



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**March 4, 2016**

### **Humor: Do You Have What It Takes to Be an Endurance Rider?**

If you're not an endurance rider (yet), it may be difficult to believe that people would do this sport on purpose. It takes a certain dedication and toughness to join the American Endurance Ride Conference and pursue endurance riding (50-100 mile rides) and limited distance riding (25-35 mile rides). We offer a test: do the stories below intrigue you? (You may want to join right away.) If you find them horrifying, maybe this isn't the sport for you. (Or you should just stay away from friends with thermometers.)

by Michael Campbell, AERC President

At the pre-ride check in, the riders were lined up with their horses along a fence line and watching as each rider presented his/her horse to the veterinarians. It's a relaxed time. The riders chatted with one another and commented on the horses and riders trotting for the vets. One rider, proud of his bay mare, trotted her out on a loose lead line, very loose. They turned at the cone and headed back toward the vet. The mare was feeling good at a vigorous trot with an occasional little canter step.

She felt so good that she wandered away from the rider a bit to the end of her lead and kicked up—not aggressively, just excited—and caught her rider right in the groin. An audible gasp erupted from the crowd and everyone stared open-mouthed at the rider. The male observers cringed. One of the vets started to jog toward what he was sure would be an emergency situation. But no, this was an endurance rider, and he just kept on trotting his horse, who got an A+ for attitude. (The rider caught the kick at the end of the arc in a precariously non-vital part of his anatomy.)

Like all endurance riders, this guy not only volunteered for this but paid hard-earned money for it. A Hollywood stuntman would get a big check for that one.

Endurance riders are not quitters and don't tolerate such among themselves. One tough woman endurance rider brought a lady friend to try a limited distance ride on a well-seasoned horse. The woman came into her

first vet check of the 50 mile ride and asked the timer about her lady friend. The timer explained that the horse was just fine, but her friend had pulled, rider option, after the first loop of the LD because she was just too fatigued.

The rider woman exclaimed, “Oh, no! She’s un-pulling!” and stormed off to find her friend. The friend soon returned, somewhat chagrined, to the timer table, helmet and horse in hand, to complete her second loop. That friend was later so proud of finishing the ride that she went on to complete many more. Even when things get tough, endurance riders don’t quit. They learn how to endure from other riders and their horses.

Endurance riders are not whiners, either. But they can have a sense of humor about whining as they find creative ways to discourage it. At a ride late in the year, the wind was blowing, rain soaked everything, the temperature was dropping and everyone in camp was . . . well, I guess the politically correct way to say it is they were all feeling challenged.

One new rider was hanging around the vet check area and complaining that she just didn’t feel good and maybe she would quit because she might be coming down with something, etc. The vets were checking the horses’ temperatures that day and the new rider’s friend was assisting the vets. The friend got tired of the new rider’s complaining and said, “Let’s see if you have a fever,” and shoved a thermometer on a string into the girl’s mouth. After a couple of minutes, the friend checked the thermometer and said, “Nope, you’re okay, now go!”

Everyone got a chuckle—even the new rider, when it was explained to her later that the thermometer on a string was for the horses’ rectal temperatures. (She later told me she used a whole bottle of mouthwash when she learned the truth.)

One last anecdote. Some years ago we were warming up our horses for a 4:00 a.m. start of a 100 mile ride. The weather was freezing. It was so cold that the lady in the camp next to ours woke to find her contacts had frozen in their container.

As the ride manager took roll and her husband helped, one of the riders commented, “I can’t believe we’re out here riding in this weather.” The manager’s husband responded, “Yep, and I can’t believe I’m out here watching you.”

This is a volunteer organization. Our members pay to do this for fun, a sense of personal accomplishment

and because they love spending time with their horses. We have over 5,000 members across the U.S. and Canada. Non-endurance people can't believe we pay to do this. They have a hard time believing that we actually ride 25, 50 or 100 miles in a day. How many times has someone asked you incredulously, "In one day?"

We have better stories and in our dotage, we'll have better memories. We're tough, we don't quit, we don't whine, and we laugh. Only 1 in 60,000 citizens of this country can say they do this remarkable sport. We hope you will choose to join in the fun.

More information on endurance riding is available by visiting [www.aerc.org](http://www.aerc.org) or by calling the AERC office at 866-271-2372. By request, the office will send out a free information packet to prospective members.

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**Photos available by request**