

Did You Know?

Facts behind the Texas Endurance Riders Association Benefit Ride

Many years ago there were discussions of how to increase the advantages of membership in T.E.R.A. There were many suggestions and some of the better ideas were implemented. One of them was the initiation of the Benefit Ride.

At the time, there was a great deal of input from a large representation of the membership about what exactly a Benefit Ride should be, and what it would mean to the club, to T.E.R.A. members and to non-T.E.R.A. members. At the time the conversation was live and focused and, discounting the normal turns human discussions take, at the end of it all there was a consensus of what it meant – for Texas Endurance Riders Association – to hold a Benefit Ride.

Although T.E.R.A. was not exactly rolling in cash at the time, it was decided – after discussion – that the Benefit Ride was not and would not be intended as a fund-raiser for the club. The “Benefit” part of the “Benefit Ride” was to the dues paying member – not to the Association itself. The first agreed upon benefit was to make available a substantial discount in ride fees to any participant who was a T.E.R.A. member on the day of the ride. There was a conscious decision to phrase it this way (on the day of the ride) so that folks who were coming to rides but were not yet T.E.R.A. members could decide that the discount was attractive enough to get over the inertia concerning actually filling out the form and joining T.E.R.A. to become a full member. Usually we retain members, so any reasonable opportunity to get new ones would be good for the group.

Over the years the club has grown and in some cases the history has not been accurately handed down, so the efforts involved on making the Ride a benefit, to the individual members, has become somewhat diluted. Some of the Benefit Ride budgets have been pared down to minimize actual costs – no meals, donated prizes, no T-shirts, etc. and these budgets are amenable to offer bigger discounts to T.E.R.A. members since all that has to be recovered are actual costs. Some years Benefit Ride managers have included many amenities which changed the financial dynamic. All Benefit Ride budgets are to be overseen by the T.E.R.A. Board and Officers. At the time the Benefit Ride was established it was not intended that the ride entry fee be a fixed amount – just that the discount to the member be substantial.

Most of you know that the current structure of T.E.R.A. rides – no matter the funding source – involves a modest discount for members. The discount for Benefit Ride entries for members is in addition to the currently mandated \$5.00 discount.

It was never an intent or a goal to make money for TERA, but the ride should and did cover expenses, increased the membership and created goodwill.

After the objectives concerning funding were agreed upon, it was observed that a Benefit Ride could have another role that would address what was becoming a significant problem.

In the 80's and 90's ride management was drastically different than it is today. Total entries at a well-run ride with a good reputation might be 20 or fewer entries. Actual costs of the ride were lower - but not in terms of fixed costs. Land use fees have not changed much, vets still have to be paid, and Porta-Potties are still essential and not much higher in price. Bottom line is that many rides – almost all of them – lost money. Sometimes big money. The losses might be a couple of hundred or a couple of thousand dollars dependent on location and complexity of costs, but there were few break-even rides.

We realized that as the sport grew in size and popularity, and as T.E.R.A. increased the management level of club rides, we needed more good rides and a larger number of good ride managers. We did have individuals who decided to step up and suffer the losses to start a good ride, and this was crucial in our development. But what of people who thought they could be a good ride manager but simply could not take the financial leap of faith to start from scratch and hope for the best? Enter the secondary role of the T.E.R.A. Benefit Ride.

It was decided, after the ride itself got off the ground, that prospective ride managers who were qualified by attendance at the Ride Manager's Clinic be identified and either approached or encouraged to manage the Benefit Ride. The intent was for T.E.R.A. to offer its core of trained ride managers as advisory resources for the manager(s) in training and for T.E.R.A. to fund the ride. The BOD realized that a very good candidate might need financial and planning assistance to put on a ride that would meet T.E.R.A. standards. Ideally these candidates had already figured out that they could go to rides and work in a number of the staff positions to better understand what actually happens during a ride. Being a timer is far more instructive than discussing being a timer.

The first Benefit Ride was held in 1989. We were gifted a sum of money by a different riding group with the stipulation that the money be used for ride benefits. Their event was called "Hoofprints" and that was the agreed upon name until 1995 when the "Old Glory" ride was retired as an "owned" ride and the name was donated to T.E.R.A. to be used for the Benefit Ride. Since then it has been called the "Old Glory Benefit Ride".

Over the years the venue has moved from Davy Crockett National Forest and has been on public land and private land, but the things that have never changed are that the ride is to be used as a benefit showing appreciation to the individual member, and as a vehicle for development of ride managers who can later fund their own rides meeting the goals and standards of T.E.R.A. Many of the Benefit Ride managers have their own rides now, and all of them have helped T.E.R.A. improve the overall program for our members.