

An endurance force to be reckoned with

by Anette Hanekom, secretary of the
Namibia Endurance Ride Association

Joan Eikelboom from Holland
on Izra Sarouk during the
2005 Walvis Bay ride



The first endurance ride in Namibia was held in 1966 between Veldduin and Maroela-boom. The first endurance ride club, the Otjiwanda Uithourit-klub, was established in 1978 at Grootfontein. But with the withdrawal of the South African Defence Force in 1989, endurance riding came to a standstill.

After Namibian independence, the Grootfontein Endurance Ride Club was established in 1990 and the first endurance ride was held on 13 April 1990 at Kranzfontein near Grootfontein. In 1992 the first Namibian championships were held at Gobabis. Ever since the endurance sport has grown tremendously, and we now have more than 200 members and seven clubs.

More important than the numbers, though, is the improvement in quality experienced in Namibian endurance riding. We have grown to become internationally competitive with our wonderful and tough horses.

Among the seven clubs, there are at least two to three club rides each month. This enables riders to continually start the training of new horses, while keeping the older ones in competition. The Namibia Endurance Ride Association also hosts three international rides during the year. The Gobabis Independence Ride, the Otijwarongo CEI International Ride and the Walvis Bay CEI International Ride.

International rides

The Walvis Bay International Ride is the final leg of the Africa Championships. During the year a Namibian team is sent to South Africa to compete against their best at one of their international rides. South Africa and Botswana then send teams to compete at Walvis Bay at the end of August. This is one of the toughest endurance rides in the world, as riders and horses do not only compete against one another, but also against the sand, dunes and winds of the Namib desert, one of the oldest deserts in



During the Christiana endurance ride in 2006: left from Namibia is Wanette Hanekom. In front on the right is Kabous Grunschloss with two unknown riders



The senior Namibian endurance riding team that competed in Christiana in 2006. From the left: Wanette Hanekom, Neil van Wyk, Karel Grunschloss, Judie Wiese (team manager), Johan Kriel, Udo von Schaurath, Hannelie Coetzee. Gerrit Kriel is at the back

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steeds aangaan terwyl jy hier besig is.

Sodra die perd se pols onder die toegelate maksimum is, vat hom veearts toe. Die idee is nie om die pols so laag as moontlik te kry nie, maar wel om die gliptyd (slip time) so kort as moontlik te kry. Die gliptyd is die tyd vandat jy by die ritbasis aankom, totdat jy die perd by die veeartse aanbied. 'n Lae pols beteken niks in terme van die kompetisie nie, maar 'n kort gliptyd sal help om jou uiteindelige posisie te verbeter.

Sodra jy klaar is by die veeartse, is dit tyd om na jou staanplek te versit. Gee ander nou kans om die houggebied te gebruik waar ruimte dikwels maar beperk is. Jou perd kan nou nog water drink, eet, afgespons word, elektroliete kry en sommer net lekker ontspan, weg van die gewoel in die houggebied af. Die ruiter kan nou bietjie sit en 'n energiedrankie en -stafie of twee verorber.

Hou die tyd fyn dop! By meeste van die hekstelselritte word jy nie nader geroep wanneer dit weer tyd is om te vertrek nie – jy sorg self dat jy betyds by die wegspringpunt aanmeld. Indien daar 'n verpligte herondersoek is, sal dit beteken dat jy jou perd ongeveer tien minute voor vertrek weer na die veeartse sal moet neem vir 'n tweede ondersoek.

Laaste been

Wanneer jy amper klaar is met die rit en terugkom van die laaste been af, is dit tyd om jou strategie aan te pas. As jou perd se toestand dit toelaat, moet jy nie nou spoed verminder nie, en kan jy maar by die waterpunt wat 'n kilometer of wat voor die eindpunt is, verbyry. Anders as met die ander bene van die rit, stop jou rytyd die oomblik wat jy oor die eindstreep ry. Hier moet jy ook op die perd se rug bly, en nie afklim voor jy nie oor die streep is nie.

Die keer gaan jy nie houggebied toe nie, maar versit jy dadelik na jou staanplek toe. Benut die tyd (20-30 minute, afhangende van die afstand wat jy ry) om jou perd af te koel en die pols af te kry. Maar weer eens, vat jou perd veeartse toe sodra die pols binne die toegelate perk is, en kry die ondersoek agter die rug. As jy te lank karring, kan jou perd dalk bietjie styf raak en dit mag dalk net beteken dat die veeartse jou elimineer!

Ritte onder die hekstelsel is 'n groter uitdaging vir die ruiter, want ritstrategie is uiters belangrik. Dis egter nie moeilik nie, en as jy hou by die basiese beginsels hierbo uiteengesit, sal jy sukses behaal. Lekker ry! **DR**

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the world. Often the winds bring mist from the sea, adding another challenge to this wonderful ride.

Whether in South Africa or in the deserts of Namibia, the Namibian horses and riders do exceptionally well and have been victorious on many occasions.

Namibia Endurance has a well-organised structure and all members work together, making it very successful. We have also taken the lead in endurance in Africa, in the sense that we were the first country to make the decision to present all rides under the international rules of the International Federation for Equestrian Sport (FEI).

Namibia Endurance also boasts its own website which provides information on the sport and also an up-to-date ranking

system for horses and riders. Namibian endurance riders also feature prominently on the FEI world endurance rankings.

Namibia has successfully competed at three World championships, and the riders have done Namibia proud. Due to African Horse Sickness, riders are unable to participate on their own horses at these events, and horses have to be leased at extremely high costs to allow the riders to participate. During March 2007, Namibia once again sent a team to the young rider and junior world championships in Argentina.

With the growth and experience of our riders and the good quality of endurance horses, Namibia will become an endurance force to be reckoned with in Africa. **DR**