

Session 8 - Eventing Risk Management session

The discipline of Eventing is considered as the most complete all-round test of horse and athlete and a tremendous feat of horsemanship. It is however, and will remain, a risk sport, and the FEI, in line with the Eventing Vision Statement, is committed to undertake all possible risk management measures to control and mitigate such risk.

An International Eventing Safety Committee was formed in 2000 in the wake of five tragic fatalities in International and National events during 1999. This Committee produced the initial FEI Safety report identifying the essential need for the International authority to establish an overall global monitoring system together with a list of recommendations. These recommendations were related to the qualification requirements, technical, veterinary and medical aspects of the discipline, Officials' education and safety equipment, and this report most importantly recommended the set up and collection of information for a world-wide statistical database. Since then, data on cross-country fences and falls have been collected allowing the Eventing Committee to undertake different risk management actions and rules revisions based on evidence emerging from these statistics.

An independent audit of the Eventing discipline and specifically of Eventing Risk Management was conducted by Mr Charles Barnett on request of the FEI President in 2015 focusing on review of the measures implemented to date and assessing ways in which the risks associated with falls on Cross Country could be minimised. A thorough review of the FEI statistical data available as well as many interviews of experts within the discipline and the sport industry in general was conducted. The Barnett report provided the FEI and the Eventing Committee with further recommendations to be implemented immediately as regards to qualifications, additional items for data collection and improved communication with Course Designers and Officials (Tattersalls Risk Management Seminar, Feb 2017) and also a list of measures to be further evaluated and analysed.

As a follow-up, a Risk Management Steering Group was appointed in 2016 by the FEI Bureau in order to evaluate some of the recommendations of the Barnett report, investigate new ways to reduce horse falls and identify factors to decrease the number of serious injuries to athletes and horses. Other key areas for the group are the evaluation of statistical analysis gathered to date, including athlete qualifications and performance history, and a review of fence design. Safety equipment, the education of athletes and officials, and the roles and responsibilities of officials are also to be reviewed.

Presenters:

Giuseppe Della Chiesa (ITA) Chair of the FEI Eventing Committee since 2009, and the FEI Eventing Safety Officer from 2003 to 2009, will detail during this session the main evolutions and decisions taken during this ongoing review process involving all aspects related to the discipline. The latest statistical outcomes in term of Horse fall rate monitoring will be presented during the session as well as the permanent objective to keep this percentage within the limits set.

David O'Connor (USA) Former FEI Bureau Member, double Olympic Eventing medallist in Sydney 2000, Member of the 2000 International Safety Eventing Committee and Chair of the first International Eventing safety forum in Copenhagen in 2008 leads the FEI Risk Management Steering Group and will lay out during this session the scope of action of this working group, the next steps, new proposals, and possible progressive recommendations. Eight members have been appointed to be part of the Risk Management Steering Group based on their specific areas of expertise.

Equiratings®: Co-founders of the company, **Diarmuid Byrne (IRL)** and **Sam Watson (IRL)** will present during this session the rationale behind the EquiRatings Quality Index (ERQI®) and its scope and opportunities. The analysis of athletes and horses performance history is one of the key aspects of the reduction of the risk in Eventing. Statistics allowed the Eventing Committee to set a certain number of rules including the categorisation of athletes. The Risk Management Steering Group recommend to move forward from statistics to analytics and collaborate with EquiRatings in order to add another dimension to the qualification criteria set by the FEI Eventing rules.

A general discussion will be encouraged on views to progress and to develop further risk management actions in the sport.

For reference:

- FEI Eventing Vision Statement (Eventing rules introduction)

Eventing constitutes the most complete combined equestrian Competition, demanding of the athlete considerable experience in all branches of equitation and a precise knowledge of their horse's ability, and of the horse a degree of general competence, resulting from intelligent and progressive training.

The Cross Country Test constitutes the most exciting and challenging all-round test of riding ability and horsemanship where correct principles of training and riding are rewarded. This test focuses on the ability of athletes and horses to adapt to different and variable conditions of the competition (weather, terrain, obstacles, footing, etc.) showing jumping skills, harmony, mutual confidence, and in general "good pictures".

This test requires by all involved special awareness and acceptance of a certain level of risk inherent to the particularly challenging and exciting nature of the test.

Every effort must be made to ensure that, at each level, responsible athletes are participating with progressively trained horses in order not to be exposed to a higher risk than which is strictly inherent to the nature and level of the competition.

- 2000 Hartington Report
- 2015 Barnett Report
- FEI Risk Management Statistics