

Introduction to Endurance

Endurance or Long Distance Riding is a friendly, fun sport which is available to anyone with a horse to ride. No special equipment or horse is needed, and it is all about riding through beautiful scenery and countryside, making new friends and above all else, having a good time. One thing appealing about endurance is that for many rides you are not directly competing against anyone else - it is just you and your horse enjoying yourselves with a reward at the end!

Enjoy the Camaraderie!

Another element is the spirit of camaraderie which exists amongst the riders. Endurance GB is always happy to put you in touch with a more experienced rider who can advise you; EGB organisers are happy to talk about their rides and EGB regularly stages talks, seminars and demonstrations across the regions.

If it is your first ride and you feel a little nervous, the Ride Organiser may be able to arrange for you to ride with someone who is familiar with the sport. Friendliness between riders is commonplace. You will find sections of the ride where you need to reduce speed for whatever reason and part of the fun at these times, is the conversation with other riders along the way. When you meet again at another ride, you will be meeting friends both old and new.

Building Partnerships

Perhaps the best reason of all for taking up Endurance Riding is the partnership built up with your horse over these many miles of new riding ground. You guide him, and he carries you; the relationship which is forged between endurance rider and endurance horse would be hard to equal in any other sport. He has to trust you to lead him back home, and you have to trust him to get you there; the resultant bonding and confidence will stay with both of you in any future sports you may try. That's if you're not hooked on Endurance Riding for life!

How do I start?

You do not need to be a member of Endurance GB to do our pleasure rides, however, EGB runs an Associate Member Scheme, in which you can join your local group – in this case Lancashire Group EGB, for only £38 per annum [Joining EnduranceGB](#). This allows you to take part in social or training rides run by the Group at member's rates. It also allows you to enter any other Groups' rides. You can also enter national pleasure rides (i.e. any ride with a competitive class) at member's rates. To enter competitive rides, you would need to be a Full Member of EGB.

As a local Associate Member, you will need to register your horse(s) for a Ride Record Card. All kilometres gained at any of the Lancs. Group EGB recognised rides you complete, will be credited to your distance card and you will then be eligible for distance rosettes "in increments of 100km" at the Annual Awards Presentation Evening. You will also be eligible

for local member's trophies although you will need to offer to help at one ride during the season – this is a condition of eligibility for all group trophies. To claim your Annual Distance Rosettes, and to be considered for the group trophies you must return your completed Ride Record Card to the address listed on the card by the 30th November.

As an Associate Member you will also be supplied with the quarterly Endurance GB magazine and EGB Annual Handbook, which contains all the national rides, and the rules we must abide by. You will also receive the quarterly Lancs. Group newsletter which will include details about all our rides, as well as interesting and informative articles. All you need to do is tell us whether you prefer to receive these by e-mail or by post.

Types of Ride:

If you are an Associate Member: -

Social or Pleasure Rides, sometimes called Training Rides, are non-competitive and may be of distances up to 32 km, some with shorter routes. Open to non-members they must be completed within 2 to 3 hours. When run in conjunction with Competitive Rides horses must be trotted up to check for soundness, before the ride and again, no sooner than 20 minutes and no longer than 30 minutes after completion of the ride.

For Full EGB members only: -

Graded Endurance Rides (GER) usually between 30-80 km though longer rides may occasionally be included in the fixture list. Speed varies between 8-18 km/hr with restrictions on lower speeds for novice horses and higher speeds for more advanced combinations. Horses must comply with set veterinary parameters to successfully complete the ride. For example, penalties are given for certain speed, heart rate, "lumps and bumps" parameters. The total number of penalties will denote the grade awarded – from Grade 1 to Grade 4 for those within the qualifying parameters.

Competitive Endurance Rides (CER's), these are only for advanced horse and rider combinations. They are the hardest test for both. All FEI and International competitions are ER's. They begin with a mass start, and the riders aim to cover the distance as fast as they can, taking into account the terrain and welfare of their horse. During the ride the rider will be required to present their horse to the vet at various set intervals to be checked as fit to continue. Following this are rest periods called "holds" where the horse and rider can eat and take a breather before continuing. Many riders ultimate goal is the successful completion of an Endurance Ride. These vary from 65 –160 km in a day or longer over several days.

Where will I ride?

As far as possible, rides are on bridleways, through woodland, over moors and try to use little or no roadwork. There are no jumps although occasionally a ride can offer the opportunity to jump a little log or there may be optional jumps.

