

### Session 6 – FEI Endurance Rules – Full revision

Proposals outlining the modifications to the FEI Endurance Rules that were undergoing full revision in 2023, were discussed during session 6 of the FEI Sports Forum 2023.

FEI Endurance Committee Chair Christian Lozano, Deputy Chair Doctor Sarah Coombs and FEI Endurance Director Christina Abu-Dayyeh presented the main changes proposed by the NFs, Stakeholders and the Endurance Technical Committee.

#### **a. Proposal to include a margin to the minimum weight allowed to be lost by Athletes during competitions (Article 805)**

The current system of minimum weights does not take into account the fact that Athletes can lose body weight during the competition. According to the proposal presented during this session, for all Events, if the Athlete is found to lose up to 1kg of their starting weight, the Combination will be allowed to continue. If, during the same competition, the same Athlete is found to be underweight a second time, the Combination will then be Disqualified.

Dr Ali Tweissi (UAE NF) asked if the weight loss happened after the last loop (i.e. at the finish line), what would the consequences be. The Chair of the Endurance Committee, Mr Christian Lozano, replied that this would be tolerated, considering the weight loss is within the 1kg allowed.

Dr Ignasi Casas Vaque (ESP NF) asked whether a kilogram or percentage tolerance would apply in this rule. He also mentioned that there used to be a margin of tolerance for weights and this did not work smoothly and was not applied properly. Finally, he proposed to introduce different rules for smaller CEIs and Championships. Christian Lozano replied that it is easier to control a 1kg tolerance on the ground by Officials and this method would give another chance to all Riders.

Mohammed Essa Al Adhab (UAE) highlighted that it is important to set limits as to how this rule is applied on the ground.

Quentin Simonet (FRA) mentioned that this rule is adding extra complexity to the existing rule.

Jean Michel Grimal (FRA) mentioned that it is difficult to weigh Riders during the Competition as the scale is not always placed close to where they come in from the loop. The FEI Endurance Director, Mrs Christina Abu-Dayyeh replied that this is an organisational matter and that the scale could be easily moved during the Competition. The movement of the scale on unlevelled ground also impacts weight readings which is why allowing a margin makes sense.

Finally, the Chair of the Endurance Committee clarified that further work on the wording would continue.

### **b. Proposal to extend the qualification period and its validity from 2 to 3 years (Articles 832.3 and 835.2)**

In order to alleviate the difficulties of Athletes living in countries where there are a few opportunities to qualify their Horses in CEN or CEI rides, proposal presented during the Endurance Rules session suggested the extension of the qualification period and its validity for Horses from two to three years. There were no comments from the audience regarding this proposal.

### **c. Proposal to increase of minimum age requirements for Horses for CEI1\* (Article 827)**

Due to the fact that many of the Arabian horses, which predominate in the sport of Endurance, do not reach physical maturity by the age of 6, the proposal to increase minimum age requirements for Horses from 6 to 7 years for CEI1\* (Article 827) was presented.

Patrizia Giacchero (ITA) highlighted the impact that this rule change would have on the breeders. She mentioned that this would mean that the breeder would have to keep the Horse for one more year in their stables. She questioned possibility of having 6 year old Horses participate in CEI1\* events with capped speed. Endurance Athletes' Representative, Sabrina Arnold replied that speed limit will not have the same impact on Horses that participate in rides with different conditions.

Dr Ignasi Casas Vaque (ESP NF) agreed with Mme Giacchero's idea of the speed limit. He also mentioned that different venues have different terrains and conditions. He gave an example that an 80 km ride in Florac (FRA) could be equal to 100km desert ride.

Jean Michel Grimal (FRA) and Quentin Simonet (FRA) mentioned that it is a good idea to keep the same speed limit for the first CEI1\* of 6 year old Horses as for the novice rides.

Dr Ghanem Al Hajiri (UAE NF) mentioned that it is important to conduct a study in order to provide more scientific-based feedback to this rule proposal.

Mohammed Essa Al Adhab (UAE) asked about the background of previously increasing the age of Horses from 5 to 6 years old.

The Deputy Chair of the FEI Endurance Committee, Dr Sarah Coombs emphasized that in the long run this rule proposal is beneficial for Horse Welfare. She also agreed to receive more data to study possible outcomes.

