

06 November 2015

Responsibilities of Officials

Dear Officials,

Over the past decade, Endurance has developed into a highly professional equestrian sport. This is demonstrated by the increased popularity and growth of endurance around the world. In parallel with the increased popularity of endurance, we have seen a significant increase in the value of star rated sound horses as well as the development of a growing international trade in qualified horses.

The effect of the increased value of the endurance horse has impacted upon the sport in a number of ways, for example:

- Increased demand for endurance horses internationally;
- Increased market value for proven endurance horses;
- Pressure to qualify novice horses as soon as possible;
- Increased competition at both CEN and CEI events leading to faster times;
- Faster competitions leads to increased risk to welfare of the horse;
- Increased responsibility of veterinarians to protect the welfare of the horse; and
- The development of highly skilled endurance officials and veterinarians.

The developments described above are not necessarily bad for our sport providing that we remain vigilant against horse abuse and always ensure that "the welfare of the horse is paramount". Abuse of the horse is described in Article 142 of the FEI General Regulations. We refer you to the list of examples of abuse and in particular the sentence "To compete using an exhausted, lame or injured horse". Abuse of the horse can be reported by any person at any time, no deposit is required for lodging a protest claiming abuse of horses. Any form of abuse of horse (such as but not only rapping, abnormal sensitisation or desensitisation of limbs, banned schooling methods etc.) may entail a fine of up to CHF 15,000 and/or a suspension of a minimum of 3 months up to life.

As FEI officials your primary role is to protect the welfare of the horse, maintain the integrity of the competition and to hold accountable athletes, trainers, grooms and officials who fail to meet the high standards of behavior that are expected and defined in the FEI Rules and Regulations.

Under the FEI rules for Endurance, FEI officials have significant authority to intervene in a competition where horse welfare is threatened. Examples of such intervention, to be taken with the agreement of the Organising Committee Ground Jury, Technical Delegate and the Veterinary Commission, are:

- Reducing the presentation time between the loops as well as the final presentation time (example 15 minutes);
- Lowering the maximum heart rate (example 60bpm);
- Increase the hold times;
- Reducing the minimum speed
- Reducing the length of the competition.

Exceptional circumstances and or catastrophic events are additional areas where FEI officials are authorised to intervene.

We remind you that all it takes for a serious and damaging incident to occur is for one athlete to ride his/her horse beyond its capacity to perform or one official to turn a blind eye to rule violations or one veterinary official not to recommend the removal of a horse from competition suffering from lameness or metabolic issues. The consequences of such an action could compromise the welfare of the horse and destroy the integrity of the competition and irreversibly harm our sport.

Fortunately the need for significant intervention by officials in the conduct of the competition occurs infrequently when officials place horse welfare first, understand their role and responsibilities and communicate with their colleagues throughout the competition.

The FEI fully supports you in the work that you do on behalf of our sport and we thank you for your commitment to our sport

Yours Sincerely,



Brian Sheahan
Chair Endurance
Technical Committee



Manuel Bandeira de Mello
FEI Endurance Director