

Unicorn Hunt Report

By Donnelle Keen Tomasik • Sent by Dale Keen

This was written by my sister, Donelle Keen Tomasik, who crewed for a group of four of us at the Unicorn Hunt Ride. This was the first time for Donnelle, her daughter Logan (and her horse) to ever be in or at an endurance ride. Natalie Lord rode her first ride with us on one of my horses. This was a 55 mile ride!

I could write a book about last weekend's adventure and still could not adequately capture the events and emotions. Logan rode in her first endurance ride. The original plan was for her to do a 25 miler, but Dale is training his horses for a 100 miler and since she is a junior, she must be accompanied. They begin in the dark with headlamps on helmets, looking like bizarre cyclops riders; they leave camp to follow a trail of LED lights through the hot, still, humid trails of the Davy Crockett National Forest. With a flash of grins, they are off! This is when the pit crew job begins. The first vet check is in 24 miles. The vet checks ensure safety of horses and riders. The horse pulse has to return to 64 before your hold time begins—thus, the more quickly your horse reaches this point, the more quickly your horse and rider leave camp. The pit crews of NASCAR have nothing on endurance riding pit crews! You must attend to horses and riders in remote locations with no cell service. As soon as the cyclops leave camp, you rush to the vehicle loaded with supplies to travel down poorly marked logging trails with zero GPS (not sure they would be marked even if there was cell service). You navigate, trying not to break axles but you must get set up for your riders. Failure is not an option. After close to an hour, we arrived at first vet check to claim our area of shade. Other pit crews are involved—the nice folks from camp the night before have transformed into crazed pirates who will do anything to give their riders the edge. You must defend your spot, your supplies and get everything ready. When horses/riders arrive in camp, quickly throw water bottles to humans, strip saddles, water and feed horses and rush them to vet check. If you tarry, the line to the vet lengthens costing your people/horse valuable time. The minutes fly past at an alarming rate. All riders and horses did beautifully and it was time to load up the stuff and hurry to the next check—there were four such events! Mike was the other half of this crew, slinging coolers, ice water, granola, hay and hanging on in the passenger seat as we drove like the crazy people we had become! But when the shout “riders coming” rings out in camp, all movement stops. The sound and air freeze causing an odd silence as everyone anticipates who will emerge from the forest. When you see your team of riders burst from the dense foliage, for a brief moment there are so many emotions that it is painful! But you only have a moment to ponder before sprinting into action! Logan finished 55 miles in third place overall and as the first Junior. I watched her morph into a competitor and push past discomfort (97° with 99% humidity). She followed Dale and Beth's cautious lead in caring for her horse—if the steed is not taken care of well, there will be no more race. I will be the first one to admit, this sport is not for everyone! These folks are athletes, superior riders and show endurance physically, mentally and emotionally. We all learned so much on this adventure . . . so thankful Dale and Beth have opened this world to us. Team Keen took second place through fifth place with their four horses, won best condition and best vet scores!! The world needs more Uncle Dales and Aunt Beths!

Northeast Encourages 100 Mile Riders in 2020

by Pamela Karner, VMD

The Northeast Region has seven established 100 mile rides in 2020. This region also supports two awards that celebrate those hardy horse and rider pairs who can complete three of those seven 100 mile rides! The Northeast Triple Crown and the new Northeast 300 Mile Challenge. The Northeast Triple Crown is awarded to those who complete Old Dominion, Vermont 100 and The Northeast Challenge on the same horse. To date eight horse and rider pairs have accomplished this impressive goal.

NE Triple Crown 2017:

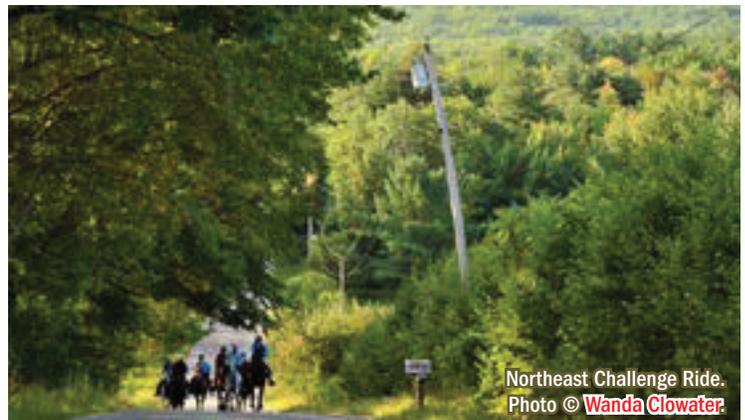
Carol Federighi and Lily Creek Stetson (winners)
Rebecca Bianchi and Rubys Tuesday
Rachel Lodder and El Dakaragorn Bey

