

Session 4 – Eventing Risk Management

Day 2 of the FEI Sports Forum 2018 began with a focus on risk management in Eventing. An update on efforts made by the FEI in this area along with trends from the latest Eventing Statistics Report were presented by the Chair of the Eventing Committee David O'Connor (USA).

FEI Eventing Risk Management Programme

The Eventing Risk Management Programme, including data collection, had been ongoing for 18 years since the first Eventing Safety audit based on the Hartington Report had been released in 2000. Up to then decisions had been based on impressions, not on scientific facts or data.

The data collection had begun in 2001, however the quality and reliability of the data collection systems had taken time to establish themselves and improve in consistency. Currently 10-year worth of good quality data were available for analysis and data-mining.

The Eventing Risk Management Steering Group had been formed in 2016 with the mission to investigate new ways to reduce horse falls by identifying factors to decrease the number of serious injuries to athletes and horses and to coordinate and exchange ideas, efforts and research studies around the world relating to Risk Management. This group had formulated further questions to be asked from the data in addition to the “first level” questions, which had been covered during the last 10 years.

Review of Eventing data 2017

David O'Connor presented the annual review of Eventing data which showed a 60% increase in competitions and a 45% increase in starters from 2008 to 2017. During that period, the **percentage of falls had decreased** from 5.73 % in 2008 to 5.34 % in 2017.

The 4-star level represented a very small number of starters, which explained the variation from year to year in percentage of falls as one fall had a strong impact on the total percentage.

The Eventing Risk Management Policy Action plan and policy included the **qualification system through MERs** (Minimum Eligibility Requirements) to which an athlete category system had been added in 2013. This categorised riders according to their competences at a certain level (15 results at a certain level were necessary to be categorised). The review of falls per rider category clearly showed that **uncategorised riders** were subject to a **greater risk of falls**. Education and experience had a great influence, which needed to be factored in the risk equation.

The rate of injuries based on the percentage of falls was higher for horse falls versus rider unseated falls.

Currently the **serious injury definition** was “transported to hospital”, which needed to be changed to “overnight stay in hospital” to avoid categorising minor injuries as serious.

The concussions were also included in the serious injury and would be separated in a specific category.

The intention was to require that **all countries** involved in Eventing implement a **Concussion and Return-to-Play** programme on a national level.

Since the start of the collection, data showed that falls in national competitions compared to international competitions were much lower, which was difficult to explain as the cross

country courses were similar, if not identical. One reason could be the psychological effect on athletes and further study was needed.

Eventing National Safety Officer (NSO)

In 2008, the Eventing National Safety Officer (NSO) programme had been created to develop a direct communication line between the FEI and NFs for all matters directly relating to Eventing Risk Management. An NSO-dedicated seminar was organised each year to share ideas, experiences and information.

Data collection

The data collected by the Eventing Department included fence description forms, fall reports and fence analysis. **All fences** from **each** competition – i.e. approximately 21'000 fences at 670 competitions - were **entered in the database**.

Fall reports covered many different questions, the description of the fall, the details of injuries to athlete and horse, the contributory factors, etc.

The data collected was essential in Risk Management and allowed to take informed decisions.

Frangible technology was available for certain type of fences and the use was increasing. However, it was not available in all countries equally.

Education of athletes

The additional element added to the Risk Management programme this year was the education of athletes **through the FEI Coaching System**. A short survey had shown that only seven out of the 19 NFs, which had been contacted, had specific cross country coaching education (for reference: 56 NFs have Eventing athletes registered for 2018 and 42 NFs organise Eventing competitions). Ways to develop educational tools in countries, who did not have such programmes, were being examined.