

Welcome to our Horse Trainer “News Sheets”.

These “News Sheets” will be emailed direct to each subscriber before they are posted on our web site. They are designed to provide you with health and training information that can be of great benefit to users of Polar Horse Heart Rate technology.

Understanding your Horses’ Heart Rate in Endurance Riding

The rules of endurance riding place a huge emphasis on recovery heart rates of horses, with horses failing to meet the official cut off recovery heart rate limit being eliminated from the competition. As such, endurance horse owners and trainers are well educated in using recovery heart rate to monitor the fitness and well being of their horse. But what about exercise or training heart rates – how can the owner or trainer monitor and use this information to provide a better-prepared equine athlete for endurance competition?

The first thing to understand is that the fit horse’s heart rate recovers more quickly than that of an unfit horse. This is of course one of the reasons we spend hours and hours training our horses – to increase our horses fitness. But how do we know if you are working your horse(s) hard enough to increase its level of fitness? How do you know if you are working your horse(s) too hard, which in turn may cause injury and overtraining? One way to help provide these answers is to monitor your horse’s exercise heart rate during training rides. Figure 1 is an example of an endurance horse’s exercise heart rate during a three-hour training session over undulating terrain.

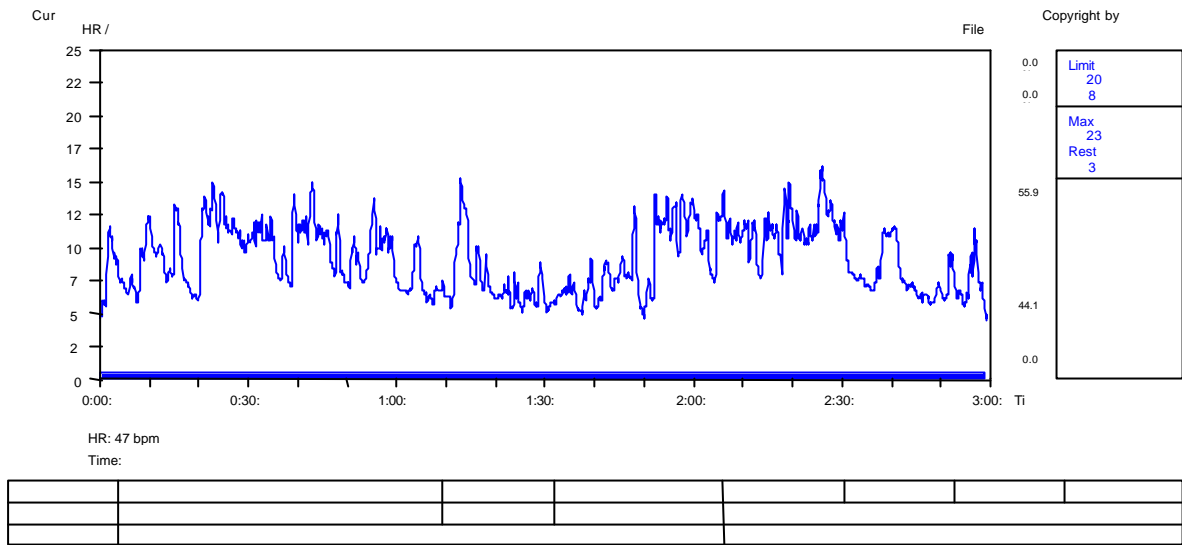


Figure 1 Exercise heart rate of an endurance horse during a three-hour training ride

The next thing to understand is there is a direct positive correlation between how hard the horse is

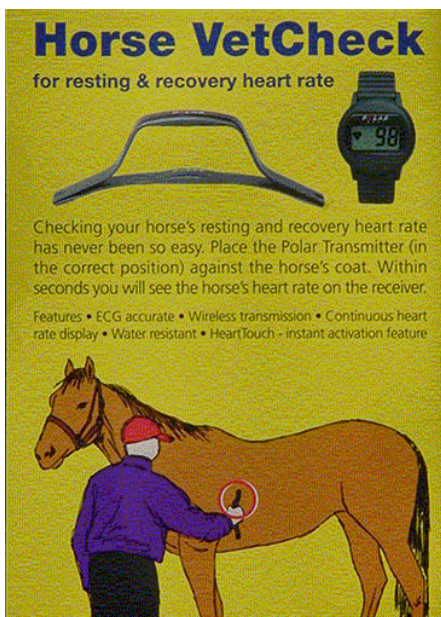
working and it's heart rate, i.e., the higher the heart rate the harder the horse is working. There are several ways to work you horse harder (and increase its heart rate); some of which include:

1. ride your horse faster
2. ride your horse up an incline (e.g., hill)
3. ride your horse in soft sand
4. put a heavier rider on your horse

So how hard should you work your horse during a training session? This of course will depend on a variety of factors (age and fitness of the horse, phase of the training program, etc). From Figure 1, you can see that this horse worked at a variety of heart rates during the session. The horse's heart rate peaked at 161 bpm and averaged about 90 bpm overall. During times of

walking his heart rate dropped well below 60 bpm. So was this a beneficial training session in terms of increasing fitness? According to some experts, good aerobic conditioning (conditioning the heart and lungs) is achieved when endurance horses work in the range of 110 – 150 bpm. From Figure 1, this horse spent approximately 50 minutes (~ 28%) of the training session in this range. Only 1 minute was spent above and 129 minutes (~ 72%) spent below this range during the session. If the aim of the session was to provide aerobic conditioning, one could say that parts of the ride provided this stimulus. In future rides, the owner / trainer may look to increase the amount of time spent in the 110 – 150 bpm range. This can be easily achieved and monitored by using a Polar Horse heart rate monitor.

In summary, getting your horse fit to compete at any level of endurance riding requires a commitment from the owner / trainer to develop a comprehensive training program that incorporates training sessions that initially provide a sound aerobic base. Sessions that perhaps mirror the demands of competition can then be added. Using a Polar Horse heart rate monitor can help achieve this goal.



Polar Vetcheck....Heart Rate when the horse is stationary

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