

8-9 April 2013, IMD, Lausanne (SUI)

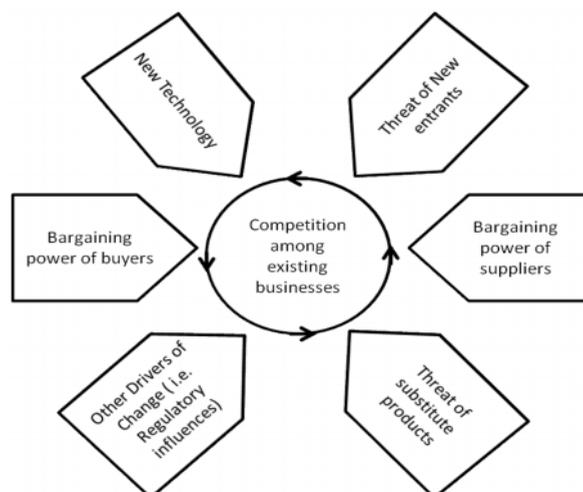
INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENTS OF COMPETITION HORSES**A ROAD MAP FOR CHANGE**

The intention of this session is to explain the steps taken to define the FEI horse as a clearly identifiable official category of horses. This new category is to be recognised by governments as presenting a lower disease risk and therefore, it should be eligible for a more streamlined approach to movements internationally.

This group of horses must be supported by a strong partnership between National Federations and their governments, to create confidence and to build a solid foundation of trust. The equestrian sport - government foundation must also be strengthened by an improved basic biosecurity across the entire industry, as part of a routine behaviour.

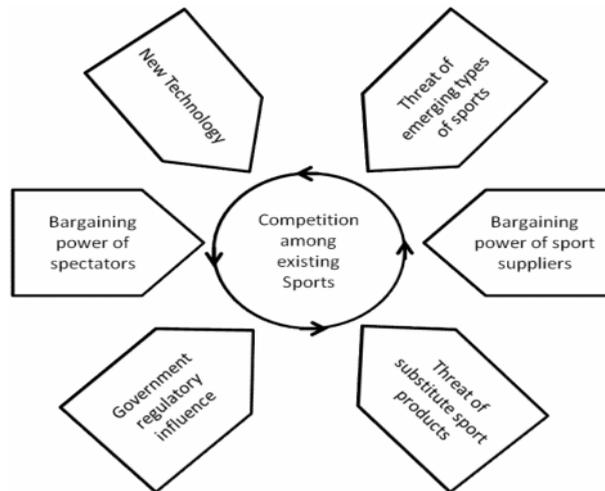
As in any industry, when regulatory changes are made on the level of international trade that are an improvement, significant opportunities become available for expansion. In the case of equestrian sport, an improved way of regulating the international trade of horses presents a landmark opportunity for continued growth, development and change within equestrian sport.

All industries and businesses are subject to forces that shape their environment and their ability to compete with other industries. These forces have been classified into distinct groups.

**Industry Competitive Forces**

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Should this thinking be applied to Equestrian Sport, the forces shaping the competitive landscape could be described as follows:



Equine Sports Industry Competitive Forces

Equestrian sport is unusual in that governments act as a major force upon our development and activities. Through legislation and voter’s support, governments have a responsibility to regulate the movement of horses from one country to the other, to protect against the spread of disease into the national animal and human populations, and finally, to ensure that welfare standards are enforced. The economic, political and emotional costs of dealing with foreign disease outbreaks in horse populations is very high. Moreover, the introduction and spread of disease is extremely damaging to economies, both in terms of actual eradication costs and the sudden loss of ability to trade horses with other countries. The cost of cancelled events, movement restrictions such as extended quarantine periods, the deaths of valuable horses without compensation as well as a lack of suitable vaccines for many serious equine diseases would be devastating to the equestrian industry.

As part of the process of disease outbreak prevention, government legislation often requires health standards to be certificated in the form of an Official Animal Health Certificate, which accompanies a horse at the time of importation and must be agreed on by the respective countries of travel. These health certificates frequently require proof of disease testing before the horse is even allowed entry to the importing country. Similarly, a horse returning to its country of origin must also comply with the standards agreed on by the countries involved, as it could have contracted a disease while out of the country, so as to ascertain that no risk of disease spread to the local population exists. This is again done by means of an agreed Official Animal Health Certificate. The standards required by these health certificates reflect the perceived disease risks and concerns, and often vary greatly from country to country.

