

2023 Eventing NSOs Seminar

A total of **50 Safety Officers and NF Representatives** from 23 countries (AUT, BEL, CAN, CZE, DEN, ESP, FIN, FRA, GBR, GER, HKG, IRL, ITA, JPN, NED, NZL, POL, POR, SUI, SWE, THA, USA) (see participants list) attended the Eventing NSOs Seminar, which followed the FEI Eventing Forum at Haras de Jardy in Paris (FRA) on Sunday 22 January 2023.

The following NFs were not represented by their NSO or a NF Representative during the NSO Seminar: AUS, ARG, BLR, BRA, BUL, CHI, COL, ECU, EST, GUA, HON, HUN, IND, MEX, NAM, NOR, PUR, RSA, ROU, RUS, SVK, UKR, URU, VEN, ZIM.

Please note that as from 2023, the attendance by the NSO (or a NF representative) of the yearly FEI Risk Management (NSO) Seminar is compulsory for NFs organising Eventing Events, as mentioned in Article 500.2.3 of the 2023 Eventing Rules. We kindly ask those that didn't attend the in-person Seminar, to view the "replay" videos available on the [FEI website](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Falls on the flat to be examined to understand the contributing factors as they represented approximately 20 % of all falls
2. The "style" competitions Rules to be sent to the FEI HQ and distributed to all NFs
3. NFs to provide the number of annual Horse fatalities in the National Statistics

Welcome – Introduction

The Chair of the Eventing Committee, David O'Connor welcomed the NSOs and NF Representatives and thanked them for attending the NSO Seminar.

Geoff Sinclair, Risk Management Steering Group (RMSG) Chairman thanked all the National Federations for attending and sending their National statistics.

National Statistics

Annex I

The National Statistics were presented (*Annex I*). The number of competitions, starters and falls were compared for NFs with more than 6,500 starters, less than 6,500 and less than 1,000 starters in 2022. In most countries, the number of starters were not back to the pre-Covid numbers.

This was felt to be related to cost implications, membership, veterinary fees, medical coverage and entry fees which had all increased in many nations causing reduction of members and starters. The number of starters at FEI competitions had increased which could suggest that Athletes enter more FEI events rather than National events.

When comparing the horse falls (as a percentage of starters), the National rates were always lower than the FEI percentage. It could be related to the levels being different, competitiveness, athlete being under pressure, etc.

Where the horse falls happened on the course was discussed. A higher number of horse falls occurred on the last third of Long format courses. The type of fences used on the last third was very important especially for courses with a high intensity around the 8 minutes marker. It was suggested to have more fences with frangible device rather than only on the technical parts of the course.

The reporting of falls on the flat had improved and showed that approximately 20% of the falls were not related to a XC fence. It was recommended to further investigate the causes of such falls.

National Federations were asked to report back in their National Statistics the number of horse fatalities at events.

National Federations presentations

Austria – Katrin Eichinger-Kniely, AUT NSO

Annex II

The national statistics showed that only 106 competitions were held in 2022 compared to 149 in 2016. A total of 1,557 starters in 2022 compared to 2,085 in 2018.

A total of 54 rider falls and 3 horse falls were reported in 2022 compared to 62 rider falls and 6 horse falls in 2021.

In the fall statistics for 2022, 4 riders had 2 falls, and the 3 horse falls all occurred on the flat.

No injured horses but one fatality when horse broke fetlock while cantering between fences.

There were 15 rider falls on the flat, 28% of all falls during the 2022 season, and all related to riders being "out of balance". It was mentioned that these statistics were not good, riders were not educated enough and National Federation needed to do something about it.

David O'Connor mentioned that number of falls on the flat were high, the RMSG believed sanctions should also be given for this type of fall.

