

**EQUINE ETHICS & WELLBEING COMMISSION  
RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE FEI**

Dear National Federations,  
Dear MOUs Stakeholders,

In the present Annex we share with you:

- The Recommendations that the independent Equine Ethics & Wellbeing Commission (EEWB Commission) put forward to the FEI Board;
- The Resolutions taken by the FEI Board at its Teleconference on 4 October regarding the EEWB Recommendations; and
- A number of EEWB Recommendations to be discussed at the FEI Session 1 on 12 November 2022 during the FEI General Assembly week in Cape Town (RSA).

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**(Updated 24 October 2022)**

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## A. EEWB RECOMMENDATIONS

During the EEWB Commission in-person meeting on 3 and 4 August 2022 at the FEI Headquarters in Lausanne (SUI) a number of Recommendations were discussed and agreed to be submitted to the FEI.

These Recommendations were initially defined by the EEWB Commission as “early Recommendations”, with the purpose of being implemented as speedily as possible by the FEI, ideally by the end of 2022.

The 6 EEWB Recommendations can be divided into:

- **Technical/Sport Recommendations:**
  1. Field of Play Regulations across FEI Disciplines;
  2. Double bridle not to be compulsory in Dressage’s Grand Prix;
  3. Spurs not to be compulsory in any FEI Discipline; and
  4. Tightness of Noseband to be harmonised across FEI Disciplines ideally with an FEI approved measuring device.
- **Research and Education:**
  5. Establishing an Education Focus Group to review existing horsemanship modules in FEI Campus and propose new ones as necessary; and
  6. Setting aside a research fund specifically to address evidence to underpin decisions that relate to Horse Welfare.

The 6 EEWB Commission Recommendations were submitted to the FEI Board at its Teleconference on 17 August 2022. At this Teleconference the FEI Board agreed:

- To share the 4 Technical/Sport Recommendations with the FEI Technical Committees for their feedback; and
- To ensure that the process and implementation timelines of these Recommendations:
  - a) follow a proper consultation process with the FEI National Federations and Stakeholders with whom the FEI has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU Stakeholders); and
  - b) Comply with the existing FEI Governance process.

On 18 August 2022 the FEI Discipline Directors were asked to share and discuss with the Technical Committees the 4 Technical/Sport Recommendations.

Simultaneously, the FEI Director Governance made an analysis of the existing FEI Rules concerning these Recommendations. This analysis was shared with the EEWB Commission at its Teleconference on 14 September 2022.

## B. FEI BOARD RESOLUTIONS ON 4 OCTOBER 2022

After having received the feedback from the FEI Technical Committees a final report was submitted to the FEI Board at its Teleconference on 4 October 2022.

At this Teleconference the FEI Board:

- Understood the reasons why the EEWB Commission want to implement these Recommendations as quickly as possible;
- Acknowledged that two of these Recommendations: a) double bridles not being compulsory in Dressage's Grand Prix, and; b) spurs not being compulsory in any FEI Discipline, provoked the reaction of 2 MOU Stakeholders, the International Dressage Riders Club (IDRC) and the International Dressage Trainers Club (IDTC), as explained by letter of 16 September 2022 addressed to the FEI Board and to the EEWB Commission (see [Appendix I](#)); and
- Underlined the importance of following a consultation process with the National Federations and MOU Stakeholders, particularly on the controversial topics.

Based on the above considerations the FEI Board accepted all 6 EEWB Recommendations and agreed the following:

- **Technical/Sport Recommendations:**

1. Field of Play Regulations Across Disciplines;
2. Double bridle not to be compulsory in Dressage's Grand Prix;
3. Spurs should not to be compulsory in any Discipline;

The FEI Board agreed to have a first discussion about these 3 Recommendations during the FEI Session 1 at the upcoming FEI General Assembly in Cape Town (RSA) on 12 November 2022<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, these Recommendations will be submitted to the National Federations and MOU Stakeholders on 14 October 2022, date by which the General Assembly agenda and related working documents must be made available to them (as per Article 2.2 of Annex 1 of the FEI Statutes).

4. Tightness of Noseband to be harmonised across Disciplines ideally with an FEI approved measuring device:

Mandate the FEI Headquarters to investigate the possibilities and come up with proposals for such a device and to harmonise the rules and methodology to measure tightness of nosebands at FEI Events.

