



TRAINING FOR THE RDA RIDE

GENERAL ADVICE.

Your horse must be a minimum of 4 years old, that is, it will have 8 of the adult front teeth (incisors) in wear at the time of vetting.

A very young horse will need more training than an older campaigner that has been around the block before. Start training earlier and spend more time in the first weeks of the training program if your horse is young. Ideally your horse should have been broken in and regularly ridden 3-4 times a week for at least 6 months prior to beginning training.

Under no circumstance is it appropriate to get a horse out of the paddock and ride for this distance without preparation!

He should be in good physical condition, sound and regularly dewormed and free of all disease. If you are in doubt consult your vet at any stage during the program if you are concerned. Tell your farrier that you intend to do this training ride and he will advise regarding hoof care. Never work a lame horse or one that feels dead to the leg.

The ride has some reasonable hills during the course and so hills will need to be included in your training program.

The rider should also be fit and it is a good idea to revise your own physical training program in order that you can help your horse by getting off and running up all the hills!

TRAINING.

Start the program at least 6 weeks prior to the ride. Bearing in mind it will take more time to get your horse fit if you have set backs such as lameness, injury and bad weather etc. It is fine to extend the times to allow for unforeseen events.

Begin the training with shorter flat walks, say 30 mins every second day building to an hour after 8 days. In the second week include some hill work but stick to the hour. In the third week include some periods of trot with the hills but do not increase the distance at this stage.

During this period you are improving the strength of the horses' tendons and bones in a process known as "legging up"

Note that working every second day allows for rest and REPAIR should it be required. Also note that it is unwise to increase speed, inclination and distance all at once.

During the fourth week you will be working for an hour or so at the walk and trot with short periods of canter. Due to the increase in speed you will have to increase the distance to insure a good hour's work. At all times work within the horses' capability; you should not be returning on a wet puffing horse at this stage!

Over the final 2 weeks increase the periods of canter and trot and try to trot up all hills. You should be able to ride 10-12 km in 1 hour with the horse returning and recovering well.

ON THE DAY.

Ride within the ability of your horse; **do not try to compete.** Be aware of any changes that may be a set back on the day and change your pace accordingly. Perhaps revise starting the second leg on a young horse if they seem stressed on the day. Be very aware of the effect of excitement on the energy reserve especially on the inexperienced horse.

If it is hot on the day slow down and actively cool your horse with water before vetting. Quite a few riders vetted out last year due to inadequate preparation and inappropriate speed on a hot day. It is easy to get sucked along on the day by the faster horses. Remember the hare and the tortoise and enjoy the beautiful scenery!

Happy Riding
David Brown