Belgium – Kristof Verlinden, BEL NSO

Annex III

In Belgium, it was difficult to obtain clear statistics as the sport of Eventing was run by three different regional Federations - LRV, Paardensport and LEWB, all three had different sets of rules, not only related to the sport but also regarding Medical and Veterinary checks after a fall and starting Cross Country after a fall in Show Jumping. This needed to be changed to have similar rules at least as from 1m05 level.

There was no official reporting as there was no TD, CD or Ground Jury and certain events were mainly run by people who didn't have much experience in Eventing.

The rules of the three regional Federations needed to be aligned, however, there was not much appetite from the riders who competed under all three different sets of rules, to address this issue.

The injury reporting was a challenge and needed to be addressed. The details of an athlete's medical incident were not shared between the regional federations, an athlete who suffered a concussion the previous weekend was allowed to start in another region the following weekend.

The first priority was to avoid horses/riders starting unfit. More qualified Officials were needed, therefore, training for rural Course Designers and Stewards was organised.

The recommendation to align the three regional federations were related to Rules, Reporting formats, Medical incident reporting, Statistics, Medical and Veterinary suspension to avoid starting unfit and appointing officials trained to the level.

Spain – Felicísimo Aguado Arroyo, ESP NSO

Annex IV

The Spanish statistics showed that in 2022, the highest number of starters was recorded since 2016, with a total of 2,143 compared to 1,544 in 2016.

229 competitions were organized in 2022, which was the largest number ever. The increase was mainly due to competitions being split to have sections for Young riders, Young Horses, regional athletes, etc.

In 2022, the number of falls had decreased from 3.29% in 2021 to 2.61%. No serious injuries were reported. The data collection had improved for the fall reporting.

Frangible devices were currently used in national competitions and the use will be extended to regional competitions.

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A new procedure to communicate sanctions to athletes had been implemented, based on the FEI's system, the Officials sent the sanctions to the NF just after the competition to allow the National Federation to notify Athletes in a timely manner.

Seminars and courses for Officials were organized, risk management matters were communicated, however, Coaches had no clear awareness of safety matters especially at pony and amateur level.

Medical coverage at events was of a high standard level although there was no Medical Committee in the Federation, and it was felt it should be implemented.

Finland – Seppo Laine, FIN NF Representative

Annex V

The Eventing sport was not very big in Finland due to the long winter season which did not allow any competitions to be organised during that season.

In 2022, 1,444 starters split in three categories, 10% national, 44.7% regional, 45.3% club.

The highest number of competitors rode at 80cm level, (487 starters in 2022), the highest level was CCN3* with only 12 athletes riding at that level in 2022.

Percentage of falls on starters in 2022 was 2.21 %, (32 falls for 1,444 starters), 12 rider falls and 2 horse falls at 80cm, 7 riders falls and 1 horse fall at 90cm, 8 rider falls and no horse falls at CCN1* and 1 horse fall and 1 rider fall at CCN2*.

The figures showed that the number of lower level starters had increased, however, there was a lack of international competitions and national 2* level and above, with only one FEI Competition organized.

In 2023, the situation should be improved with the Nordic Baltic Championships taking place in Finland as well as a new series created with neighboring countries Sweden and Estonia.

Finland has similar rules to the FEI in regards to sanctions and horse welfare rules.

Athletes participating in national competitions in other countries she/he must have MER result/s according to the rules of that country. When athletes are entered for their first CCI competition, they must obtain the approval of the national team coach.

MERs:

- For CCI1* level, Athletes must have 2 MER results from 100 cm.
- For CCI2* level, Athletes must have 2 MER results CCN2* or one CCN2* and one CCI1*.

It was recommended to appoint at lower level events, an Athlete's representative to help beginners (XC walk, warming up/cooling down) as they often don't have a trainer/coach.

Organisers were encouraged to give a special XC style prize, 1-3 riders will be awarded for the most skillful riding in XC.

At lower level, alternative competitions were held for young horses and beginners. The XC test was at 60 -100 cm, a collegial assessment (style competition) was done by Judges, experienced Riders or National TDs.

