EQUINE FARM MANAGER · FACT SHEET & ADMINISTRATOR'S GUIDE

# Recovery Ledger: Conditioning & Recovery Guide

Track how a horse recovers after work using heart rate, breathing, heat load, optional lactate, and a whole-horse check. Slowing recovery often shows strain before anything else does.

Version 2.0 · November 2026  Pairs with: Recovery tab

IN THIS GUIDE


1. What the Recovery Ledger measures
2. Who may administer it
3. Equipment
4. The protocol, step by step
5. Heat index
6. Reading a session
7. Speed and rodeo events
8. Stop and call your veterinarian
9. Limitations and sources


## 01 What the Recovery Ledger measures

The Recovery Ledger measures recovery, not performance during work. A horse whose recovery is slowing across sessions may be overworked, unfit for the task, too hot, or coming down with something, often before you can see it.

| SYSTEM | MEASURE | REFERENCE |
|---|---|---|
| **Cardiac** | Heart rate at each minute after work; time to target | Target 64 bpm or lower, from endurance vet-gate practice |
| **Respiratory** | Breathing rate during recovery | Breathing that matches or exceeds heart rate ("inversion") is a heat-stress sign |
| **Muscular (optional)** | Blood lactate at about 5 minutes, then later | Under 2 mmol/L aerobic · 2–4 threshold · over 4 anaerobic. A falling second reading shows clearance. |
| **Environment** | Air temperature + humidity | Heat index bands, section 05 |
| **Whole horse** | Hydration, gut sounds, attitude and gait, welfare flags | Section 04, step 7 |

**Not for:** diagnosis, a veterinary exam, a lameness or cardiac workup, or a competition gate. The Recovery Ledger is not affiliated with the LARC TEST, a separate proprietary commercial service.

## 02 Who may administer it

A veterinarian or veterinary technician, a trained educator, or an owner or trainer who has read this guide. Lactate requires a blood sample; it is optional and may be skipped.

> **STANDING RULE**
> The horse comes before the data. If the horse is distressed, overheated, bleeding, or unwell in any way, stop recording and attend to the horse.

## 03 Equipment

- Timer or phone stopwatch
- Stethoscope or a girth-strap heart-rate monitor
- Thermometer and hygrometer, or a weather app for temperature and humidity
- Water, sponges, and shade for cooling
- Optional: handheld lactate meter and strips
- A phone or tablet with the app open on the Recovery tab

## 04 The protocol, step by step

1. **Set up the session.** Pick the horse, date, work type (conditioning gallop, interval or fitness set, cross-country school, dressage schooling, jump school, hack or long slow distance, competition round, return to work), and discipline.
2. **Take a resting baseline.** Resting heart rate (about 28–44 bpm in an adult horse), optional resting respiration (8–16 breaths per minute), air temperature, and humidity. The heat index fills in.
3. **Do the planned work.** Record duration and effort (easy, moderate, hard, maximal) relative to the horse's current fitness. Note peak heart rate if you have a monitor.
4. **Start timing the moment work ends.** Record heart rate at 1, 5, and 10 minutes at minimum; use *+ Add a reading* for more. The app interpolates time to the recovery target, 64 bpm by default. Change the target if your vet or discipline uses another.
5. **Count respiration** during recovery. If it matches or exceeds heart rate, flag heat stress and cool actively.
6. **Optional lactate.** Sample at about 5 minutes, then again a few minutes later to check clearance.
7. **Whole-horse check.** Hydration (good, mild, poor: gum moisture, capillary refill, skin tent), gut sounds (normal, reduced, quiet or absent), attitude and gait (bright, flat or dull, short or off behind). Tick any flags: blood at nostrils, cough or abnormal breathing, cramping or tie-up, filled or warm legs. Note footing or anything unusual.
8. **Save the session.** The horse's history updates. Repeat across the season under similar conditions so sessions compare.

## 05 Heat index

```
Heat index = air temperature (°F) + relative humidity (%)
```

| INDEX | BAND | MEANING FOR WORK AND RECOVERY |
|---|---|---|
| **Under 130** | Safe | Cooling works well; recovery readings are reliable |
| **130–150** | Caution | Cooling is working harder; watch recovery and keep water close |
| **150–180** | High | Cooling is compromised, especially in high humidity; shorten work and cool aggressively |
| **Over 180** | Dangerous | Sweating can't keep up; avoid hard work and don't judge fitness from the session |

## 06 Reading a session

The read on each session is an educational summary of that session, not of the horse's health. Interpret it in three bands:

| BAND | LOOKS LIKE | DO |
|---|---|---|
| **On track** | Reached target within about 10 minutes; no flags | Continue the program |
| **Watch** | Slow recovery, uncleared lactate, marginal hydration, or heat | Re-check under cooler conditions or easier work |
| **Attention** | A welfare flag, or markedly poor recovery | Involve your veterinarian |

Trends across sessions matter more than any one result. Add a management note on the BCS tab when you change the program, so the change shows on the horse's timeline.

## 07 Speed and rodeo events

Barrel racing, pole bending, and roping are short, near-maximal bursts. Lead with lactate clearance and the heat index, use heart-rate recovery mainly to compare sessions over time, and give the whole-horse check extra weight.

## 08 Stop and call your veterinarian

**STOP SIGNS**

- Blood at the nostrils, even a small amount
- Breathing outrunning heart rate that does not settle with cooling
- Cramping, or a stiff, short gait (possible tying-up)
- A dull horse that is not recovering

## 09 Limitations and sources

The Recovery Ledger supports conditioning of healthy horses in training. It cannot detect or rule out disease, and normal-looking numbers do not confirm health. Persistent poor recovery, unexplained loss of performance, or any respiratory or cardiac concern belongs with a veterinarian, ideally one with a sports-medicine interest.

Draws on standard equine exercise-physiology measures used in eventing and endurance research, including heart-rate recovery, lactate clearance, V200, and VLa4. The 64 bpm reference comes from endurance vet-gate criteria; the heat index is a common rule of thumb in equine sport.

---

**Equine Farm Manager** — developed by Ken Estes, Jr. · © 2026 Ken Estes, Jr. All rights reserved. Free to use at equine-farm-management-suite.netlify.app.

Questions or a problem with a download? EquineFarmManagerSupport@gmail.com

These guides are planning and educational aids, not veterinary, nutritional, or agronomic advice for an individual horse or field. Confirm diets and health decisions with your veterinarian or an equine nutritionist. Mention of a product, lab, or service is not an endorsement.

*Prepared with the assistance of AI tools. All content was reviewed and verified for accuracy by the author.*