



Recommendations for Riders
of the
WESTERN STATES TRAIL RIDE

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RIDERS

This information is provided to help you decide if you are ready to undertake the 100-Mile in One-Day Western States Trail Ride ("the Tevis Cup"). A successful performance requires genuine athletic fitness and ability in both the horse and rider, and at levels equal to that required by competition in eventing, jumping, and racing. Riders and their horses need substantial experience with endurance rides prior to attempting the Tevis Cup course.

This is not a training program. Its purpose is to alert you to the important aspects of planning for the Tevis Cup. As with many athletic endeavors, a great deal of time, effort, and cost is associated with participating in this event. It is important that you carefully evaluate yourself, your horse, and your resources, so that you make good choices to maximize your success.

The management of the Western States Trail Ride wants you and your horse to participate fully prepared for the difficulty of the course, most of which is inaccessible to vehicles, and impervious to cell phone service. The weather conditions, the flexibility required for successfully negotiating veterinary checks and ride controls, and the discipline necessary to ride the trail with more than 200 other riders represent a huge challenge. The safety and well-being of all horses and riders depend on your ability to take care of yourself and your mount properly, and to avoid

endangering other participants. ***Read the Western States Trail Ride Rules. They prevail over all other rules, including those of AERC.***

The Western States Trail Ride will be a major experience in your life. You might find it helpful to contact other riders who have completed the ride for advice. Since the ride is held annually, you may wish to wait until you gain more experience. If you can't finish the first time you try, the ride will be waiting for you next year.

Your Tevis Team

You are the most important part of your team for Tevis, because you have to stay mentally alert for every moment of the ride to avoid making mistakes. You must be a fit and experienced rider, and know how to check basic physiology on your horse such as pulse, respiration, hydration, and capillary refill. Assess yourself about how well you function when you have to stay up long hours working on something important, especially after a short night's sleep. Your personal health should be excellent, because the heat, stress, and difficulty of this ride are beyond the level where you can expect medication for serious health issues to keep you out of trouble.

Your horse is the next important part of your team. You need an endurance horse, ---preferably with experience going 50 miles or more in competition. He should be

genuinely sound to start training, and really sound before you load him in the trailer to take him to the ride. He doesn't have to be a Top Ten competitor to complete. Although Arabians are preferred for endurance, any sound horse or mule with endurance experience is a good prospect. Save yourself (and ride management) difficulty by taking a mount which is naturally strong. Don't take a horse which is the family's favorite pet, older than 18 or 19, or one that has had chronic colic or tie-up syndrome, colic surgery, thumping, or other metabolic and lameness problems. If you have the time and resources, get two horses ready, so you have an option if one of them fails during training.

You will want a support crew as part of your team. They can't get to you very often, but you'll welcome their presence at Robinson Flat and Foresthill, -the main vet checks. In some cases, with effort, they can meet you at a couple of other vet checks. For the most part, you are on your own. However, the vet checks are all stocked with feed, carrots and apples, plus food and drink for riders. Choose crew members who are patient and willing to follow the rules of the ride. Management is strict regarding where crews may be and how they behave. You don't want to be disqualified because they let your dog run loose or get in arguments with ride officials.

Training for Tevis

The recommendations provided here assume that you have some experience with organized endurance rides. For example, you are a member of the American Endurance Ride Conference and receive their publications, you have successfully completed six or more 50-mile rides, and the horse you are planning to use on the Tevis Cup has completed 50-mile rides. Completions of 100-mile events are also good background. Or perhaps you ride competitive rides, and you have completed six or more 50-mile NATRC events. If you come from another country, equivalent experience with distance riding under the auspices of your own country's organization would be adequate. *If you and your horse don't have this much experience, it is highly recommended that you get it before you attempt this ride.* **You are required to have 150 miles of completion on rides 50 miles or longer in 2003, with higher requirements likely for future years.** The information below is presented as guidelines.