A Seminar was organized one or twice per year in Finland with an experienced TD, CD or trainer from abroad to educate the Officials. An annual seminar/courses for promotion/maintenance for all national officials was also held.

Federation support for FEI officials taking part in FEI education/seminar/courses (Course fee, flights and accommodation)

Event Organisers received support to acquire frangible technology for their events.

Questions:

Q: How many countries organize "style" competitions?

A: This type of competition was organized by several National Federations including GER, SWE, FIN, NZL, ITA, POL, CZE.

In Germany most style prizes were awarded in competitions up to 1m level and Young Horses competitions.

In Sweden and Denmark the "Sugar Cup" was organized for children at 60cm level, in addition, different style competitions for riders and horses were held at competitions up to 1m.

Delegates from those countries, including Finland, were asked to send the rules for "style" competitions to FEI HQ to be circulated to the other National Federations.

France – Laurent Bousquet, FRA National Representative

Annex VI

The French Federation followed the FEI Rules.

The National Statistics were presented. The starters were divided per category, the "pro" represented 5 % of starters, "amateur" 27%, "prepa" 1%, "club" 39% and "pony" 27%.

The 2022 number of competitions were not back at the same numbers as before the Covid pandemic, however, it was expected to increase in 2023.

The FRA NF created a safety steering group in 2019 to establish a security management system to develop concrete lines of work with the aim of improving Eventing safety. This led to several meetings and seminars as well as the production of a video by Professor Fournier, in 2020, about head trauma and its management as well as investigating helmets and protective equipment.

Eventing Rules were modified and a FFE manual for course designers was created. A fall report database was also created.

A "spotters" system on the XC was implemented. 60 experienced Athletes, Coaches, Officials were part of this group. It had been used for 2 years, however, it was not very conclusive as the process to stop an athlete was too slow. It was reviewed to allow the "spotters" to stop an athlete on XC without having to radio the Ground Jury / TD to obtain the approval. It should improve the efficiency of the system. "Spotters" were also used to assist the judges on training areas and XC courses.

A Course Designer review system was also set up to alert CDs with a + 3% of falls and/or 15% of combinations eliminated on their XC.

A "Paddock Steward Check List" was created to help the Stewards check the tack equipment, horse's general condition, athletes' equipment, etc.

Great Britain – Helen West, GBR National Representative

Annex VII

Frangible Devices

British Eventing has been doing numerous testing days of frangible fences, at Burghley using the BE impact tester.

The BE Reverse pin was being tested to obtain approval for use on front rails as currently it was approved only for back rails.

Dave Vos, RMSG Member, mentioned that the 40 kg kettlebell impactor, mentioned in the updated FEI standard for frangible device, replicated more a forelimb movement and weight of a horse rather than the BE impactor which would replicate a chest-on impact.

Whip rule

The whip rule had been changed for 2023, the use of padded whips were now compulsory for all the jumping phases. A welfare panel will be formed in the spring of this year to study other changes which could be implemented in 2024 such as not being able to use the whip behind the saddle or not removing the hand from the rein to use the whip. Were there any other Federations looking at the whip rules was asked.

Denmark NSO mentioned that their whip rule had been changed to only allow riders to use the whip 3 times during the whole course, however, it was difficult to monitor but did sent a signal to the riders that they were monitored on how they use their whip.

Medical

BE we looking at giving the Chief Medical Officer the power to stand riders down, similar to what was done in horse-racing. An incident which happened recently where a rider was concussed after a fall and back to competition too soon despite the automatic 21-day suspension helped identify a loophole, as high performance athletes could be signed back on before the end of the suspension, this should be looked at.

Germany – Philine Ganders-Meyer, GER NSO*Annex VIII***MIM Frangible Devices**

Since 2015, approximately 1,050 MIM systems have been distributed free of charge, through a funding system, to the Organisers and training centers. It was not compulsory to use frangible devices at National Competitions but was strongly encouraged.

