

Organizing An Endurance Ride

By CLIFF LEWIS & LOY ANN TRENT

HOW DO YOU organize an endurance trial ride? The Nevada All-State Trail Riders organization headquartered in Virginia City, Nev., has sponsored four 100-mile one-day rides and, from its hard-earned experience in organizing these rides, can offer some advice that may help you to make your endurance trail ride a pleasurable and successful experience for all concerned.

First of all, it is helpful to organize a club (or a corporation) to generate interest, for the support of interested horsemen is needed to assist in planning the ride—businessmen to provide many of the necessary facilities, and private citizens to offer their assistance before and during the ride. Election of officers soon after the organization's formation will start the ball rolling.

A non-conflicting date for the trail ride should be set and that date used as a goal to work towards. Two-week intervals between club meetings will provide the time for members to work on or complete their assigned tasks, report progress, and make themselves available for new duties.

Types of awards for your ride should be decided upon well in advance to assure their arrival regard-

less of delays. Should trophies, belt buckles, mugs, or medallions be given? The Nevada All-State Trail Riders chose to give belt buckles for their rides. Buckles were practical in that they could be worn, yet they could also serve as trophies. But how many buckles should be given?

After much deliberation, it was decided that modern-day endurance rides, beginning with the Western States 100 Miles One Day Ride (now known as the Tevis Cup), were formed to establish whether or not a horse could travel 100 miles in 1 day. As a result, everyone since that time who has been able to complete the Tevis Cup's 100 miles in one day under rigid veterinarian control has received an award of some type. The Nevada All-State Trail Riders appreciated this line of reasoning; they ruled that everyone who finished their ride was going to receive a buckle also.

In addition, they wanted to recognize the best-conditioned horse at the end of the ride, and the first person to cross over the finish line. This has become a practice in rides sanctioned by this group since that time.

Naturally, despite careful planning, there are always a few unforeseen details that will arise to cause some last-minute activity. Therefore, everything that can be done long before



• Cliff Lewis on Black Jack takes advantage of a level stretch on the Alta Sierra 30-mile endurance race in California.

the actual ride should be taken care of as soon as possible.

Advance promotion and advertising should be handled by a committee chairman who is capable and, preferably, experienced in this area. Rules to protect both horses and riders should be formulated.

For example, here are the rules that were utilized in the first annual Nevada All-State Trail Riders Virginia City Ride:

1. All horses must be five years old.
2. All horses must be shod.
3. All horses must carry a minimum of 150 pounds.
4. All horses must be presented for pre-ride veterinary examination between the hours of 12 and 5 p.m. on the day before the ride is to begin.
5. The same horse and same rider must pass all control points and stay on the marked trail in order to qualify for awards.
6. The opinion of the veterinarians is final in all matters concerning the condition of the horse.
7. All stallions must be kept under complete control.
8. Abuse of horse and use of stimulants are prohibited.

Much careful thought must go into selecting where the ride will begin and end. The vet checks for a 100-mile ride in 1 day would ideally, of course, be 25 miles apart with water and plenty of parking space for spectators, friends, and competitors' helpers.

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• Mrs. Loy Ann Trent, who trains and shows horses, specializing in pleasure.

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The rules and the course should be stated on the entry blanks, which can be printed two to three months before the ride. A mailing list of potential competitors can usually be obtained from the secretary of an older, established ride and entry blanks mailed to these people.

At least two veterinarians are needed; preferably one should have previous endurance judging experience. Several veterinarian helpers and several timekeepers are also needed to keep the necessary records on each horse.

Probably the most important and the most difficult task in running a trail ride is the proper marking of the trail. Regardless of how well your vet checks are planned and how attractive the trophies are, the ride will obviously be a failure if the majority of competitors get lost while on the trail.

So the trail should be marked carefully about two months in advance to allow riders to become familiar with it. Needless to say, an unfamiliar trail can be hazardous after dark and, because the trail may have to be ridden in the dark, anyone who wants to cover the trail before the actual ride should be able to do so. The trail should also be marked again, where necessary, immediately before the ride.

Markers are quite often a problem. They must be of a fabric and a color which can be readily seen. The first annual Nevada Endurance Ride utilized markers made of surveyor's tape, a plastic iridescent ribbon which can be seen for a considerable distance. There are some disadvantages to this type of marker, as is the case with any marker. Sometimes cattle or deer will eat them or carry them away. Sometimes the wind will blow them away or the weather may cause them to fade. Whatever type of marker is used, the trail must be checked periodically to ensure that the markers are still in place.

