

VET BOX PROCEDURES FOR HM JUDGES

Chief Horse Management Judges need to be aware that the Eventing Rally Organizers Guide is very vague about the requirements of the vet box / XC cool out area.

There is no mention in the guide about the size area needed for the vet box.

The guide only briefly mentions the water requirements for the vet box and really only addresses the need of water for riders, not for horses.

It is important that CHMJ's communicate early and often with the organizer about the vet box and make sure that the area is adequate in size and location and that sufficient water and ice will be available for proper cool out procedures.

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.**

The area needs to be near the finish (ideally with a clear view of the finish) and should be able to comfortably accommodate at least 10 horses being walked at a time, plus all the competitors gear and equipment. Some shade would be great, but this may not be an option. At the very least a tent of some sort so that an overheated rider can get out of the sun.

Teams should be encouraged to keep all their equipment in a small and tidy area. Tack and buckets spread all over the vet box is not an acceptable, workmanlike environment. A 10x10 tarp works well to define each team's space and gives them a clean place to put tack as it is removed. Organizers could be encouraged to ask each team to bring one for this purpose. It is also handy if there is a system to help teams move their equipment to and from the vet box and organizers can often make arrangements for this transport.

Not all rallies have a vet for the vet box. If there is only one vet, that vet must be available to leave at any time to aid an injured horse. It is crucial that the HM staff understands and is able to implement all veterinary functions, including taking and interpretation of vitals and necessary care to resolve any distressed horse issues.

In the event that there is no vet with you in the box, make sure you know how far away the vet is and how long it will take for them to get to you if they are needed. This may make a difference in your decision making about when to request their presence.

Ideally the CHMJ will have a direct line of communication to the vet, and will not need to send or receive information through other people.

A volunteer scribe to man the clipboard, clock, stopwatch and to keep track of horses as they come in is important. Make sure this person is well briefed prior to the start.

A couple of experienced horse people as vet box volunteers can come in very handy in the event of a hot day and multiple distressed horses. They too need to be well briefed.

Put your strongest AHMJ in the box with you!

A volunteer to monitor riders is handy...riders can be distressed also and must be encouraged to remove helmets and vests and to drink plenty of fluids. No distressed rider should neglect their own well-being to care for their horse. A properly managed vet box will have plenty of help to relieve a rider so they can address their own needs.

Only release horses from the box when they are showing significant progress towards a return to resting vitals and any distress symptoms have resolved. You do not need to keep them until fully recovered. Often horses will finish recovery best in a more quiet environment, especially if they have a stall and fan.

A thorough briefing of competitors prior to the start of XC is crucial. Riders need to understand expectations (pull up gradually, check in with vet or CHMJ, be quiet and attentive while vitals are taken, immediately after vitals un-tack and begin cool out, return for additional vitals checks, etc.) and must also be briefed on the proper use of ice and water (douse generously and immediately scrape, repeat, repeat, repeat) so that they are able to function efficiently.

Riders should remove their horse's boots as well as tack. Often the legs are the place that the blood vessels are closest to the surface and as such are an important location to reduce body temperature. Some riders may be reluctant to remove boots if horse is wearing studs and this should be taken into consideration. Address this at your briefing and if any riders feel strongly about leaving them on you could allow it on studded horses, making clear that any signs of distress mean boots come off regardless.

Plan to take second vitals 5 minutes after first check, as often distress will show up in an elevation of vitals after the first check, rather than a decrease. Checks can then be done at 10 minute intervals for horses showing no distress. Continue at 5 minute intervals for any horses you are concerned about. Record the pulse OVER the respiration on sheets. Note the time for each check.

It is not necessary to take a temperature on each horse coming in. Pulse and respiration are adequate **unless** horse is exhibiting signs of distress. **Temp must be taken and closely monitored with distressed horses!**

An inversion in vitals (respiration rate higher than pulse rate) is a sign of a very high temperature. Horses lose up to 25% of their body heat through respiration and an inversion is the body's attempt to remove excess heat not lost through other tissue. This is common in drafty types and overweight horses. Immediate attention is needed! Ice water is urgent, and lots of it. Remember it is not putting it on that cools the horse, it is scraping it off immediately!

If the vitals elevate rather than decrease after the first check, this is also a sign of a potentially high temperature. Muscles continue to release heat for several minutes after exertion. Same as inversion treatment discussed above.