A test on different fences fitted with MIM systems using the kettlebell will be undertaken in 2023 with Karl-Heinz Nothofer, FEI Level 2 Course Designer.

National Statistics

The German fall report form collected the type of fall detailing if it was a fall on flat, fall on flat while approaching the fence or on landing, rider fall whilst jumping a fence and other rider falls.

It was noted that only 20% of falls were related to jumping a fence, slightly more in the higher levels and less in the lower levels. A lot could be done to change the profile of fences however, if the falls were not related to a fence, other aspects needed to be considered.

Education

8 Short videos for social media (& influencers) about Safe Cross Country riding had been developed on the seat of the rider, how to educate horses, approaching fences, how to get fit and prepare for an event, etc. were available on the GER NF [website](#).

3 Workout videos of 15-20 minutes each were also created to help athletes train for a more balanced, stronger and safer rider's XC position.

Helmets

A computed tomography of riding helmets after accidents was done by a Doctor, using CT scans to examine the damage. The results were not yet available but the report would be presented when available.

Air vests

The second airbag vest workshop was planned to take place in February 2023. HitAir, USG Helite, Free jump, etc. air vests would be tested and a discussion would take place with the product managers. The testing session with Athletes simulating a fall will help understand how they work, the comfort, sizes, inflating speed, etc.

Style competitions

A concept for amateurs was tried in 2022, where the horse obtained the marks rather than the athlete.

Netherlands – Gert Naber, NED NSO*Annex IX***Statistics**

There were 150,000 members competing in horse sport in The Netherlands but the number in Eventing was small. 50% competed in Dressage, 40% in Jumping and the last 10% were divided between other equestrian activities including Driving and Eventing.

The fall rates in Eventing had increased in 2022, with more falls on the flat.

3 horse fatalities were reported, 2 in Driving 4-in-Hand Marathon, 1 in Jumping when horse broke a leg. None in Eventing and no falls resulted in serious injuries.

Dutch breakable pole

The pole was developed in 2001 and used in national competitions. It was made of cardboard with a special coating, produced under ISO standards to ensure it broke at a defined horse impact. It was tested to meet the FEI standard, however, it did not pass the testing as it did not fulfill the requirement of having an indicator when the pole should be replaced. It was widely used in national competitions as it was positive for horse welfare and the image of the sport.

MIM Frangible devices

MIM devices were free of charge for national event Organisers and were compulsory in 1m and 1.10m competitions. The costs of MIM-devices were paid by the "Eventing Safety Fund" for which Riders paid €2.50 per start.

Other topics

A manual for national course designing based on FEI guidelines had been published along with a manual for frangible/deformable fences.

In 2023, the aim was to make the Eventing world more aware of social license by using good pictures, increasing the attention for safe Cross-Country designing in the training of CDs and TDs and increase the rider responsibility.

Poland – Henryk Swiecicki, POL NSO*Annex X*

A total of 11 international events will be organized in 2023 including 10 at CCI4*-S level and 5 at CCI4*-L. The main venues included Strzegom, Baborówko and Sopot.

In 2022, it was the first time that Poland won the Nations Cup which had big influence on the Eventing Community.

An FEI Olympic Qualification Event for Group C was planned at Baborówko in May 2023.

Statistics

In 2023, the total number of starters was 1,961, total number of competitions from 90cm to 1.10m was 91. 69 total falls were recorded of which 7 horse falls.

Qualifications

The MERs requirements for national levels (CNC1* to CNC3*) was shown, they had to be obtained as a combination in the current or previous two years.

Frangible devices

In national competitions, there were not many fences fitted with frangible devices and this needed to be improved.

Rules

In CNC 70/80/90/100, fast riding was penalized with 1 penalty point for every second under 20 seconds below optimum time.

Reverse qualifications were applied according to FEI rules, riders needed one MER to come back after reverse qualification.