In many parts of the world, a period of quarantine, which often differs widely in severity and in the time required, must be imposed in order to comply with the requirements of an Animal Health Certificate. Furthermore, these quarantine conditions depend greatly on the assessment of risk made by the

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particular country imposing them. The movement of all animals between countries, even if only temporary, constitutes a form of trade and is negotiated in a similar way to the trade of many products between countries, except that in the case of animals, there is a concern about limiting the possibility of disease spread and ensuring their welfare, hence the need for agreed animal health measures to accompany this sector of trade.

The requirements imposed by governments can be seen as a "Force" that shapes the ability of our sport to develop and compete with other international sports, and as part of the "Regulatory Force" described above, which affect any business. When this "Regulatory Force" - i.e. government animal health legislation - is overly strict and not based on scientifically proven risk, it also causes unnecessarily large expenses, delays in the movement of horses to competitions, and ultimately, renders their movement so complex and difficult that some owners, organisers and competitors are actually discouraged from proceeding. As this approach is not based on the actual risk involved with the category of sport horses, it prevents regional competitions, series' and championships from reaching their full potential, and hinders athletes from developing their sporting potential in many areas of the world.

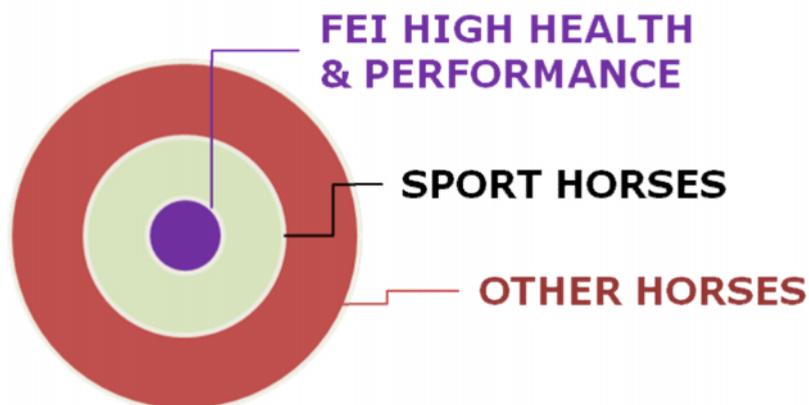
Whilst it is necessary to impose measures to protect horses from disease spread, which in turn protect the equestrian sport industry, these "Trade" measures seem to be often extremely disharmonised, created without any consideration to the nature of the high-performance horse environment.

The World Trade Organisation (WTO)¹ has delegated the responsibility of providing the principles and Codes for the movement of animals to the World Organisation of Animal Health (the OIE). The OIE is therefore the coordinating cross-government body that establishes the approach by which animals are moved internationally. Whilst some governments may impose their own animal health requirements unilaterally, most countries are signatories to the OIE, and therefore are bound to draft their regulations respecting the principles and Codes of the OIE. Currently however, government officials frequently feel that these principles and Codes do not incorporate a mechanism to recognise the difference between the "high-performance" sport horse such as the FEI horse, and any other horse, and therefore they are simply treated in a similar manner to all other types of horses.

To distinguish one horse category from another, it must be easily recognised not just in terms of the competition level, but most importantly, in terms of the approach to animal husbandry maintaining the horse's health. The actual concept best defining what separates one type of animal from another is a "sub-population". In the case of many FEI horses, there are good grounds for claiming that these horses possess the necessary characteristics to be considered as a particularly healthy "sub-population" amongst other - regular horses, including other sport horses.

¹ The International Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the SPS Agreement) entered into force with the establishment of the World Trade Organization on 1 January 1995. It concerns the application of food safety and animal and plant health regulations. This agreement, along with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade as amended (GATT 1994), are part of the treaty which establishes the World Trade Organization (WTO). The WTO superseded the GATT as the umbrella organization for international trade.