Always remember it is not how high the pulse and respiration are that indicates distress or proper conditioning. Many horses will come in with high vitals and will recover quickly, indicating good condition. Often those with lower vitals will be much slower to recover. It is all about recovery rate!

Make sure to involve the riders in the taking of vitals so that they understand what you are seeing and what, if any, concerns you might have. Give clear guidance and instructions so that the rider completely understands your expectations.

Take lots of notes...be prepared to give clear, concise comments on daily sheets for those horses who were distressed or not efficiently cared for, as well as those who were in good condition and received appropriate care. Teaching moments happen often and quickly in the vet box

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SIGNS OF MOUNT IN DISTRESS

(Items in Red or multiple symptoms indicate vet attention needed immediately)

Mount being pressed to continue on to finish – most horses will continue on without urging until asked to pull up.

Loss of coordination – tired horses may be lazy about foot placement – severe loss of coordination – staggering, etc.

Reluctance to move – rigid back / hind end muscles

Inversion of vitals (resp. higher than pulse) – Not resolved in 10 – 20 minutes

Vitals going up instead of down – Not resolved in 10 – 20 minutes

Slow Recovery – Not resolved in 10 – 20 minutes

Dehydration Symptoms (dry mouth, lack of sweat, tenting of skin when pinched, sunken appearance)
Once dehydration symptoms appear the dehydration is already at a severe and dangerous level.

Lack of sweat (which may or may not be a part of general dehydration but does indicate potential high temperature)

Temperature above 105* or maintaining at 103* or higher for more than 10 minutes.

Reluctance to drink

Slow CRT (capillary refill time – should be 1-2 seconds)

Blue/white/red mucous membranes

Anal sphincter relaxation (sphincter should pucker tightly when tapped externally) sign of severe distress!

Depression / Lethargy

Most symptoms will resolve with proper care and cooling

All symptoms are concerning and require attention and monitoring.

Riders should be informed of any concerns and given guidance and supervision during recovery process.

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ACTUAL NUMBERS FROM A RALLY

Novice level eventing rally. The temperature was 89* with humidity. The course was 1950 meters @ 350 mpm over hilly terrain. All riders were C2's.

16 Hand 8 Year Old TB	132 88	92 58	56 28		
15.3 Hand 10 Year Old ISH	101 70	60 26			
15.0 Hand 13 Year Old Appy/TB	84 68	98 78 (105.4)	82 64 (103)	60 38 (102.4)	Released with AHMJ's at barn alerted.
16.1 Hand 18 Year Old Perch/TB	118 84	58 40	42 16		
14.0 Hand 11 Year Old Haflinger	88 94 (105.2)	84 84 (105.2)	68 66 (104.1)	50 32 (101.2)	Released with AHMJ's at barn alerted.

Horse # 1 – 16 hand TB – This horse finished the course in a fast time and had moderately high initial numbers, but he showed good, steady recovery and was released after three checks with no issues.

Horse # 2 – 15.3 hand ISH – This horse had time faults as his rider was very concerned about his condition with the temperature and terrain and took it easy on him. His recovery was great and his rider on top of things so we released him after only two checks.

Horse # 3 – 15.0 hand Appy/TB – This horse had good numbers coming in, but was elevated for the second check, prompting us to take his temp., which was quite high. We went into Distressed Horse mode. He showed steady recovery and was released after 4 checks, though we did alert HM back at the barn to keep a close eye on him and his continued care. This rider was diligent in his care. His numbers, while concerning for a few minutes, did not indicate an alarming lack of fitness, but rather a moderately chunky horse on a hot day. No penalty points were assessed.

Horse # 4 – 16.1 hand Perch/TB - This horse had moderate numbers coming in and showed a very good recover rate. He was released after 3 checks.

Horse # 5 – 14.0 hand Haflinger – Very chunky. This horse had lots of time faults and needed to be pushed to finish, so we were alert to a possible distress before he even got to us for his first check. He was inverted with a high temperature. We were immediately in Distressed Horse mode and had the additional problem of a rider who lacked focus and concern for her horse. Volunteers aided with rapid cooling procedures. He was released after 4 checks. I would have liked to have kept him for another cycle, but we had no shade and thought it better to get him into his stall with a fan. We did alert HM at the barn to meet rider on her way back and to assist and supervise in his continued care. This rider received penalty points for both an under conditioned horse and a lack of attention to the care required of a distressed horse.