Map Reading - A Brief Guide

After you have entered a ride, you will get a ride pack which contains a photocopied map. All Endurance Riders check their whereabouts on a map carried in a case, and never just follow the rider in front. There are three reasons for this.

- The first obvious one is that the rider in front may be lost and not realising or admitting it.
- Secondly the rider in front may be in a different class to you and following a slightly different route.
- Thirdly, it is part of the adventurous spirit of Endurance Riding - you are there, putting yourself and your horse against the elements, riding unknown territory, and finishing' exactly where you should, back at the venue. You feel a real sense of achievement in this that gives meaning to the old saying "To finish is to win!"

All routes are also marked with spray paint/chalk or coloured tape. All ride organisers try to mark their routes as clearly as possible, BUT every ride suffers from marker vandals, people who deliberately remove (or worse re-direct) markers for whatever reason. Every rider gets lost sometimes, even on the best-marked routes, so it is very important to be able to read your map. ALWAYS follow your map as well as the markers. Reading the map might seem difficult at first, but like everything practice makes perfect.

The Day of the Ride

On the day of the ride you will have to report to the secretary, collect your number bib (you may need to take your membership card as a deposit) get yourself ready, and then off you go – making sure to pass the Timekeeper at the start and finish. On your return, a rosette awaits everyone who has kept within the speed parameters. Don't forget to get your Ride Record Card signed by the Ride Organiser or secretary when you hand your number bib back in and collect your rosette. Many of the groups Pleasure/Social Rides are run on their own, however, the group offers some pleasure rides which are run alongside competitive classes; this should not put you off, as the day is just as low key. You will however have to trot your horse up in front of a vet before you start and when you finish. It will also give you an insight into whether or not you would like to step up a gear and try a Graded Ride!

Crewing

A crew is one or more people, usually family members or friends, who assist the horse and rider in many ways over the course of the event. Anyone and everyone can take part in an endurance ride as back-up crew from your children to your granny – this is one of the things that helps to make it a unique "family" sport.

At pleasure ride level a crew is not essential, and a fit horse can easily cope with the distance required. However, for longer rides a crew can play a vital part. The crew can carry plain water and/or sugar beet water around the course in the back of the car for the horse to drink. They can assist in cooling the horse with slosch bottles (nothing fancy – plastic milk containers or 'Comfort' bottles make wonderful slosches) both during and after the ride. They also carry some of the emergency supplies, and any little snacks and drinks which you may require on the route!

On many rides, water points are provided for those of you without a crew. You may be restricted in the places your crew can meet you on the course, but this will be made clear when you get your ride instructions for each ride.

Offers of help!!!!

Help is always needed before, during and after rides. Some of the jobs that need doing are moving the group caravan, marking and de-marking the course, gate stewards, timekeeper, vet writer, checkpoint steward, mending bibs, etc. etc. If you feel that you can offer help, why not give the ride organiser a phone call – your offer will be much appreciated, and it is a wonderful way to get to know people. If you wish to be eligible for local member's trophies at the end of the season, you will need to have helped at a minimum of one ride.

Top Tips.....

- Send your entry early to avoid disappointment Many social rides have the facility to enter on-line and pay via PayPal or cheque. Paper entry is still available but remember to include an A5 sized SAE with correct postage (pre-gummed envelopes will earn you Brownie points!!)
- When you think you have checked everything - go back and check again. You will be surprised at how many times you find something you have missed.
- Always allow sufficient time for your journey so you can arrive at the venue calm and collected with time to collect your number and organise yourself and your horse.
- Learn to read a map, measure the route and work out timings – conversion charts are available on the national website.
- Start your stopwatch as you pass the timekeeper – or if you don't have a stopwatch then turn your watch to midday when you start the ride so you can simply work out how much riding time has elapsed.
- Don't just follow the horse and rider in front, they may be lost – keep checking your map.
- Always carry a mobile phone with you and arrange it so that you can dial your crew or the organisers by just pressing the green button. (Hint: make sure it is the last number you have dialled before setting out). N.B. Don't attach it to the saddle – if you fall off and your horse runs off you are stuck!!!!!!
- If you see another rider in trouble always stop and ask if you can help - it maybe you next time.
- Don't forget both you and your horse need to eat and drink at crew stops.
- Always be polite to other riders, officials and even your crew - a smile, "please" and "thank you" cost nothing and reaps dividends. Ask if it is OK to pass another rider as you approach from behind, and an absolute must Don't forget everyone helping at a ride is a volunteer!
- Last thing "Ask if you want help!", we're a friendly bunch".