

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – SESSION 1 – EQUINE ETHICS & WELLBEING COMMISSION FINAL REPORT AND PROPOSED ACTION PLAN

The FEI Secretary General and Session moderator, Sabrina Ibáñez, opened the session and presented the speakers alongside her: FEI Legal Director, Mikael Rentsch and FEI Veterinary Director, Göran Åkerström.

Unfortunately, Malin Axel Nilson, PhD in ethology and animal science from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala, was unable to attend. The FEI Secretary General thanked Malin Axel-Nilsson for her hard work and her very significant contribution to the development of the action plan.

Setting the Scene

In her introduction, the FEI Secretary General reminded participants that the whole equestrian community share a collective responsibility and commitment to ensuring that everyone involved with sport horses recognises and upholds their responsibility for horse welfare.

In addition to the different rules and processes that the FEI is implementing over the years to ensure horse welfare, and in response to growing concerns, the FEI proactively was the first to establishing an independent Commission to address societal and equestrian community concerns over horse welfare.

Equine Ethics & Wellbeing Commission

The [Equine Ethics & Wellbeing Commission](#), whose work spanned an 18-month period, was tasked to create a blueprint to future-proof equestrian sports, and provide independent advice and recommendations to the FEI to ensure equine welfare is safeguarded through ethical, evidence-based policy and practices.

Commission's work included (but not only) conducting [Equestrian and public surveys](#) in different parts of the world. One Survey with the Equestrian Community was answered by approximately 28,000 respondents from 116 countries; another Survey, run by an external company and this time aimed at the general public targeted 14 countries, and received responses from 1,000 respondents in each of the targeted countries.

Equine Ethics & Wellbeing Commission Final Report

Commission's Final Report - A Good Life for Horses - was presented to the Board on 18 November 2023 and the FEI took ownership of it with the aim of translating it into action.

The Report outlined 30 recommendations divided into six priority areas of focus: 1) training and riding, tack and equipment; 2) recognising physical and emotional stress; 3) accountability, enforcement and knowledge; 4) the other 23 hours (the life of horses outside of competition); 5) competitive drive; 6) not fit to compete or masking health problems).

The Commission further outlined a suggested approach urging the FEI to be a Leader; be Trusted; be Transparent; be Proactive; and be Accountable, and had proposed tools for action.

The FEI Equine Welfare Strategy

The different elements of the Commission's Final Report helped to create the FEI Welfare Strategy, "A Good Life For Horses", and to define the Welfare Vision and Welfare Mission which are defined as follows:

Welfare Vision: *To acknowledge and respect the natural needs of horses within the context of international equestrian sports.*

Welfare Mission: *To acknowledge and respect the natural needs of horses within the context of international equestrian sports. If necessary, we apply sanctions to ensure good horse welfare with the overall mission to lead, drive and develop equestrian sport globally*

Tools to deliver the FEI Equine Welfare Strategy

FEI Secretary General explained that two essential tools for action to deliver the FEI Equine Welfare Strategy are:

- The **Five Domain** model, which had been updated in 2020 to achieve and measure horse welfare through: 1) nutrition, 2) physical environment, 3) health and fitness, 4) interactions with the environment, with other horses and with humans, and 5) positive mental state (which equals good welfare). This model will be further defined by the FEI for sport horses; and
- The **Six Enablers** (Evidence, Education, Engagement, Effective Regulations, Enforcement and Empowerment) which will allow the actions to be effectively planned and implemented.

The Matrix

The FEI Secretary General further explained that the initially identified action points were introduced into a Matrix identifying: what actions are already put in place by FEI, what possible future actions could be taken and ways for the FEI to support and collaborate with the National Federations and other official stakeholder groups.

The FEI Veterinary and Legal Directors presented the main elements of this Matrix and provided details for some of the key proposed actions, including a broader approach to reviewing tack and equipment; resuming scientific research on hyperflexion and rollkur; and developing guidelines, principles, rules and registration of trainers across the disciplines to ensure ethical training methods. Other key projects discussed in detail were the development of harmonised post mortem reporting protocols in national events with the support of the NFs; updating the FEI Code of Conduct for the Welfare of the Horse in collaboration with World Horse Welfare; strengthening the awareness and use of the FEI Equestrian Charter, and the implementation of an Out of Competition Testing Programme.

The FEI Secretary General emphasised that an in-depth Communications strategy was also to be developed and will be presented at a special session at the FEI General Assembly 2024 in Oman in November.

Delegates Feedback

The work accomplished by the FEI to date was commended by delegates, many of whom expressed valuable suggestions. The importance of education, information and communication was highlighted on several occasions. The need to consult closely with

athletes, trainers and Officials was also raised, and there were calls to celebrate examples of good horse welfare. Several NF representatives shared positive experiences of implementing the Equestrian Charter in their national rules.

The FEI Secretary General stressed that the FEI Welfare Vision and Mission would inform all FEI activities going forward.

She commended participants to consult the presentation used during the Session, urging Sports Forum participants and the community as a whole to provide their feedback by 15 May to an email especially created for this purpose welfare@fei.org. This will be used as part of developing a detailed action plan to be presented at this year's FEI General Assembly.

The Recording of the full Session, including all delegates interventions can be watch on replay [here](#).