1. If you ride 50-mile rides and finish in the middle or higher and your horse isn't stressed at the end, you are probably ready to go. If you ride hard and finish Top Ten and the horse needs time off after the ride to regain strength and weight, you should consider slowing down a little until after Tevis so you come to the ride with a fresher mount. And, if you ride hard and finish Top Ten on Tevis your first time out, good show! However, most people who try to do that the first time don't finish. If you ride 50-mile rides and finish in the lower half of completers, you are at least half way there. You just need a little more fast work and a good sense of timing for the day of the ride.

2. You will not need to add much extra conditioning if you are regularly riding endurance rides with the horse you plan to bring. A sound horse can probably complete the Tevis Cup with no more than his normal conditioning schedule if he has completed five or six 50-milers in the spring. Of course, if you want ride for a top placing, you will have to set up a serious schedule with timed routes to build up your horse. This approach will put on more wear and tear, which can leave him lame or tired before the ride. So be careful. A highly experienced horse, or one which has done the ride before, can be tuned up for a few weeks and taken through quite successfully. The trick is to do your conditioning in a manner, which doesn't use up your horse before the ride.

3. The Tevis Cup will be more than doing two 50-milers back to back. It's a long and difficult trail. You won't have much time to walk. With 24 hours to complete the ride (including the vet checks), you will have to trot a lot to make up for slower work such as climbing out of the canyons. Most of the ride is on trail rather than road. Your horse will have tired periods when it's best to slow down for a while. Amazingly, horses usually recover after going at a slower pace and can move out again after a rest. However, you have to learn the signals your own horse gives you when he needs a break.

4. Work on timing when you are conditioning or riding other rides. Getting through the Tevis Cup involves a lot of careful time management. The cut-offs are much closer to actual riding time into the vet checks than on other rides. If you are used to coming in two hours ahead of the cut-off, you must not panic and ride too fast when you discover you are traveling in the last available hour.

5. If you don't get off much on rides, now is a good time to start practicing. Get in shape by jogging or hiking. Teach your horse not to step on you or crowd you when you lead him on the trail. Teach him to tail up hills ahead of you. If you get off and tail up the canyons, he'll be a lot less tired. However, the canyons on the Tevis Cup are steep and long, and you will have to be in shape to do them on foot. Conditioning yourself as much as possible also helps you ride better and last longer. Getting off and walking, even for a very short time, is good for you as well as your horse. If you hurt when you ride a long time, use some Tylenol or Ibuprofen. Your horse will suffer if you ride badly because you are painful.

6. If you haven't ridden your horse at night, do it at home often so you are both used to trotting along on trails in the dark. In spite of the "riding moon" dates used for the Tevis Cup, much of the course is in thick forest. The moon doesn't shine through very well, and it makes deceptive shadows on the trail. That won't bother your horse, but *you* need to be used to the reduced visibility. Practicing ahead of time will also help you train yourself to let the horse make the decisions on the location of the trail. Your horse doesn't want to fall off a steep trail either, and he can see better than you can at night. You must allow him to determine the direction to go or run the risk of steering him over a cliff, with possibly deadly consequences.

7. Train your horse to be under control. Start at home, and then make be sure you have an understanding with him at other endurance rides. The beginning of the Tevis Cup is dark, dusty, and crowded, with excited horses and nervous riders maneuvering for position and trying to keep it all together until everyone spreads out along the course. If your horse is unmanageable, you are not only risking yourself, but others too. Good sportsmanship is an important part of good riding, and it starts with being able to manage your horse properly.

8. Don't work your horse really hard for a couple of weeks before the ride.

Just keep him limber, sound, and happy with shorter workouts. Let his reserve strength build up for the task. Bring him with new shoes or Easyboots. Pad him for rocky trails if he needs it, and is accustomed to pads.

