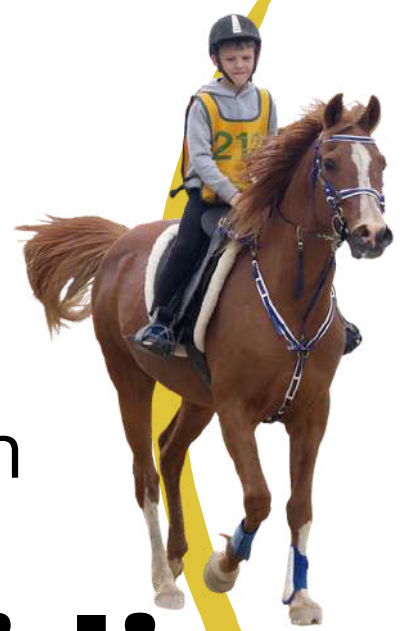


Why Not Try...?



The Discipline of the Month

Endurance Riding

Five reasons to give it a try

1.

Endurance riders ride for hours through beautiful countryside and can camp over and ride two days, or just come on the day for 5-20km distances.

2.

Horse welfare is of prime importance, not winning. The saying is 'To Complete is to Win'.

3.

With rides from 5km, 10km, 20km, 40km, 80km, 100km, 120km, and 160km, multiple-day events and marathon events, endurance has something for everyone.

4.

Endurance riders can ride in the gear of their choice (within [PCA Gear Rules](#)) for their comfort and their horse's comfort.

5.

Endurance riding is a recognised sport internationally, with opportunities to compete overseas.

Endurance Riding - What is it?

The sport of endurance riding requires a horse and rider combination to successfully complete a marked course within a specified time.

This challenges the rider to have an effective use of pace and thorough knowledge of their horse's capabilities over varying terrain.

At all times, the welfare of the horse and the skills of horse management are paramount.

Endurance distances within Australia vary, offering a level to suit most riders, for example, from 5km rides allowing families to escort their children, to social rides of 20km progressing to intermediate rides of 40km.

A 'proper' endurance ride is a minimum distance of 80km and extends to marathon rides of 400km over five days. The penultimate championship distance is the one day 160km event. Riders and horses must progress through novice levels to achieve Qualified Endurance status.

Endurance rides are split into two or three legs. At the end of each leg there are compulsory veterinary checks where the horse is assessed for his recovery and fitness to continue. The vet checks are followed by a 'hold' time in which horses and riders may rest and recover.

Endurance is a unique sport as families can compete side by side and inclusivity is inherent. Riding over varying terrain in different rural settings afford many opportunities for spectacular scenery whilst creating a strong bond between rider and horse.

Endurance has won Australia more medals at the World Equestrian Games than any other discipline. Australian bred endurance horses consistently perform amongst the best in the world.



The three Australian team members crossing the finish line together at the 2016 World Endurance Championships in Slovakia - image by Miroslava Vidova

Starting out - Mentoring Programs



Decided that you want to try Endurance but you're unsure where to start? There is loads of online information available about endurance riding in Australia: YouTube videos, Starting Out in Endurance, Manuals and Tips n Tricks on each State Endurance Riders Association website. (See our back page for contacts).

There are Mentoring Programs as well. Ride Calendars and Zones are online and will show you your closest endurance events. Facebook also has lots of online groups who ride/train together in different areas if you want to 'buddy up' with some more experienced riders. Your local Ride Organising Committee or State Management Committee can also point you in the right direction.

Do I need to be an AERA member?

For introductory and intermediate rides you do not need to pay for an annual membership of the Australian Endurance Riders Association.

However, you will need to pay a Day Membership fee on top of your ride entry fee for each ride you enter. Note that this Day Membership does not provide the same insurance cover as can be taken up with an annual membership. However current Pony Club members have insurance cover when participating in their sport.

There are membership plans for each level of riding, ie when you start out and you are doing less than 60km events you can take out an Intermediate Membership which means you do not have to pay the Day Membership Fee at each event. Once you progress to 80km events you need AERA full membership.

What Division Would I Be?

JUNIOR RIDERS

A Junior Rider is one who will attain the age of 17 years or less in the calendar year of the ride they are entering. The minimum age to enter an Introductory ride is four years (on the day of the ride). The minimum age to enter an Intermediate or Endurance ride is five years (on the day of the ride). Riders less than five years of age must be accompanied by an adult pedestrian. The horse may be led. Riders five years or older and less than 10 years must be accompanied by an adult either on foot or mounted. Junior riders are not permitted to ride stallions in official events.

SENIOR/ADULT OPEN RIDERS

Based on weight with saddle riders are either Lightweight, Middleweight or Heavyweight Division, but this only applies to Open Riders. All four divisions ride in the same event and compete together.