During the actual ride, a checker should be placed at any point where a rider could possibly take a shortcut. All riders are required to give their numbers to a checker when they pass or be disqualified. After all starters have passed over the starting line, two drag riders ride over the course to be sure that no one has had an accident or is left behind for any reason. No matter how slow a rider might be, the drag riders never leave anyone behind them.

A catering service with a lunch

wagon can provide refreshments for everyone's convenience. Hot, tired, and thirsty people much appreciate this service.

A banquet following the ride allows everyone to get together, accept awards, and watch others accept awards.

The festivities make all the grueling miles seem worthwhile and generate interest in the next ride to be held by the club and in other competitive rides.

As a result of many thorough preparations, the Nevada All-State Trail Riders first annual 100-mile endurance ride was a complete success. However, soon after the completion of the first ride, plans were already under way to make the second annual Nevada Endurance Ride an even better one. For instance, instead of giving ribbons to the first five finishers, the first seven horses were given ribbons and the best-conditioned horse was selected from among them. Trophies were given to the first-place lady finisher and first-place junior. In addition, some new rules were added to the list:

1. Failure to be ready to start at the designated time will disqualify the horse and rider.
2. The ride must be completed in 24 hours.
3. Sponsor and minor must stay together at all times while entered in the ride. (Junior riders under 18 years of age must be sponsored by an adult entry and stay with the sponsor.)

A lack of standard rules for endurance trail riding prompted the establishment of a point system. Also, a ride sanctioned by the Nevada All-State Trail Riders must have a best-conditioned award, a first-place award, be judged by qualified veterinarians, and give everyone who finishes within the pre-allotted time an award.

Held on September 18, 1971, the fourth annual Virginia City Ride sponsored by the NASTR club was a



• "Ah-h-h-h . . . isn't it nice to get out in the fresh air!"

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smashing success with more than 60 riders entered. The following excerpt from the ride's brochure is indicative of the progress made by this club in four short years:

"The awards banquet will be held at 2 o'clock on Sunday afternoon. A 100 Mile One Day sterling silver buckle specially designed for this ride will be awarded to all entries successfully completing the ride. Those riders who will be completing the ride for the second time will receive 200 Mile Two Day buckles; for the third time, 300 Mile Three Day buckles; and some riders will be riding for their 400 Mile buckles. However, only 100 Mile One Day buckles will be available at the banquet. The other winners will be awarded a certificate with the actual buckle following in the mail.

"The Virginia City Cup will be awarded to the first horse and rider to cross the finish line. This is a revolving trophy with the winner's name engraved, and is on display at the Delta Saloon. The winner receives a replica to keep.

"The Mapes Cup will be awarded to the horse judged to be in best condition out of the first ten finishers. This is also a revolving trophy on display in the Delta Saloon. The best-condition award winner will take home a light saddle of a design considered suitable for endurance riding. Other awards will be for the first junior rider; Arabian Horse by the International Arabian Horse Associa-

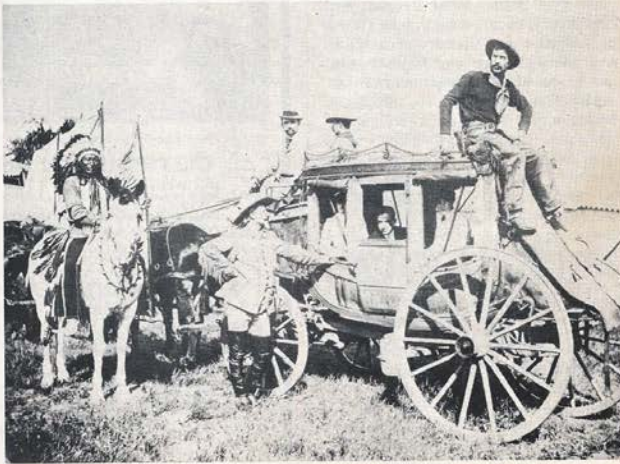


• "Then you don't think, sir, that you would ever have the slightest interest in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*?"

tion; Appaloosa by Mr. & Mrs. Dave Campbell; Quarter Horse; Thoroughbred by the Jockey Club; and Pinto by the Pinto Horse Association. Ribbons will be awarded to the first ten finishers. In addition, a special award will be made of an anti-sway control hitch. Details to be announced at the ride."

If you are interested in promoting a competitive endurance trail ride and wish further information regarding the organization or rules of a ride, you may write to Nevada All-State Trail Riders Club, P.O. Box 7083, Reno, Nev. 89502.

They Went That-A-Way



• No back-talk mister, you're going to get a ticket. The Chief here clocked you doing 19 in a 15-mile-an-hour zone.

THE WESTERN HORSEMAN