

EQUESTRIAN ENDURANCE EVENTS, FAURESMITH

Fauresmith has become world renowned for its endurance events.

FAURESMITH 200

The first endurance ride was held as a consequence of an argument in the magazine *Landbou Weekblad* about which horse breed has the best endurance ability. In 1964, the magazine *Landbou Weekblad* organised a race to settle the issue. An endurance ride was held from Hanover to De Aar to Richmond and back to Hanover. In those years there were no veterinary surgeons to check the horses, as is compulsory today. The ride was a huge success, with the Arabian breed emerging victorious. In 1965 disaster struck when, after the ride, most of the horses appeared to have been poisoned by persons who were opposed to the competition. Approximately sixty of the participating horses died.

The first ride after 1965 was in 1973 in Fauresmith. The area and temperature lend itself to endurance riding. During the 1973 race, seventeen riders competed. The number has since grown to between 250 and 300 entries each year.

After every 25 km has been completed, the riders have 20 minutes to cool down their horses. They are then checked by veterinary surgeons. Heart rate and muscles are checked, and all overstrained horses are disqualified.

The Fauresmith International Endurance Ride is considered one of the toughest in the world. It is not the toughest because of the distance, but because riders must complete long distances over three consecutive days. Riders have been known to get up every hour during the freezing nights to check on their horses.

LOUISE BOTHA STRIDE MEMORIAL CHALLENGE

The Louise Botha Stride Memorial Challenge is a full-fledged International Ride. It has been approved and is held under the auspices of ERASA and the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI), based in Switzerland. It is the governing body for all equestrian sport in the world.

The results of the Louise Botha Challenge are published on the world rankings. Riders and horses are ranked according to results. The Louise Botha Challenge is one of the higher grade rides because it is a 160km competition. It is therefore a 3* ride. Since 2007, the ride is also the Free State Endurance Riding Championships.

In addition to the International Ride, an ERASA division is also held where horses can progress from one level to the next without the stresses of participating competitively.

The ride has grown from a humble beginning with 25 horses to the entry of 200 horses (of which 130 started) in 2010.

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