

## **EVENT RALLY ORGANIZERS GUIDE TO THE VET BOX**

The “vet box” is the area where competitors report and cool out immediately following their cross country ride. At an Eventing rally, the vet box is the heart of the educational aspect of the HM program, and as such needs to meet very specific criteria. In this area competitor’s care for their mount after a strenuous activity, the Veterinarian and / or CHMJ monitor the horses care and well-being and treat those horses that may be in distress (not an uncommon occurrence at PC rallies) and competitors demonstrate, are judged on, and receive education about, proper cool out procedures.

Given the importance of the vet box, organizers are encouraged to make every effort to provide the area and amenities as described below. As always, consultation with your CHMJ prior to the big day will allow you to insure that everyone’s needs are met within the space and resources available at your rally!

Generally horses leave the start box of cross country at 2-3 minute intervals. Horses are usually kept in the vet box for 15 – 25 minutes. Simple math shows us that this means there could be 12+ horses in the vet box at a given time, all being walked, sponged and inspected by the staff. Additionally, all the riders tack and equipment, as well as the teams water and wash buckets, etc. will be in this space. A minimum of 100 x 200 feet might be adequate but don’t hesitate to allow more space if available.

The area should be roped off, providing a definitive boundary between competitors and spectators.

Ideally the vet box should have a clear view of the cross country finish. How a horse finishes can give those responsible for evaluating and judging its condition a heads up to potential issues. It also allows a clear understanding of who is coming to the box and when. If the finish is not clearly visible staff may lose track of who is finishing and competitors might tarry on their way to the box, potentially causing issues from both a care and a judging standpoint.

The footing in the vet box needs to be decent and as flat as possible. It must be mowed. It will get wet and muddy as the day goes on so try to start with a relatively dry and well drained area.

In a perfect world, the vet box would have some shade. At the very least, a tent or canopy that allows both staff and overheated riders to get out of the sun and cool off is necessary. Please provide a table and at least 6 chairs.

Encourage the teams at your rally to bring a 10 x 10 tarp to use in the vet box. If each team sets up their tarp the morning of cross country, placing on it their wash and water buckets and whatever other equipment is needed, it will make the day go more smoothly. They can then place their tack on the tarp as it is removed from the horses, keeping it tidy, organized, and ready for return to the barns.

If the vet box is anything beyond a very short walk to the barns the organizer should provide some method to transport equipment to and from the vet box. Competitors should not be asked to carry all their tack a half mile back to the barns after completing their rides! Tack and equipment could be left at the vet box until the completion of the phase if periodic transport throughout the day is an issue due to location, etc., however this should be discussed with the CHMJ as it could affect the turn back timing and procedures back at the barn.

If all the teams set up their tarps in a neat row or two in the very middle of the vet box, this frees up the perimeter for walking horses. This is a more functional layout than placing tarps on the perimeter which cuts down on the walking space and makes things much more crowded.

It is a good idea to provide a muck bucket, pitchfork and rake to be used to keep the manure in this area picked up. Things can get messy as there is already going to be a lot of water getting used in the space. If you provide it the competitors will use it!

If the vet is not in the vet box please insure that the CHMJ has a direct line of communication to them. If there is only one vet on the grounds that vet must be free to attend to injured horses and may not be in the vet box at all times. Sometimes there is no vet on the grounds. In this case a vet must be on call and the time it would take them to arrive needs to be understood by all staff. In either case the CHMJ must be able to reach them immediately if they are needed.

Please make sure that there is an equine and human first aid kit in the vet box. See the Required Equipment check list in the HM Handbook!

Several clipboards and the cross country forms from the HM Handbook, as well as a good supply of pens and pencils, should be provided.

A large clock placed where it is easily visible would be a great help to everyone!

A basket of fruit and snacks for staff and competitors is a good idea, as well as water for human consumption.

### **There are several roles that your volunteers can play in the vet box:**

A vet box secretary is crucial. They can keep track of rider's arrival times and vitals check intervals and assist the vet or CHMJ in keeping things running smoothly.

It is a good idea to have one or two volunteers to keep an eye on riders and make sure that they are feeling well and drinking plenty of fluids. We often get consumed with horse care and forget that riders too may need some care and attention.

If you have one or two volunteers who are experienced and knowledgeable horse people, they can come in handy if there is a distressed horse who needs immediate care, or a rider who is unable to care for their horse due to illness or injury. Horses do not stop arriving when things are going wrong, and the majority of HM staff will be in the barns, not the vet box. It is nice to be able to utilize the help of experienced people when a horse or rider is in trouble!

Consult with your CHMJ about the volunteers that they wish to have in the box with them. Schedule a briefing time for these volunteers with the Chief.

### **WATER, WATER, WATER!!**

Your vet box will need water! Lots of water! This is not negotiable!

At **minimum** 10+ gallons of water per horse will be required for a cool climate / day, while 20 – 25+ gallons per horse plus ice will be required for a hot climate / day. **A distressed horse may easily need 30+++ gallons of ice water to be properly cooled!**

### **YOU CAN NOT RUN OUT OF WATER!**

The water must be in or right next to the vet box.

If you are using a water buffalo or some other water storage container that will be in the sun and getting warm you must insure that you have plenty of ice to cool it down. Cold water is imperative in hot weather and ice cold water is crucial if there is a horse in distress!

**Even if your water is provided from a hose and is cold, you still need at least 8 – 10 bags of ice in reserve to aid a distressed horse.**

If the property hosting your rally has a well you must be certain that the water supply is adequate to the task. Running a well dry will mean you must put the XC on hold until a replacement water source can be established.

You **CAN NOT** run your XC without adequate water at the vet box!

Running out of water at the vet box, or having only warm water to work with is unacceptable and can not happen!

Please provide several coolers with water for the competitors and staff as well!

### **EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY**

If your region or club has a knowledgeable non-competitor who could explain what is happening in the vet box to spectators, parents and other PC members, this is a great opportunity for education!

Having a designated area just outside the vet box where interested parties can gather to observe and have procedures explained to them is a great idea. Teaching moments are what Horse Management in Pony Club is all about and this is a golden opportunity to see the amazing knowledge and skill level of our members as well as HM judging up close and personal!

**With pre-planning and plenty of communication XC day at your rally will be a safe, fun and educational experience for the horses, competitors and spectators!**