Finally, all agreed that changes should always be made to prioritise horse welfare but the representatives of some National Federations argued that modifications should occur only when supported by scientific data. The Deputy Chair of the FEI Endurance Committee appealed to all the NFs to share their research and data, which the FEI Endurance Committee and the FEI Veterinary Committee will eagerly review. The FEI Endurance Director reassured the delegates that both the FEI and the Committee would do their due diligence.

### **d. Correction of average loop speed trigger in relation to the consequences for repeated FTQ and/or DSQ designations with average speeds exceeding 20 km/hour (Article 837)**

The average speed referred to in this article was derived from research which was done before the previous Endurance full rule revision (2019). It was calculated based on the phase speed and not loop speed. However, this rule is applied to the Combination's average loop speed. In order to correct this inconsistency, the proposal to increase the average loop speed trigger from 20km/h to 21km/h was presented. There were no comments from the audience regarding this proposal.

### **e. Proposal to increase of Mandatory Out Of Competition Periods (Article 839)**

Proposal to revise the Mandatory Out of Competition Periods (MOOCP) (Article 839) in order to ensure that there is no link between adverse outcomes for Horses and insufficient recovery periods between competitions resulted in significant debate. Similarly to the proposal to increasing the minimum age of Horses for CEI1\* competitions, representatives of multiple NFs raised their concerns regarding the scientific research supporting this rule change proposal. The FEI Endurance Director confirmed that the necessary scientific data will be collected and duly analysed prior to making the decision in regard to the increase of MOOCP.

Dr Ghanem Al Hajiri (UAE NF) emphasized once again that it is important to get more statistics and conduct more studies. He also mentioned that Horses outside of competitions are the ones getting more injuries. Dr Al Hajiri also touched upon the fact that some regions have a shorter season, so with longer MOOCP they would need more time to qualify their Horses. The FEI Endurance Director mentioned that extending qualification window and validity period of qualifications would solve this issue.

Dr Coombs also confirmed that this proposal came from an NF as one of the ways to protect Horse Welfare.

### **f. Proposal to reinforce concept of Reserve Horses and number of Reserve Combinations allowed in CEIOs and Championships (Article 843.2)**

In order to avoid the confusion that occurred at the FEI Endurance World Championship 2021 in Pisa (ITA), and in order to address comments that were sent in by numerous NFs about the definite entries allowed in a Championship, the proposal to reinforce the concept of Reserve Combinations was presented during the session. There were no comments from the audience regarding this proposal.

### **g. Proposal to the addition of new elements to the Endurance Ranking System (Article 858 and Annex 4)**

In order to make the Endurance Ranking System more competition and to better reflect the achievements of all Athletes, Horses and Trainers, the proposal of full ranking system revision was presented. The Endurance Ranking points would be linked to the number of starters and finishers as well as the Bet Condition Awards.

Quentin Simonet (FRA) agreed that it is important to improve ranking system to make it more representative of Athletes' achievements. However, he mentioned that number of starters does not always guarantee success of the Competition/Championship.

### **h. Proposal to expand on the Badges of Honour system to recognize Athlete's achievements (Article 860)**

In order to reward a wider range of positive achievements of Horses and Athletes, it is proposed to expand the Badges of Honour system to recognize various achievements, and reward, in particular, the longevity of a successful partnership.

The proposal covers:

- Recognition of Combinations that have had a long career together;
- Recognition of consecutive successful completions;
- Recognition for multiple Best Condition awards received by Athletes, Horses and combinations; and,
- Recognition for Combinations who compete successfully on varied types of terrain (example: mountain, desert, forest).

There were no comments from the audience regarding this proposal.

### **i. Proposal to review maximum Trainer Penalty Points (Article 864)**

The fact that many Trainers that train a large number of Horses which are active increases the likelihood of these Trainers reaching the 100 point maximum (which triggers the two-month suspension). The FEI Endurance Department and the Technical Committee are looking into different ways to address this point, including a rewards system for successful completions in the Trainer ranking system.

Dr Ghanem Al Hajiri (UAE NF) agreed with the rewards system and balancing out the possibility of receiving penalty points.