Taylor from Gympie Pony Club after an endurance ride, 2021.

Is an Endurance Ride Different to a Navigation Ride?

Yes they are different. A Nav Ride is a friendly or serious competition where teams of two or three riders have a list of instructions to follow to get them around a set course, and they have to complete tasks on the way.

[Read the PCA Discipline of the Month for Navigation Rides.](#)

A Bit of History



Arabians and Arabian crossbreeds are noted for their endurance. Ron Males, noted Arabian breeder, has won 21 Quilty buckles, a feat we don't think has been beaten.



Tom Quilty was a wealthy cattleman and horseman from the Kimberley.

When R.M. Williams approached his good friend about the idea in 1966, Tom donated the \$1,000 which paid for the original Quilty Gold Cup 100 mile endurance event.

This cup has pride of place in the Stockman's Hall of Fame in Longreach, Queensland.

How Fast Do You Ride?

There are many differing opinions on training a horse for endurance, and different approaches work better for different horses and in different situations. The following points provide some general guidance:

- The average horse walks at about 4-6kph, trots at about 8-12kph, and canters at about 15-25kph.
- In a one hour active dressage session, you are likely to have ridden around 10km. Collection, lateral work and deep sand combine to provide a more strenuous workout than travelling 10km along a trail.
- Many endurance riders recommend training around 2-4 times per week for ride distances of 20km or more, which could include flat work sessions as well as trail rides. It is important to include rest days for muscles to recover and develop in response to the training.
- Do not leave trail work out of your training program, as your horse needs to learn to develop rhythm for long stretches, build bone density on compacted ground, and become used to the various obstacles and sights of the trail.
- At the introductory level, you should aim to travel at around 10kph on the trail, maintaining a steady rhythm and pace. Though most introductory rides will allow you to travel slower. The maximum speed you may travel at a ride is 14kph.
- At the intermediate and endurance level, you should be travelling steady at a minimum of 10kph over your ride distance. The maximum speed for novice horses and riders, and for all riders in intermediate distance events is 14kph.
- Practice checking your horse's heart rate when you finish training and then after cooling down. Recovery time is a good indication of fitness, and this knowledge of your horse will be useful at a ride, or other active sports like eventing.



[How to take a horse's heart rate with a stethoscope](#)



Photos: Endurance riding can be enjoyed by the whole family, or with friends, through some lovely countryside. (Endurance NSW)



Your First Ride

So, you've decided to give endurance a try. Be warned though, it is addictive.

You can't jump in and try an 80km endurance ride, but you can try a 5km, 10km or 20km introductory ride or a 40km intermediate ride as a Day Member, without joining your State body.

Rides require pre-nomination. As the season progresses, links to ride flyers, Facebook pages or websites will appear on ride calendars. A good place to find up to date information is the Australian Endurance Riders Association web calendar, or each State Division's website Calendar.

Early Starts

If the ride starts early in the morning, you may need to arrive the previous day and camp overnight. Even if it is an afternoon ride, it is still worth camping overnight. Endurance riders are quite the sociable bunch, and we love to relax and unwind around the camp fire after a ride.

If it is a Sunday morning ride, nominations, pre-ride vetting and pre-ride talk are all on Saturday. The ride paperwork will advise you as to when you need to arrive. You simply arrive at the ride base, and you should be stopped at the gate by a volunteer that will check your horse health declaration is complete. They will direct you where to camp. You pick your spot, and set up a yard for your horse and your own camp.

Pre-ride vet check

All horses must pass a pre-ride vet check. Horse welfare is of the utmost importance in our sport.

The Aim is to Complete

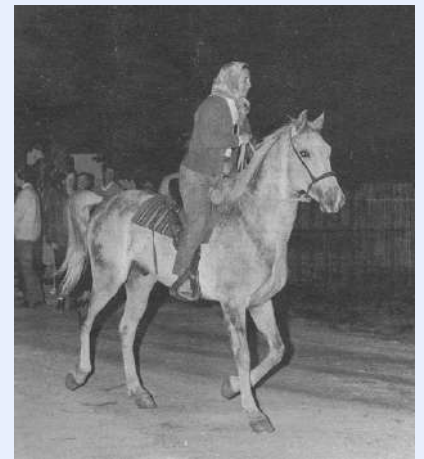
The goal of an intro ride or intermediate ride is to complete, there are no placings. They are non-competitive and are speed limited. There will be a minimum time set for the ride, and you must not come in early or you will be disqualified. You ride at you and your horse's own pace, and plenty of time is allowed for you to complete the ride, even if you decide to walk your horse around the course.

Follow the arrows

You follow the arrows as specified in the pre-ride briefing. You will come to at least one checkpoint, once again, call out your bib number and wait for a reply. Every 5 or 10km, you should find a distance marker that will tell you how far you have come.