Getting a Preview of the Course

How do you know what you will face? Start by contacting the Western States Trail Foundation or going on the website ahead of time to obtain a map of the trail and a copy of *The Western States Trail Guide*. You can expand your knowledge of the terrain with local Forestry maps and Geological Survey Maps. If possible, drive into some of the accessible trail areas and look at them. Become familiar with the distances and major landmarks of the ride *before the ride* so you know where they are during briefings.

Often the Western States Trail Foundation and others hold clinics, and have “fun rides” over part of the trail. They are very worthwhile if you can take the time to attend, and can dramatically increase your odds of finishing the ride the first time out.

One successful and enjoyable approach to completion involves riding the last part of the course ahead of time. Actually, it's your horse, which needs to see and experience the route so you can rely on him a little more to make the right decisions. Riding the whole trail isn't very workable because it usually isn't entirely open until shortly before the ride. Try to make a trip with your horse and ride the section from Michigan Bluff to the Auburn Fairgrounds in the daylight, about three weeks before the ride. (This is the part of the course you will be doing late and at night during the ride itself.) It will take you all day, so start early and take someone along who is willing to move your rig from Michigan Bluff back to the fairgrounds. To make it easier and shorter, you can start at Foresthill where there is plenty of parking. The course is usually marked, especially if you go after the Western States Run. It's best if you can hook up with someone who knows the trail and is willing to point out landmarks. Also, it's much more fun to ride in a group. Weekends and holidays there will be other recreational users around. Don't try to go too early in the summer because the river will be too high to cross. If the river is high, you can ride from Michigan Bluff to the river crossing, then return to Francisco's (one of the later vet checks) and ride to Drivers Flat (next to the Auburn-Foresthill highway) to be picked up with a trailer. Then the

next day you can ride from the Auburn Fairgrounds backward to the river crossing, and turn around and go back to the fairgrounds. You can usually get the latest information on conditions from the website for the ride.

Equipment Considerations

Assemble your equipment well ahead of the ride. You definitely need a breast collar or breastplate. Martingale-type breastplates that do not inhibit the movement of your horse's shoulders or strain against his windpipe work best. You might use a crupper for downhill, especially if your horse does not have prominent withers. Parts of the course are very steep. Carry at two bottles of drinking water and some nutrition bars. Include a sharp knife or trail tool, an extra stirrup leather, an Easyboot (fitted to your horse), vet wrap, aspirin, Tylenol, or Ibuprofen. Some electrical tape, shoelaces, and about a foot of thin wire will fix almost anything temporarily. Add sunscreen, horse electrolyte, and bug repellent. At Foresthill, pick up a windbreaker and small flashlight. You can tape glow-bars to your horse's breast collar during the Foresthill vet check to have low light in front of you on the trail. A scoop for water from which your horse is trained to drink is very useful. Take long reins so you can keep hold of your horse if you tail him up the canyons. Wear a good helmet, adjusted properly. Safety stirrups or breakaway stirrups are recommended. Your equipment should be clean and in good repair, so it won't fall apart under stress.

Have at least \$ 20 with you, and something like business cards with your name and phone number. Carry a concise list of personal medications and allergies. You may need to pay a veterinarian for service, or give someone identification with which to contact you. Also, you should offer the driver a contribution for gas if your horse needs to be trailered out.

Wear the clothing you normally use for endurance riding, and note that you will have long hours in the sun. The trail is very dusty in places, especially in the first 35 miles. Many riders wear tight fitting goggles and use masks or bandanas in the dust. You and your horse will probably want to get drenched in some of the streams during the heat of the day. A full change of clothing is often welcome in the Robinson Flat and Foresthill vet checks. This ride also has lots of spectators and reporters with cameras. Wear your spiffy duds so you'll look good in the newspaper!

Whatever equipment and clothing you use, make sure you have used it all before, and all of it together. There will be enough to worry about on the trail without adding a scratchy pair of pants or a poorly adjusted bridle.

