there is water provided at the venue and en-route. However bringing your own (especially on hot days) for the finish is advisable even if you do not intend to “crew”.

Q. Please can you tell me if fun rides and the por section of trec events count towards the mileage achievement badges? Is it just the case of getting your mileage card signed by the organiser if any rides that you do?

A. Any rides count for this and any level. However they must be recorded on a mastercard – you can ask to see a copy or trust that the Branch DC/discipline manager has seen it.

To explain: a pleasure ride (PR) under EGB rules has a simple vetting which consists of only a trot up and no heart rate is taken. This type of ride is cheaper to enter and often run at distances of up to 30km. It has its own kind of vet sheet which does not record heart rate. Graded rides (GER) run at the same distance have a vetting which takes heart rate and a vet sheet appropriate to this.)

Q. We would like to have 3 accompanying horses as plan to ride as a split team due to the size and ages of riders, is this ok and do they have to wear tabards?

A. There is nothing in our rules that says they can’t have just one adult to one member, providing they are Juniors. Last year the accompanying adults didn’t wear tabards.