### **j. Review of Warning Cards system (Article 865) – proposal to remove Incorrect Behaviour Card**

The FEI Endurance Department received a lot of feedback from Officials that they found the consequences of the Incorrect Behaviour Card too harsh and were often reluctant to use it. Therefore, there is a proposal to go back to the previous system (being that if a Person Responsible (PR) receives two Yellow Warning Cards, this results in a two-month suspension) and re-align with other disciplines by eliminating the Incorrect Behaviour Card and using the Yellow Warning Card system for incorrect behaviour again. There were no comments from the audience regarding this proposal.

### **k. Proposal to make clarifications regarding the reexamination procedure after third (or subsequent) FTQ-GA (Annex 7)**

In order to cover cases where a Horse who has three (or subsequent) FTQ-GA loses its CEI qualifications and where Horses want to train on shorter distances before resuming their CEI careers, the proposed change is applied to Annex 7 indicating that *'Once the Horse has undergone the required Mandatory Out of Competition Period (MOOCP) of 180 days it may*

*enter in CEN rides subject to normal veterinary control and subsequently enter a CEI ride. At that CEI ride, the Horse must undergo an Annex 7 inspection, and should the Horse successfully complete the ride, the flag from the Horse's profile on the FEI database will be removed.'*

Andrea White (ITA NF) requested to clarify the procedure written out in Annex 7. She also wondered if FTQ-GA that happen in National (CEN) Competitions can be reflected on the Horse's profile on the FEI Database.

Mahmoud Zyoud (UAE NF) agreed with Andrea White (ITA NF) and inquired about the display on the FEI Database if an FTQ-GA is in both CEN and CEI rides.

The FEI Endurance Director clarified that further work on the wording and details on the database display would be discussed with the FEI Technology and Sports Services Department.

### **I. Creation of a new committee to study the current Vet Gate Protocol and ways to better protect Horses during an event**

The procedures for Vet Gate protocols are currently under review by a working group comprising members of the Endurance Technical Committee and the Veterinary Committee.

Dr Elsayed Elrefaei (UAE) mentioned that he previously shared multiple comments regarding the vet gate protocol with the FEI Veterinary Department Director, Dr Göran Akerström. Dr Elrefaei also mentioned that he thinks that there should be a maximum heart-rate parameter in the compulsory re-examination (for example, between 32 and 56 bpm).

Jean Michel Grimal (FRA) mentioned that heart rate being equal to 64 bpm is enough for the re-exam. He mentioned that is important to collect more information on-site during the event (presentation time vs recovery time) to fully analyse Horse's condition.

Mohammed Essa Al Adhab (UAE) mentioned that the recently introduced two-phase vet inspection improves the vet gate protocol and this gives more control over Horses.

### **m. Proposal to differentiate between CEI2\* Minor and CEI2\* Regular in relation to the Star Level of Events (CIMs)**

In order to address the hardships that some National Federations have reported as a result of removing the CEI2\* from the CIM category, there is a proposal to re-instate the CEI2\* as a CIM provided that it meets certain criteria that will be set out in the FEI Endurance Rules (subject to approval at the FEI General Assembly 2023). It is expected that the majority of current CEI2\* will meet the criteria to be considered as a CIM.

Sabrina Ibanez (FEI Secretary General) emphasized that consequences for those events that are not organized under the relevant criteria need to be very clearly identified.

Ingmar De Vos (FEI President) agreed with this proposal, as in his view this would facilitate CEI2\* organization from a cost perspective. However, he proposed to make the criteria for CEI2\* that will be categorized as a CIM more clear and precise in the rules.

**n. Proposal for Horses in poor metabolic condition to be sent directly to the Veterinary Clinic (addition to Article 816.6)**

In an effort to provide immediate care to Horses who present with poor metabolic conditions, there is a proposal to add a provision to Article 816.6 Heart Rate Assessment that would allow the member of the Veterinary Commission – after having identified a Horse in poor metabolic condition – to send the Horse immediately to the treatment clinic without further delay.

Dr Ali Tweissi (UAE NF) inquired if a panel of three veterinarians would be requested to eliminate/send the Horse that is in poor metabolic condition to the clinic. Dr Coombs replied that this rule proposal allows the veterinarian to send the Horse to the clinic should its metabolic condition be poor without the need of doing the vote.

