

How To Condition

This article was written by Gretchen Butts, Co-Organizer of the Training Three Day Event

FEI Eventing Steward and Advanced Level Amateur Event Rider

Gretchen's qualifications are among the most detailed of any eventing official in the United States. Please read her comments carefully!

Q:

What are the speeds and distances of the roads and tracks, what speed will steeplechase be, how many fences, and what size are the fences?

PHASE A WILL BE 2200 METERS @200 MPM WITH AN OPTIMUM TIME OF 10 MINUTES; PHASE B WILL HAVE A DISTANCE BETWEEN 1250 AND 1560 METERS AND WILL BE RIDDEN AT PRELIMINARY CROSS COUNTRY SPEED OF 520 METERS PER MINUTE; NATIONAL BRUSH FENCES WILL BE USED WITH THE BRUSH HEIGHT NOT TO EXCEED 4 FEET AND THE TOTAL NUMBER OF FENCES WILL EITHER BE 5 OR 6. PHASE C WILL BE 2800-3200 METERS IN LENGTH AT A SPEED OF 160 MPM AND PHASE D WILL BE AROUND 2500 METERS WITH A SPEED OF 470 METERS/MINUTE.

Q:

How much conditioning should they be doing for the extra roads and tracks, and steeplechase, above the ordinary work readying for a training level horse trial?

IF YOU CONSIDER THAT ALL OF PHASES A AND C WILL BE DONE PRIMARILY AT TROT AND WALK (ESP PHASE C) , THE TOTAL TROTGING TIME WOULD NOT EXCEED 30 MINUTES; ASK YOURSELF, CAN MY HORSE AND I COMFORTABLY TROT FOR 30 MINUTES WITHOUT UNDUE FATIGUE ON EITHER OF US? SO IT MAY BE THAT YOU NEED TO ADD MORE TROTGING TO YOUR CONDITIONING SCHEDULE IF YOU ARE SKEPTICAL ABOUT YOUR ANSWER! PLUS ASK YOURSELF A VERY IMPORTANT QUESTION: HOW FIT AM I TO DO THIS JOB SAFELY FOR MYSELF AND MY HORSE?

Q:

For those who have not to this point checked tpr in their horses, how should they be doing this at home? So they know what is expected at the event?

,BEGIN BY CHECKING TEMPERATURE, PULSE AND RESPIRATION FOR A WEEK, BOTH AT REST, IMMEDIATELY AFTER WORK AND THEN 10 MINUTES AFTER WORK; BEGIN TO RECOGNIZE ANY PATTERNS THAT MAY EXIST WITHIN YOUR HORSE; FOR EXAMPLE, HOW LONG AFTER YOU FINISH A CONDITIONING WORKOUT DOES IT TAKE FOR YOUR HORSE'S PULSE AND RESPIRATION TO RETURN TO NORMAL OR HIS RESTING STATE? CONSULT YOUR VET AS TO WHETHER THESE NUMBERS ARE SUITABLE FOR YOUR HORSE AND MODIFY YOUR WORK OUTS ACCORDINGLY; EACH HORSE IS QUITE DIFFERENT. JUST BECAUSE YOU HAVE A THOROUGHBRED DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY GUARANTEE THAT YOUR HORSE WILL BE EASIER TO CONDITION THAN A CROSS BRED. ASSUME NOTHING BUT WORK WITH REAL NUMBERS/REAL DATA, NOTING THE CONDITIONS OF THAT PARTICULAR DAY AS WELL (ESPECIALLY GIVEN THE HOT HUMID WEATHER THIS SUMMER IN THE EAST!) SO YOU TRAIN 'SMART'.

Q:

Are gallop sets useful, if so, how much and how fast. All the books have upper level recipes for gallop sets. How should they be scaled down for the half star requirements?

YOUR CONDITIONING SCHEDULE WILL BE BASED ON INTERVAL WORK, THE DIFFERENCE BEING THE SPEED, TIME AND NUMBER OF INTERVALS; AGAIN, CONSULT WITH YOUR VET AS HE OR SHE BEST KNOWS YOUR HORSE AS AN INDIVIDUAL. DEPENDING ON YOUR BASE LEVEL OF FITNESS, DO NOT NEGATE THE IMPORTANCE OF WALKING TO BUILD FITNESS. CONSIDER ADDING WALK TIME TO YOUR DRESSAGE AND SHOW JUMPING SCHOOLS, FOR EXAMPLE WALK 30 TO 45 MINUTES (AND USE THE WALK FOR BOTH RELAXATION BUT TO ALSO PRACTICE YOUR TRANSITIONS FROM FREE TO MEDIUM PACEWORK, SUPPLING LEFT, RIGHT, STRAIGHT AND SO ON; USE YOUR TIME MEANINGFULLY! AND THEN PROCEED TO YOUR DRESSAGE OR JUMPING WORK.

WHAT IS YOUR BASE LEVEL OF TROTTING? DO NOT SIMPLY GO OUT AND TROT FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES CONTINUOUSLY IF THE LONGEST STRETCH YOU HAVE DONE THUS FAR IS ONLY FIVE MINUTES! GENERALLY TUESDAYS AND SATURDAYS ARE CONDITIONING DAYS. IF YOU COMPETE ON A WEEKEND AND RUN CROSS COUNTRY, THAT COUNTS AS ONE FITNESS DAY. IF YOU RUN XC ON A SUNDAY, FREELY CHANGE TO WEDNESDAY AS YOUR OTHER FITNESS DAY FOR THAT WEEK. IT IS REASONABLE FOR THE HALF STAR TO WORK UP TO THE FOLLOWING WHICH WOULD BE YOUR WEEK BEFORE THE EVENT:

TWO CONDITIONING DAYS/WEEK WORKOUT:

15 - 20 MINUTE WALK

THREE FIVE MINUTE TROT SETS WITH A THREE MINUTE WALK IN BETWEEN;

TWO FOUR MINUTE CANTER SETS AT 400 MPM WITH A THREE MINUTE WALK IN BETWEEN

FINISH WITH A SIX MINUTE CANTER FOLLOWED BY A PROPER COOL DOWN AT WALK, CHECKING P AND R AND NOTING IN YOUR JOURNAL.

IF YOUR HORSE 'NEEDS' AN EXTRA CONDITIONING DAY, THEN ADD ONE BUT ONLY WALK ON THAT DAY BUT WALK FOR AN HOUR IF YOU HAVE THE TIME; ADD SOME HACKING TO YOUR OTHER DAYS, THAT INCLUDES WORK IN ALL THREE GAITS ON BOTH REINS. ABOVE ALL, KEEP IT SIMPLE AND FUN FOR YOU AND YOUR HORSE. ROCKET SCIENCE IS NOT NECESSARY TO SUCCESSFULLY CONDITION!