



STRAPPING GUIDANCE

For Loop Rides

The Day Before

- fill and set out water buckets at the strapping area
- lay out strapping gear - halter, lead rope, sponges, stethoscope, towels and rugs (use an enclosed container if possible) at the strapping area
- have molasses handy at the strapping area if your horse needs this to drink water
- prepare feeds/water for your horse at your float
- prepare food and drink for yourself at your float
- have change of clothes ready for all weather conditions at your float

On Ride Morning

- check that your feeds, water, food, drink and clothes are handy at your float for when you return during loops
- pack water and snacks on your person or horse for the ride

On return to base at end of a loop

The temperature is important when strapping your horse. Look at how people are dressed or ask your strapper if it is warm, cool or cold? Do not rely on how you feel as you may be hot from the ride.

If Cool/Cold

- Untack, halter on
- Place rug over hindquarters, take heart rate and allow to drink water
- Wipe down with a damp sponge the saddle area, between hind legs, legs, under tail and belly, areas where tack is in contact, and around head.
- Continually monitor horses heart rate while you are cooling them.
- When your horse is at the heart rate you are comfortable with (must be under 64 when vetting in), walk to the vet ring.

If Hot

- Untack, halter on
- Take heart rate and allow to drink water
- To cool your horse down, you can continually hose them with a large quantity of tap water, provided that the water temperature is lower than the horse's body temperature. If you don't have a hose, then use sponges or buckets with copious water.
- Avoid cool water over rump and loins, some horses may stiffen up in this area.
- Light rug/towel over hindquarters if the horse feels cool to touch.
- Continually monitor horses heart rate while you are cooling them.
- When your horse is at the heart rate you are comfortable with (must be under 64 when vetting in), walk to the vet ring.

Vetting

Enter the vet ring area and call "time". If there is a delay to vet, walk your horse slowly to keep muscles warm and prevent stiffening up.

After Vetting

Feed, water and rug as necessary.

Give Electrolytes if drinking well and leave the horse to rest and recover.

Wash and Walk Technique

Horses ridden at a high anaerobic level, produce lactic acid as a waste product in muscles. This process continues after a horse stops exercising. If the horse is standing still the lactic acid builds up in the muscles when the horse moves again and the muscles push lactic acid into the blood which causes the heart rate to increase.

As a result, the heart rate may have dropped at strapping, but while walking to vetting, the circulating lactic acid causes the heart rate to increase. It is important to wash, then walk slowly for several minutes, then repeat.

Urinating

Urinating drops the heart rate through heat loss and reduces anxiety.

Encourage urinating by walking in long grass and check colour as it indicates hydration status: clear is ideal, yellow indicates slight dehydration, dark yellow indicates severe dehydration and red/brown (coffee colour) indicates muscle damage (see vet).

Eating

Eating will put the heart rate up a few beats, but it is better to allow them to pick at hay/grass than worry about increasing heart rate, especially a novice horse. If the heart rate is that borderline the horse may have been overridden. Eating helps to relax the horse and promote gut sounds but avoid grain and electrolytes until after vetting.

Electrolytes

Only give electrolytes if the horse is drinking well. Electrolytes when a horse is not drinking well will draw fluids into the gut and further dehydrate the horse. The taste of electrolytes can put horses off eating / drinking. Build up levels before and after the ride.

Heart Rate

The heart rate recovery is more important than the arrival heart rate e.g. 100 on arrival recovering to 60 in 15 minutes is better than 60 on arrival and still 60 in 15 minutes.

Lack of recovery is a sign of stress, if the heart rate drops well and all other parameters are good you can leave the horse alone to relax and pick and drink then walk slowly to the vet ring.

Other Parameters

You should familiarise yourself with as many of the metabolic parameters as possible for your horse, especially those dealing with hydration such as mucous membranes, skin recoil and gut sounds. Take them at home regularly so you know what is normal, then use these to evaluate your horse's recovery, this will also help your horse get used to vetting procedures.

Rider

Replace your own fluids and electrolytes regularly. Make sure you eat (you will need your energy). Keep in mind that looking after your horse includes looking after yourself, a tired, dehydrated rider is a burden for a horse.