For the vet checks where your crew can meet you, have a kit for tack repair, replacement items such as interference boots, stirrup leathers, water scoops, a change of clothing, and first aid materials. Normal supplies for crewing such as feed for your horse, buckets, brushes, towels, a cooler, etc. should be included. Your favorite ride food and drink should be brought in, along with electrolytes and ice for you and your horse. Chairs and a small tarp are nice. Since

it's often a long way from the parking area to the crewing area, many crews use a cart or wheelbarrow. Arrange all this gear ahead in compact form. Your crew may have to meet you quite far from your rig and not be able to bring you an entire truckload of stuff.

Although most vet checks where crews can attend are on paved roads, your truck and trailer must be in good condition. There are steep grades into the base camp. Roads can be dusty and rough, with traffic delays. Someone in your crew should be experienced driving your rig so it can be maneuvered well in tight places. Plan to have them leave the trailer either at the Foresthill vet check or the Gold Country Fairgrounds in Auburn during the ride. It's too crowded in other spots, and the Tevis Cup has trailers available in case your horse is pulled and needs a ride out (usually to Foresthill or Auburn).

Junior Riders and Sponsors

The minimum age for a junior rider to participate in the Tevis Cup is 12 years old, and participants are considered junior riders through age 17. A junior must be sponsored at all times during the event by another entered rider at least 21 years of age, and must be wearing an approved helmet. The junior should be an experienced endurance rider on an experienced horse. This ride is just too difficult for youngsters who are not already in good physical shape and excellent in their horsemanship.

The rules for junior riders and their sponsors are strictly enforced at the Tevis Cup for the safety of all involved. Be sure you are familiar with them before including a junior rider in your plans. If you plan to send a junior with another rider, be absolutely certain that person understands all the rules, and is willing to sacrifice his or her completion to conform to them. If you are sponsoring a junior rider who is pulled at a vet check, you will have to end your own ride and retain responsibility for the junior and his or her horse unless you have your crew there to take over. The junior rider must be self-sufficient in carrying his own rider cards, water, equipment, food, jacket, watch, flashlight, money, and Tylenol. If he or she is passed on to another sponsor for any reason, that person cannot be expected to share supplies. Even experienced junior riders can become very tired. Sponsors have to be prepared to provide extra moral support and assistance if necessary. Unless you have ridden the Tevis Cup already, it is not advisable to take on the task of sponsoring a junior unless you and the junior are highly experienced endurance riders, and have ridden together before.

Pointers for the Day of the Ride

Don't forget to enjoy the beauty of the trail!

1. Tell your crew to get to Robinson Flat (the first check) at least two hours before they expect you because traffic and parking cause big delays.
2. Wear a watch you can see in the dark. Write your cut-off times big on a card so you can see them.
3. Wear a helmet. Remove it if you get off to hike or run. You lose a lot of heat through your head. *You can skip the helmet, but someday you're likely to fall on your head and scatter your mind.*
4. Eat well and drink well all day to keep your energy level and hydration good so you stay alert.
5. Don't start early in the pack unless you are really racing.
6. The course is well marked, but watch carefully for turns. Don't lose time getting lost.
7. Leave major vet checks promptly. Don't waste your riding time.
8. Ride your own ride. Don't ride faster than your horse can handle in order to be with another rider or two hours ahead of the cut-offs.
9. Get off and lead at bridges, pavement, etc. and scary places, especially in the beginning if you have an excitable horse. Don't take chances if your horse is too exuberant or frightened.
10. Stay on the trail. The low brush can puncture joints. If you stop or pull over, do it in a clear area. At night, check with a flashlight before you pull off to the side because trimmed brush can leave dangerous stubs at the edge of the trail.
11. Watch for tree limbs, especially during the first three hours. Sometimes your helmet brim obscures your ability to see them and management can't cut them in some areas.
12. When you get to the top of the mountain after High Camp and turn onto the trail past Watson's Monument, the wilderness area is the worst footing on the ride with a couple of miles of sharp granite boulders set in chocolate pudding mud. You risk injury if you ride fast in there.
13. Be careful with cold drinking water for horses, especially in Red Star Ridge. Get away from water sources if your horse isn't drinking, and let others in. Don't sponge from troughs or standing water. If your horse is slow about drinking, carry a portable bucket or scoop so you can get a quick supply and leave the immediate watering area with it.
14. Go up Cougar Rock with determination and be prepared to pull your horse to the right if he tries to turn around or go to the left. Keep contact on your horse's mouth and get after him hard if he hesitates, and push him over the top. Most problems happen because the rider is not aggressive enough, or is not giving sufficient direction to the horse halfway up.