**o. Proposal for all Horses entering Vet Gate 2 and onwards, with more than 10 minutes recovery time to pass a compulsory re-inspection before being permitted to start the next Loop (Article 816.6.5)**

Intending to further strengthen the veterinary assessment for Horses who are having difficulty recovering after a loop, the proposal is to change the current rule so that all Horses who enter the Vet Gate with more than 10 minutes recovery time must pass a compulsory re-inspection before going out on the next loop. This proposed change would apply from the second Vet Gate onwards.

Jean Michel Grimal (FRA) proposed to apply this rule at first vet gate and onwards. Dr Coombs replied that Horse's adrenaline is still high at that point, therefore, the proposal is to apply this rule at second vet gate and onwards.

Dr Coombs finalized by mentioned that Article 816.6.5 is being removed based on the fact that it was hard to implement it on the ground.

**p. Addition of Disqualification reason for Horses presenting to the Vetting Area 'with Late Presentation' (Article 816.6.8)**

The proposal to introduce a new Disqualification reason to penalize the late presentation of Horses to the Veterinary Commission puts a label on an existing problem where the Horse is intentionally delayed in presenting to the Veterinary Commission which can impact Horse Welfare. This Disqualification reason will generate 10 penalty points for Athletes and Trainers. There were no comments from the audience regarding this proposal.

### **q. Proposal to increase the minimum Hold Time for loops between 20 and 29km from 20 to 30 minutes (Article 816.8.1)**

In order to allow adequate time for the Horse to rest, the following proposal came from one of the NFs and the FEI, which is to increase the minimum Hold Time for loops between 20 and 29km from 20 to 30 minutes. There were no comments from the audience regarding this proposal.

### **Q & A**

Quentin Simonet (FRA) shared following comments during the Q&A Session:

- He stressed the fact that there are still Horse fatalities at the Championship level and asked that such cases be shared with the community in order to have the full picture of the situation.
- He emphasized the importance to harmonize Horses arrivals at the venue at Championships.
- It was crucial that all IT monitors / machines are working well during Events.
- He mentioned that sanctions system in Endurance should be reviewed. The FEI Legal Director, Mikael Rentsch replied that NFs were previously not in favour of that. He also mentioned that this is a matter for next year's full revision of Anti-Doping rules.
- Finally, he proposed to have a clarification and strengthening of the requirements to host an FEI Championship.

Mme Giacchero (ITA) wondered if there would be a relaxation in the qualification requirements for CEI2\* Championships, lowering Combination rides requirement from two to one. Christian Lozano replied that this relaxation would apply only for Elite Riders.

Rocio Echeverri (CRC NF) raised following points:

1. She mentioned that due to qualification system being too difficult, riders currently do not aspire to anything. The FEI Endurance Director replied that qualifications were already relaxed last year and increase of validity of the qualifications & extension of the window to qualify will alleviate these issues.
2. Rocio Echeverri encouraged NFs give their feedback on the proposed rules changes by 16 August 2023.
3. Finally, she mentioned that, as an Official, she felt it is important to encourage people that are doing well and not only focus on cheating. Biggest concern she has is the use of unauthorized medications on the Field of Play. Dr Göran Akerström mentioned that Hyposensitivity control system (HSC) is in place to control unauthorized medications (he highlighted that there are less Catastrophic Injuries in events where HSC present). He also added that the FEI is looking at ways to test Horse's saliva at Events and in the labs to control the use of unauthorized medications.

Dr Ali Tweissi (UAE NF) asked if the FEI was planning to introduce any series to keep Athletes motivated and to encourage them to participate in more events that are different. The FEI Endurance Director replied that the FEI is looking into this.

Jean Michel Grimal (FRA) inquired if it was possible to allow successful completion of CEI1\* or CEI2\* as Combination in order to compete together in CEI3\* in Article 834.2. The Chair of the Endurance Committee confirmed that this will be part of the rule change proposals.

Jean Michel Grimal (FRA) also inquired if it was possible to add information regarding Annex 7 and speed restriction in the FEI HorseApp. The FEI Endurance Director replied that this will be discussed with the FEI Technology and Sports Services Department.