End of ride vet check

Your horse has to pass the end of ride vet check. The vet will check all parameters, and then ask you to do a trot-out. The rule is "Fit to Continue". That is at the end of a ride, your horse should be capable of heading out and doing more distance. If your horse is sound and passes the vet check, congratulations, you have successfully completed your first ride.



Long endurance rides start at night so much of the ride is before the heat of the day. Erica Williams (above, wife of RM) is taking part in a ride in 1968. Placegetters usually take 11-13 hours to ride 160kms. She was a keen competitor, an administrator of the Quilty Gold Cup, and wrote two books about the event.

Change of Rules

Riders can lead their horse part of the way.

We believe this is a true story . . . Many years ago in the US, a rule had to be changed so that riders spend SOME time in the saddle, after a native American won a 100 mile event - leading his horse the whole way!

Some Highlights of Endurance Riding in Australia

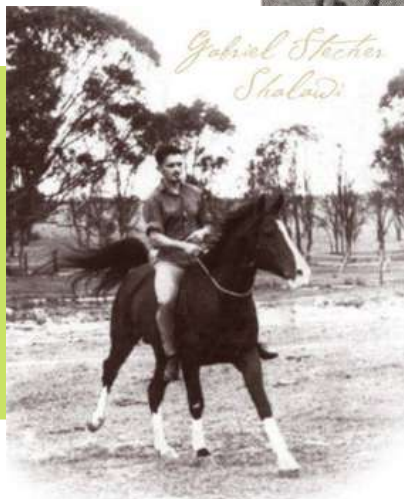
R.M. Williams and his wife Erica were great supporters of endurance riding. In fact Reginald Murray ('RM') Williams was a key figure in creating the Tom Quilty 100 Mile (160km) Endurance Ride.

Here the couple is completing the 1973 ride, coming up Bowen Mountain. This ride finished near the Hawkesbury River near Wilberforce, NSW.

You can read more about RM the legend and what he did for equestrian sport in this country - particularly endurance and rodeo and creating Hoofs and Horns magazine - by searching for him on the Equestrian Memories Australia Facebook page. (Used with permission)



The first Quilty Cup winner was Gabriel Stecher and the stallion Shalawi. Stecher rode the whole 100 miles (160kms) bareback. The year was 1966.



Famous Endurance Horse - Sarisha

Endurance horses can have a long, successful life in the sport, with good care and training. When a little known endurance rider paid \$100 for an unbroken grey Arab gelding in 1991 to save him going to the doggers, no-one realised what was going to unfold for the pair.

Keryn Mahoney became a highly decorated endurance competitor and breeder, and Sarisha formed one of the most celebrated partnerships in the tough sport.

They say it is a great horse who completes 5000 kms in endurance competition. Think of all the kms of training that also goes into competing in these events. Before Sarisha retired in 2009, he and Keryn had completed an astounding 16,679 kms together in competition. Sarisha was the first horse in Australia to complete 2000 kms in one year, and finished with a record 11 Quilty buckles from 12 starts.

He was named National Distance Horse of the Year three times (awarded to the horse with the most kms in competition) and in 2010 the World Arabian Horse Organisation selected Sarisha as its trophy horse of the year. (From the Equestrian Memories Australia Facebook page; used with permission)



Keryn Mahoney and a retired Sarisha (left), and on their way to another good endurance race completion (right). The pair covered over 16,000kms together - an amazing effort.



More Information on National and State Organisations

The Australian Endurance Riders Association
is the peak governing body for endurance in Australia

Web: aera.asn.au

Starting Out Guides:

aera.asn.au/index.php/guides/startingendurance/your-first-training-ride

National Ride Calendar:

aeraspace.com.au/RideCalendar.aspx

National Endurance Ride Results:

aeraspace.com.au

State Contacts

New South Wales Web: nswera.asn.au

Registrar: registrar@nswera.info

Queensland Web: qldendurance.asn.au

Registrar: registrar@qldendurance.asn.au

Victoria Web: vicera.com.au

Registrar: memberships@vicera.com.au

South Australia Web: saera.asn.au

Registrar: secretary@saera.asn.au

Western Australia Web: waera.asn.au

Registrar: waerasesc@outlook.com

Tasmania Web: teera.asn.au

Registrar: hux209@gmail.com



Endurance associations regularly hold Introduction to Endurance Clinics which are combined with a short ride of 10km.

Affiliated (80km) events often include five and 10km rides as well as 20 and 40km events.

If you are looking for activities to try at your Club or at home, all previous Disciplines we have covered so far are [on our website here:](#)



PCA has already produced a [Discipline of the Month for Navigation Rides](#). You can find it on the PCA website under Sports/Discipline of the Month.

With thanks to:

Linda Henley, Endurance NSW