Other topics

At present, children could start competing at 11 years old. There was one-day cross-country events for children and amateurs with fences from 30-70cms designed to promote and educate while positively marketing the sport.

It was felt that a new Eventing formula should be found, it could maybe be done with the Arena Eventing concept as it provided shorter entertainment. Of course classic Eventing should stage but we needed to talk about the future.

Questions / Comments

David O'Connor mentioned that one new concept was "Urban Eventing", indoor, arena competitions for countries around the world and designed to be held in the area of a Polo field.

Africa, Asia and South America would be using this concept in 2023. Urban Eventing could have potential as an entertainment product, staged in the middle of cities in places like Central Park (New York).

Sweden – Lars Christensson, SWE NSO

Risk management was the key to the Eventing sport.

In Sweden, trainers needed to have a license to teach XC. Each rider had to be signed off to do the first level (90 cm) and again before going 2 Star level. Before going outside Scandinavia, the Federation's approval was required. A strong recommendation was also that athletes needed a result with less than 45 penalties at the level, at a national event.

For 12 years, a rule was in place restricting Athletes with more than 16 penalties in the Jumping test (before XC) taking part in the Cross Country test.

MIM frangible devices were widely used in Sweden as well as compulsory groundlines and sloped profile fences.

The education of trainers was an ongoing development additional XC modules were recently added. Athletes were encouraged to do more XC training/schooling. The challenge was to attract young people into the sport, Showjumping was a much bigger sport and we have to compete with that.

The big indoor show in Stockholm had a great format (Arena Eventing) with a qualifier on Thursday and another Eventing event on Sunday after the Jumping. It might have been expected that the crowd would have gone, but instead there was a one-hour fantastic show with 14,000 spectators and primetime TV - everybody was happy and it was great promotion for our sport. Looking into different formats was needed to attract more riders and then lead them into the classical sport.

USA – Jonathan Holling, USA NSO*Annex XI*

The MERs were reviewed in 2022 by the Cross Country Committee. Experienced Athletes were asked how many events they competed at before moving up a level. Most Athletes did between 10 to 15 events. The initial proposal put forward to the Committee was 15. This was reduced to 10 after discussions and the final decision was 6 MERs within a 4 year period of time, 1 of which had to be within 12 months with no more than 45 dressage penalties, no cross-country jumping penalties and a maximum of 75 seconds time penalties and no more than 16 penalties in showjumping. 16 penalties or more in showjumping restricted the athletes from starting the Cross Country test or resulted in a compulsory retirement if the Jumping test took place after the Cross Country.

The Instructor Certification Program was reviewed in 2022, it was not mandatory but was a great program. A workshop was organized on Florida beginning of January 2023 which was a success.

The Virginia Tech helmet research was ongoing.

Frangible devices were compulsory on oxers at training level (1m).

At Beginner and Novice levels (below 1 meter), remounting after a fall on XC was allowed, this was changed and now athletes are eliminated.

The frangible device program started just before the Covid pandemic following a serious fall in Florida. The Eventing Community in USA were asked to give contributions to fund frangible devices. The goal set was \$ 500,000 which was attained. OCs were given \$15,000 grants to subsidize the costs of building material. The initial phase tackled Table fence types. The second phase expanded to Oxers, Gate & Walls, BE Reverse pin and Tables. Phase three expanded to more levels and skinny fences and Corners.

Many fences were now fitted with frangible devices and the USEF was looking at making frangible devices compulsory on all Table fences.

Conclusions

Geoff Sinclair mentioned that NSOs were the heartbeat in each country of what the FEI was trying to implement. NSOs had a big impact on the sport in the country not only for Risk Management related matters but also for how the sport could evolve.

It was now compulsory and very important for NSOs or a NF Representative to attend NSO Seminars and all NFs were encouraged to attend.

The attendees were thanked for their participation which was very valuable.

David O'Connor thanked all of the attendees for their collaboration, exchange of ideas, and for getting the community together to learn and promote for the future of the sport.