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The Concept of an Equine Sub-Population

The grounds for claiming that some FEI horses could form a “High-health, High-performance” (HHP) sub-population amongst other sport horses lie within the specific characteristics associated with the FEI registered horses and FEI Events:

- They always have an FEI recognised identification document (passport, recognition card and microchips)
- They are under high levels of veterinary supervision, both at FEI events and at home
- Fitness to compete is constantly verified and therefore, these horses cannot continue to compete unless they are healthy
- They must be healthy in order to perform to the best of their ability
- As a minimum standard, they are vaccinated against equine influenza
- They are often stabled separately from regular horses at events
- They participate in events for competition purposes, not for breeding
- They often are of a very high value and as such, protected by an awareness of biosecurity in order to preserve the investment

As equestrian sport has expanded rapidly across all regions of the world, the failure to recognise the lower risk that these “ High-Health, High-Performance” horses present, within the government health requirements, is identified as one of the major constraints to the further development of the sport internationally by National Federations. A shift in this “Regulatory Force” to a more practical and streamlined - **yet safe to protect the industry** - approach, would not only allow better planning and reduce costs, it would also provide a clear global understanding of equestrian sport to everyone involved. Moreover, this new approach would further shape the competitive position of our sport amongst other sports, encouraging more countries to hold international equestrian events, as the difficulties in moving horses to events would be reduced and standardised.

The lack of government understanding of the high standard of care these “High-Performance” horses are under, is due to a failure in communication by the industry and has existed for such a long time that it is now ingrained in the thinking processes of many governments.

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The FEI has substantially raised awareness of this “regulatory block” over the past two years, drawing attention to the lack of a sound scientific basis to regulating movements as well as a lack of application of the OIE principles, through lobbying and holding conferences. As a result, the OIE has convened a working Group of experts 12 months ago who have identified the key conditions needed to bring about a more practical, but still safe set of government requirements for the international movement of high level competition horses. These conditions require:

- Much better government knowledge about the sport horse environment and its industry
- Greater use of the identification of horses
- Clearer OIE standards for the trade of such horses
- A need for standard guidelines endorsed by the OIE
- A commonly recognised industry biosecurity approach
- Better and standardised laboratory tests for equine diseases

A way forward has now been road mapped out by this working group. Moreover, government representatives at an OIE conference on this subject in Panama underpinned the need to create an officially recognised sub-population of horses that best defines the “High-Health, Performance horse (HHP)”category of horse. This group of horses will be officially recognised as presenting a lower disease risk than many other types of horses i.e. working horses, slaughter horses etc. Consequently, the OIE will assist governments in creating and applying less stringent animal health certification requirements appropriate to this category of horses.

The road map provides one of the greatest opportunities ever awarded to international equestrian sport to bring about a change, as the essential “Regulatory Force”. This change must incorporate a shift in the level and quality of activities between the National Federations and their governments. Furthermore, the National Federations must adopt a clear role in ensuring that horses within equestrian sport are protected by biosecurity measures, which are consistently applied. The sport must remain the primary goal, however, the industry must be respected and as such, seen to be acting in a responsible manner by applying and promoting these biosecurity measures.

In order to achieve change as quickly as possible, the FEI has taken the lead by establishing a unique model of a public-private partnership with the OIE and the governments. Moreover, the FEI has begun to deliver the above mentioned necessary conditions for this change by providing the resources to:

1. Employ a fulltime FEI secondee working within the OIE on improving the approach to the international movement of competition horses and who will actively promote the concept of an equine sub-population of “High-Health, High-Performance” horses, which are officially recognised as having a much lower risk of transmitting disease
2. Support the development of laboratory tests and other required studies
3. Support OIE missions to improve the standards of government officials in the area of trade of horses

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4. Support further regional seminars in the style of the 2013 FEI-OIE Panama summit, to define how the concept of "sub-population" will be officially applied across the globe
5. Provide communication and training materials to governments, National Federations and FEI officials, website presence and other digital tools etc.

As this historic process starts to gain traction, now is the time for National Federations and competitors to begin a substantial change in habits and responsibilities, and to ensure that in the future, more relaxed animal health requirements for these FEI horses with a lower risk, do not result in an increased disease risk because of a poor biosecurity culture. This would simply make governments retreat back to their previously conservative positions.



Working together in a public private partnership

Speakers from outside the FEI will participate in this important International Movements session describing the steps and the wider changes needed. The theme will be an industry change and seizing an opportunity and working in a public-private partnership at the FEI/OIE/WTO and most importantly, the National Federation - National Government level.