Many horses are confused about where to go. If you are a big rider with a small horse, have a horse with stifle problems, or you have a horse with a history of wheeling around and not going up steep places, use the bypass or get off and lead.

15. Most horses are a little confused on the "swinging bridge." You might want to lead across. It swings more with other horses on it, so try to use it when it's empty or only has one or two others already crossing.
16. Hiking up the canyons will rest your horse and improve his pulse rate for the next vet check. Any time you can get off, even for a few minutes, you help your horse and stretch your own muscles.
17. The pavement areas in Foresthill are slick and traffic is not forgiving. Be very careful and walk your horse or get off and give him a break there.
18. Don't worry about crossing the river or No Hands Bridge. The river flow is lowered for the ride, and No Hands Bridge actually has rails along the sides.
19. Keep the flashlight where you can use it to check trail markings or the condition of the trail if you need to pass. If you must ride with your light on, point it down your leg to the ground. The aura will provide the needed illumination, and it won't be flashing around bugging your horse, other horses, and other riders.
20. Passing can be a problem especially at night when everyone is tired. If riders want to pass you, make a genuine and effective effort to let them get by. On switchbacks, there is often plenty of room for you to stop and let a rider pass. Don't be surprised if someone pushes on past you in a place you consider dangerous because you were not immediately helpful about letting the rider by. It's easy to get stuck in or behind a slow group, and you can't assume you'll finish in time if you follow it. It's your right to go at your own speed. Ask the riders to help you get past, and do get past *safely*.
21. If your horse is tired, slow down. If your horse is in trouble, stop and send word ahead with another rider. Don't try to get to the next vet check if you have a severe problem. It isn't a tragedy if you have to wait under a tree with your horse for six hours until management is able to get to you, and it will be better for your horse. *This ride has highly trained drag riders and good communications on all sections to help you out. However, you should be prepared for a long wait in any case.*
22. If you think your horse has a problem, talk to the vets but don't talk them into pulling him unnecessarily. If you believe your horse has metabolic issues, consult the vets as soon as possible, giving them all the information you can about his symptoms. *You know your horse best. If he's in trouble, withdraw him from the ride.*

23. While you are out there, be sure to let all the wonderful ride officials and volunteers know how much you appreciate them. When you get your buckle on Sunday, don't forget all the helpful things done for each and every rider during your special journey to Auburn.

After your ride

Your horse needs careful attention for a couple of hours. A trusted crew member can take over, but most riders prefer to monitor their own mounts. If your horse is hot from racing in, he'll need to be cooled out properly. Often it's breezy at night, and a light stable sheet can help prevent stiffness.

Most horses are very hungry at the end of the ride because there is little time to eat in the vet checks. While you are doing your aftercare, let him eat. Walking him a few minutes every now and then helps, although if he's sleeping, don't wake him. If a horse is going to have a problem at the end of the ride, he will usually do it within 90 minutes. There are vets on the grounds to help you. Two hours after you finish, if he's doing fine, you can safely leave him with plenty of clean water, feed, and a little fly repellent. Check back in a couple of hours and take him for a walk.

