

TIPS & HINTS FOR VET GATE INTO HOLD STRAPPING

Vet Gate into Hold strapping/crewing is not hard, just different.

- ❖ Remember when you are strapping, instead of thinking in terms of 30mins to reach 55bpm during the ride and 60bpm at the end, you have two opportunities to reach 64bpm in 15mins after you are timed in off each leg during the ride (see Point 4).

[FEI horses have the same two opportunities. However, if the FEI horse takes 10mins to reach 64bpm, there is a compulsory represent before going out on the next leg. This does not apply to AERA horses, unless the examining vet asks for a represent.]

- ❖ At the end of the ride, every horse has one opportunity to reach 64bpm in 20 mins, so don't rush.
- ❖ The hold periods for VGIH are 40 mins during the ride after each leg (unless advised otherwise by the Chief Steward at the pre-ride briefing).

Summary Tips & Hints for strapping/crewing -

1. The strapping/crewing area will be set up by the organisers with water tubs and will be linked to the Arrival In Timing desk and the Vet Timing In desk.
2. If you are strapping for yourself, take your gear over the day before and set up in an area that works for you, or if you have a strapper or someone helping, let them set up once you have gone out on track.

TIP – just take basic essentials to the strapping area, including a stethoscope/heart rate monitor, head stall, light rug, towel, several strapping buckets/sponges/dippers, bucket for horse drinking water, hoof pick, scrapper if you use one; perhaps a drink for the rider; anything else that works for you and your horse.

3. When the rider and horse arrive back at base and is timed in off the course, the horse will enter the strapping/crewing area. Do not go back to your camp, as you only have 15mins maximum to present to the vets, and you will risk being eliminated for being over time.

TIP for the Rider – if you are not being competitive, or you're concerned your horse's HR maybe a bit high, ease back your pace 100 metres or so from the Arrival In gate so your horse is a bit more relaxed when it comes into the strapping area.

TIP for Strappers – once you’ve unsaddled and put a headstall on, take the HR straight away. This will determine if –

- a. you need to strap the horse at all (60 bpm or under just go straight to the vets); or
- b. you need to strap the horse to take heat out of the body to reduce heart rate (see Point 4 below).

TIP – experienced VGIH crew will never use warm or hot water. If the HR is good, they either use no water at all or will just do a very light sponge with cold water and go straight to the vets; or if horse is hot, use plenty of cold water to drop body heat (little to no scrapping), which will help drop HR.

TIP for the Rider – if it helps, hold the horse so your strapper can do their job. Hold your time slip to keep track of your time off course. This is important to keep track of the 15 mins to vet.

TIP – get your horse through the strapping and vetting process ASAP and go back to camp (or FEI hold area for FEI horses) to finish washing down legs, girth, back, etc whilst the horse is eating. This is when you can use your warm water if it’s needed. Then it’s just a matter of letting the horse relax for the hold period.

4. You have two opportunities to reach 64bpm in 15 minutes, but you are still in your riding time until you are timed in at the Vet Gate to present to the vets. That means if you present to the vets within 15 mins and the HR is over 64bpm, you can go back round to the strapping area, pour a bit more water on and represent to the vets as long as it is has been no longer than 15mins after being timed in off the course.

If your horse’s HR is steady around 60-62bpm, walk slowly to the vets. This slow walk will help clear lactic acid which further reduces the HR.

Hint – research has shown that a horse eating after exercise can increase HR. With VGIH vetting where the concept is to have the HR drop to under 64pbm within 15 mins, ideally refrain from letting the horse eat prior to going to the vets. Of course, offer the horse drinking water as a matter of course. After you are back at your camp, offer damp soft hay, or a light meal that the horse will enjoy eating. Remember, with VGIH vetting, it should only be a matter of minutes before your horse is back in their yards or hold area to eat and relax.

5. MAKE SURE SOMEONE KEEPS THE TIMING SLIP WHEN YOU GO THROUGH THE VET GATE TO THE VETS. This will tell you your hold time and when you are due to go back out onto the next leg.
6. Through the course of the ride, and other VGIH rides you do, you will understand and recognise how the HR drops for that horse and what you need to do to get into the vet ring quickly so you’re not wasting time.

Hint – practice VGIH strapping at home to learn how well the horse recovers. Take notice of what the HR is when the saddle is taken off, and then how quickly the HR drops in 5 minute increments and at 10 minutes. This is a great indication of how the fitness is improving. It also gives confidence about how to strap at an actual competition.

7. If you or your strapper can watch experienced crews, you'll pickup plenty of tips. Most are more than willing to give helping advice if approached when things are not "busy".
8. Don't get stressed – the first leg may not be smooth sailing, after that everyone has worked it out, and it becomes clockwork.

SUMMARY -

One of the greatest attributes of VGIH vetting is that it provides a great indicator, for you and the vets, of how your horse is recovering.

A horse that vets back to 50 in 2 minutes with good metabolic parameters is coping well, whereas a horse that takes 15 mins to recover to 64bpm indicates that it may not be coping as well or is travelling too quickly for its fitness level. This could be a good indicator to slow down & the vet may ask for a represent before going back out on course.

It also means that as the ride progresses, horses of similar fitness are travelling together.

It is important for riders and strappers to look at this as positive, not negative as we all hold the best interests of our horses' wellbeing as the cornerstone of our sport.

We hope that those experiencing VGIH vetting for the first time, enjoy the experience, and

***.... if you need any basic help or advice, email canobolasendurance@gmail.com.
We're happy to help.***