NE Triple Crown 2018:

Lisa Delp and Catch Me Riding Dirty (winners)
Evelyn Baig and GJR Bella Cinderella
Kathy Broaddus and Fougueux

NE Triple Crown 2019:

(read more about the 2019 Triple Crown following this article)
Leslie Lloyd and HE Cometa (tied)
Dessia Miller and Amber Kiera (tied)



The Northeast 300 Mile Challenge is a very exciting complement to the already established Northeast Triple Crown. Ride managers across the Northeast Region have banded together to offer prizes and recognition to those 100 mile riders that compete and complete in three 100 mile rides in the Northeast Region on the same horse.



Northeast Rides . . .

The rules are simple!

Riders can be from any region

Must complete three 100 mile rides, on the same horse, offered in the Northeast Region

Rider must be a current season AERC member in good standing

Horse must be enrolled in the AERC mileage program

Below is a brief description of each ride from the ride managers, in calendar order:

1. NEW YORK ADVENTURE (May 2020) “2020 is our fourth year hosting your endurance ride! We offer four distances, 30-50-75-100. The 75 is also available as an elevator to the 100, for mileage only (see AERC rules for elevator rides). Our first year hosting the 75/100 we had six entries. The second year we had eleven entries. This year we are hoping to again double to 20+ entries.”

“The trail is in New Berlin, NY, over the Charles E Baker forest lands (also known as Brookfield Trails). The ride is on single-track trail, grassy snowmobile trail, hard packed truck trail and has some minor elevation changes. Mostly a rolling hill ride. All vet holds are in the base camp, which is running out of Pure Country Campground, and there is one away gate-n-go for the 75 mile and 100 mile riders. The 75 and 100 mile riders start out together at 5:30 am and do the first 75 miles, four loops, together. Then 100 milers will then go on to do two more loops to finish for the evening.”

“The ride is on Memorial weekend, Sunday May 24, 2020. The campground gives us the space from Friday through Monday so many riders bring their crew and their crew horses and enjoy the beautiful trails pleasure riding on Friday and Saturday. We have the best volunteers and provide tons of hands for the longer distance riders for their entire ride. You can certainly do 75 or 100 miles here without crew! We got you covered.”



NY Adventure 100 mile finishers: Helen Lynn, Alex Uspenski, Rachel Lodder.



Laurel in bloom at the Old Dominion ride.

3. COATES CREEK CHALLENGE (June 2020) “June 27/28 2020, will be held just 1k from the lovely town of Creemore, Ontario Canada with B&B, groceries and fuel nearby. We plan to add a second field for parking this year so there will be lots of room for pit crews. A veteran Army cook is on site to sell you food and an indoor arena for night vet checks and awards. The trail is a 50 mile ‘circle’ with two out vet checks. The 100 milers will take the 50 mile loop twice. Coates Creek offers a 50 and a 100 endurance plus our local 25 mile Set Speed on Saturday with LD 25 on Sunday and a short 16 mile Set Speed. A Ride & Tie may be offered Sunday. The trail starts with hills, a river crossing on loam and then turns to sandy pine plantation and Forestry trails. The experienced OCTRA crew from water guys, to trails, to Vets, manages Coates Creek. We hope to see you June 26.”

4. VERMONT 100 (July 2020) “will be Vermont 100’s 39th year! The Vermont 100, Moonlight in Vermont 75 and 50 are bucket list rides for lots of good reasons. The gorgeous scenery, well marked trails, and carnival atmosphere are all secondary to the fact that this is the only ride left where horses and marathon runners share the trail at the same time for 100 miles! Imagine trotting down a dark path guided by red and green glow sticks, chatting with someone who has just run 70 or 80 or even 99 miles! The runners love the horses and the camaraderie, and so do we!

2. OLD DOMINION (June 2020) “is known as the Beast of the East! The OD is a point-to-point race through mountainous terrain. There is a mixture of single track and mountain/gravel roads. The ride is tough and rocky but doable. Pads and foot protection are recommended. OD is an iconic endurance ride, not to be missed! Join us June 12/13, 2020.”