If you don't finish, your horse's needs may be even more important. If your horse has metabolic problems but is not sick enough to be kept with the ride's treatment center, follow directions given to you by the ride veterinarians about care. He still did his best for you, so keep him comfortable and monitor his condition. If he was pulled for lameness, you will again want to follow the suggestions of the veterinarians, and watch for signs of other problems. Since you are not allowed to remove your horse from the control of the ride even if you are pulled or you withdraw, your horse should be returned to the fairgrounds from where you were pulled or withdrew when possible. Although you may leave when released by the veterinarians, it is fun and educational to watch the finishers as they arrive, observe the Haggin Cup judging, and attend the awards celebration. After all, when the ride is over, whether you go part of the way, or you are returning home with a new buckle for going 100 successful miles, the next day is your first day to get ready for next year's ride!

Questions?

You are welcome to contact the Western States Trail Foundation and visit the website for more information. Although the Tevis Cup is the highlight of Foundation's year, there are related historical, educational, and social activities about the ride, the Gold Country, and the preservation of the route. They are fun and they help you appreciate this valuable and beautiful trail, and the tremendous achievement of riding it successfully.

Lodging

Robie Park, the base camp for the ride, is about seven miles into the forest on an unimproved road. Get your supplies before you leave Truckee.

Hotels in the Auburn area fill up quickly in the summer months. As soon as you are entered, you should make your reservations. Don't plan on having room at any of them for your rig. There are a few camping spaces at the fairgrounds, and plenty of parking for your rig, plus restrooms and showers. The town of Auburn is friendly, with many restaurants, antique stores, and services. These are close by, but a long walk from the fairgrounds. Most hotels are on the Auburn-Foresthill Highway off ramp east of town-- a 10-minute drive from the fairgrounds.

WARNING!

The Western States Trail Ride will always be conducted with a philosophy promoting good horsemanship, and preventing the misuse of horses either intentionally or out of ignorance. Especially here in the Gold Country, we are aware that horses helped us lay the foundation for modern civilization, and they suffered some hard times doing it. Today they are used mostly for sporting purposes, and lead a largely comfortable existence. However, it is our continuing responsibility to use them wisely with care and compassion, and to make their well-being an integral part of every moment on the trail. Valuable in itself, this approach will also serve us well as other horsemen, and other people who care deeply about animals observe us.

In keeping with the rigorous nature of this event, the Board of Governors of the Western States Trail Ride requests that you compete with a well-prepared horse, which has been schooled adequately to respond to your commands without undue force.

The following examples of deficient horsemanship and misuse are presented to alert you to areas which ride officers and committees are obliged to consider in order to protect competitors, as well as to produce this ride as a humane event both in fact and appearance. Other situations could occur which common sense and prudence would assign to this list, and therefore misuse is not limited to the instances cited below:

1. Excessive use of whips and spurs, or physical evidence thereof.

2. Excessive aggressive pushing, jerking or striking, or physical evidence thereof.
3. Excessive verbal abuse.
4. Continued prodding and struggling with a mount to go up, down, or over some obstacle. *Dismount and lead, both for your own safety and that of other competitors.*
5. Appearance of large abrasions, chafing, and sores due to poor-fitting equipment.
6. Improper use of bits, tie-downs, martingales, and other equipment that might injure a horse if used severely, or which would function dangerously in an accident such as a fall. *Riders are urged to learn the correct use of tack and school their horses sufficiently so as to preclude the need for force or harsh control devices.*
7. Overloading a horse with weight relative to its size and conditioning.
8. Failure to allow a horse to stop and rest periodically if needed while carrying a rider up steep trails.
9. Passing by water without offering a horse a chance to drink, particularly while competing for position.
10. Aggressive treatment, especially at vet checks, including overcooling by drenching with ice water solutions, excessively dosing with oral preparations, or use of any rectal preparations. *It is important to note that many observers attend veterinary checks, and they should not be given the impression that a horse requires extraordinary measures to be fit enough to continue. Remind your crew to care for your horse in a reasonable manner.*

True horsemanship and the rules of this event require that you accept the control procedures and decisions made by ride officials and veterinarians with good sportsmanship and good manners. We enter with the knowledge that the successful operation of an event of this kind requires that our spirit of cooperation be superior to our need for individual competition.

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