

Ron and Val Males have been involved with endurance riding since the first Tom Quilty Gold Cup (100 Miles/160Kms) Ride was held in the Hawkesbury District (NSW) in 1966. These icons of Endurance have a wealth of knowledge about the sport since its inception in Australia 55 years ago. Ron and Val are firm believers in the Endurance motto: 'To complete is to win'.

Said Ron: My philosophy is to finish a Ride with a horse that is ready, willing and able to 'go on'. I don't mean winning the ride ... I mean winning the personal challenge ... to have a horse that is ready, willing and able to 'go on'.

We became interested in Endurance Riding after reading articles by Erica Williams in *Hoofs and Horns* magazine about competitive long distance rides overseas confirming that the Arabian Horse and its derivatives were specifically suited to this type of competition.

The late Tom Quilty (after whom the Quilty Ride was named) argued that 'we only had a lot of show ponies in Australia ... not horses that could do that test'. However, Erica's husband, the late RM William disagreed and went ahead to introduce the idea of starting Endurance Riding in Australia through his *Hoofs and Horns* magazine.

'In our early days, Val and I used to regularly ride 15+ miles (approx. 24kms) to a show, compete with our horses and ride home again. In those days our horses needed to be really well prepared, so when we arrived at the show, they had to still 'look the part'.

We've always believed that our horses should also 'look the part' at Endurance Rides and we thought: "This is another way we can prove the Arabian Horse can do what we say it can"!

Endurance Riding continues to be a popular and challenging sport for people of all ages and one which is based on competitors starting each ride with a sound, well trained horse that not only looks good but also has the ability to recover well.

To achieve this, riders need self-discipline throughout the ride so they can successfully finish with their horses 'fit and able to continue'. After that, I think they feel a great satisfaction and, 'once bitten by the bug' so to speak, they seem to become easily addicted to Endurance riding.

While individual horses of other breeds have been successful, it is clearly evident that Arabians and Arabian Derivatives continue to record the highest proportion of wins and successful completions in Endurance Rides.