Coates Creek Challenge Ride. Photo © Wendy Webb.



Views at the Vermont 100.



Northeast Rides . . .

“Where else can you experience riding in the dark even though you are riding a 50 mile ride? You get to experience the whole scope, runners, glow sticks, cool evening breezes... on trails through private land maintained by the incredibly supportive local equine community.”

“The trail is a continuous loop with 5 away holds to which management will bring your hold gear if you are without crew. Dirt roads, fields, a river, covered bridge and wooded trails are all part of the experience. The ride is always held on the third weekend of July (18/19 for 2020) and is the second leg of the Northeast Triple Crown.”

5. NORTHEAST CHALLENGE (August 2020) “is a family run endurance ride in Buckfield, Maine. The history of race dates back to 1994. After several years off, it started back under new management with the Jack family in 2012. Since its revival, it has offered 30, 50, and 100 mile distances. It is also the third and final leg of the Northeast Triple Crown. The ride atmosphere supports a true family feel with bonfires, kids running around, and three generations working together to make the ride run smoothly.”

“The terrain of the ride varies from dirt roads, single-track wood trails, and grassy, bush hogged hills. There is flat and there are hills; some long climbs and some short steep ones. Most of the land is privately owned by incredibly supportive land owners. Ride management works tirelessly to listen to riders’



feedback and to continuously improve the riders experience every year. All holds are back at ride camp and there are crew spots along the trails every loop. There are 2 loops for the 30, 3 loops for the 50, and 6 loops for the 100. There are staggered start times and different order of loops for each distance. The ride takes place on the last weekend of August (August 29). We look forward to seeing you.”

6. IRON HORSE (September 2020) “Rides are based out of Elkins Creek Horse Camp just 20 miles North of Ironton, Ohio, and in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. Our trail system incorporates both State and Federal forests to give you a course that is challenging yet very do-able with beautiful rock formations, caves, spectacular overlooks, and historical landmarks. We boast an experienced ride management team, outstanding veterinarians, wonderful base camp hospitality, and enough on-course support for the 75 & 100 mile riders that they can be ridden without a crew. September is the best time of year to ride in Ohio, we hope you can come and join us!”

7. MUSTANG MEMORIAL (October 2020) “The New Jersey Trail Ride Association Mustang Memorial is located in the Wharton State Forest. The forest is 130,000 acres located in South Jersey. Our trails are well marked with wonderful water and hay stops along the way. Later in the evening, Piney Margaritaville opens in the forest for our 75/100 milers out on trail. All of the holds are at base camp. We do have an away gate/go for the longer distances, which can be easily reached within a few minutes from base camp for your crew. Don’t have

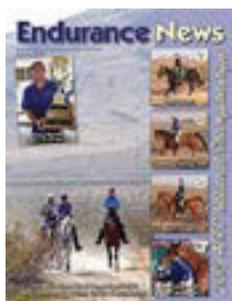
crew for the gate/go or the hold we will give you a hand, just let us know. Footing is packed sand with minimum elevation. Glow sticks go up after dark to help you out on the trail.”

“Food: let’s talk! My food crew is uncontrollable so they feed all of you and crew with amazing dishes that last into the wee hours of the morning. I grow all kinds of fresh vegs all year for the big day. Jersey corn and tomatoes can’t be beat. No worries about missing a meal in NJ.”

“Ride camp is a huge farm field with easy parking. We have quite a few restaurants, gas stations, grocery store, hotels and a Walmart within 10 miles.”

“This ride is held the first weekend in October, the 3rd and 4th for 2020. We start check-in around 2 pm on the 3rd. Ride on the 4th. The distances offered this year will be 30/50/75/100. All will be AERC/ECRTA sanctioned.”

“We are so excited to be a part of the Northeast 300 Mile Challenge. Look forward to seeing all of you this fall.”



Watch for the January issue of Endurance News in your mailbox soon!

February’s issue will feature “legends of the sport” — it’s our annual “Members Issue” with more personal stories (and no ride results or standings).

March is the annual yearbook issue! If your equine reached 3,000 miles in 2019, watch for an email about sending in an essay and photo!

Remember, your submissions for Endurance News and AERC Extra, are always welcome! Just send in an email or as a Word document to endurancenews@aerc.org!

