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## Over-Conditioning

### **Original question:**

I work full time 8am - 5pm. I also have my own business I run. In my free time I am training and conditioning my 4 yr old for 25 mile CTR's. Here is my dilemma. Is it better for me to ride him 5 days a week 1 1/2 –2 hours or to ride on weekends for up to maybe 6 hours at a time

### **Interesting answer**

*(the writer is a very well known, successful endurance rider (FEI) as well as a previous AERC director):*

You are doing FAR too much conditioning. Horses need far less conditioning than people because they are much better athletes (they evolved as prey)

For a 25 CTR I would do only at most, two days of conditioning and one day of equitation per week.

- One conditioning ride can be an hour or so
- The other day around two hours and build up to 4 hours.
- For a 25 CTR, most endurance type horses that are ridden regularly will cruise through the ride.

The key to longer mileage is to build your horse up over several years. We take 3 years to get our horses ready for 1-day 100's which is what we specialize in.

Because of our jobs my wife and I only condition on weekends.

As evidence that this can work:

- In 1992 while only conditioning on weekends and using competitions as conditioning, my then 9 year old Drubin, entered and completed 9 1-day 100s, winning 7, plus a 2nd and 3rd, plus 5 BCs and several course records.
- This year Drubin completed his 30th 1-day 100 and his 13 year in a row of one or more 100 mile completions. (Admittedly I think Drubin is exceptional.) Nevertheless we have followed a similar program with success with other horses.
- For example, this year my 9 year old Jayel Super has done 3 100s, with a 3rd and reserve BC, a 1st and BC at Biltmore, and a 1st, BC, and high vet score at Old Dominion, perhaps the toughest ride in the country.
  - o He was ridden only twice in the 5 weeks between Biltmore and Old Dominion.

Each ride was 1 to 2 hours of intense mountain training.

So I recommend less mileage to save the legs.

- For your horses do easy distance training with lots of trotting.
- For experienced horses do smart intense training.
- Equitation training in the ring really pays dividends.

Stagg Newman