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<sup>1</sup> See FEI General Assembly 2022 Timetable here: <https://inside.fei.org/fei/general-assembly/2022>

- **Research and Education:**

5. Establishing an Education Focus Group to review existing horsemanship modules in FEI Campus and propose new ones as necessary:

The FEI Board acknowledged the establishment by the EEWB Commission of an Education Working Group as part of the Commission's Terms of Reference.

6. Setting aside a research fund specifically to address evidence to underpin decisions that relate to Horse Welfare.

The FEI Board approved this research fund subject to:

- The amount to be approved as per the FEI Financial Policy; and
- The details on how this research fund is going to be used to be proposed by the EEWB Commission and approved by the FEI.

## C. TECHNICAL/SPORTS EEWB RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DISCUSSION AT FEI GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2022

### I. TECHNICAL/SPORTS RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. Field of play regulations across FEI Disciplines

##### - **EEWB Recommendation:**

*Include in the FEI General Regulations a rule to apply to all Disciplines which would allow the President of the Ground Jury (or their designee) to eliminate an Athlete/Horse combination while a round was ongoing if the President of the Ground Jury (or their designee) decided that it would be contrary to the principles of Horse Welfare to allow the combination to continue the round. The decision to eliminate was to be final and not subject to appeal or protest.*

##### - **Existing FEI Rules and FEI Technical Committees Feedback**

##### • **JUMPING:**

- A rule Proposal was submitted to National Federations and MOUs Stakeholders on 6 July 2022 to be voted on at the General Assembly 2022 as follows
  - Article 241.4: The President of the Ground Jury (or in the absence of the President of the Ground Jury from the Ground Jury box, the Ground Jury Member designated by the President of the Ground Jury to take over the running of the Competition in their absence) may, in their sole discretion, ring the bell (or instruct another Ground Jury member to ring the bell) to eliminate an Athlete/Horse combination while a round is ongoing if the President of the Ground Jury (or their designee) decides that it would be contrary to the principles of horse welfare to allow the combination to continue the round. The decision to eliminate is final and not subject to appeal or protest.

##### • **DRESSAGE:**

- Article 430.7.7. establishes that the Judge C can eliminate the Horse/Athlete combination if the performance is against the welfare of the Horse and/or shows abusive riding.

##### • **PARA DRESSAGE:**

- Currently there is no such a rule in the Para Dressage Rules. The Para Equestrian Committee supports the introduction of a similar Article 430.7.7 of the Dressage Rules in the Para Equestrian Rules.

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- **EVENTING:**
  - Articles 525 to 527 establishes that the Ground Jury shall have the right to eliminate an Athlete/Horse combination during Cross Country on principles of Horse welfare.
- **ENDURANCE:**
  - Currently there is no such a rule in the Endurance Rules. The Endurance Committee supports the introduction of this rule in the Endurance Rules.
- **VAULTING:**
  - Article 716.5.6. A bell is used by the Judge at A to signal the Athletes. It is used on the following occasions:
    - To give the signal to stop an Athlete or Test when the Horse shows any signs of irregularity or lameness, is out of control or dangerous to the Vaulters.
- **DRIVING:**
  - Currently there is no such a rule in the Driving Rules. The Driving Committee supports the introduction of this rule in the Driving Rules.

## 2. Double bridle not to be compulsory in Dressage's Grand Prix

### - Existing FEI Rules and FEI Technical Committees Feedback

- **DRESSAGE:**
  - The Dressage Committee discussed this point at its Teleconference on 20 September 2022 and highlighted that in the current Dressage Rules the Double Bridle is optional up to CDI2\* level but is mandatory in CDI3\* and up. This change, which was introduced in 2019<sup>2</sup>, reflects a progression in the level of skills of the Athlete and training of the Horse from low and medium level to the highest level of performance and therefore are in favour of maintaining the Double Bridle compulsory at Grand Prix Level.
- **PARA DRESSAGE:**
  - It is optional at all levels.
- **EVENTING:**
  - Article 539: Not compulsory for Eventing Dressage or any other test.

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<sup>2</sup> In the past, the bridle was mandatory at all Senior CDI levels (CDI1\* to Senior Championships) in FEI Dressage Competitions. ~~The snaffle in CDI1\* and 2\*, i.e. choice to ride in a snaffle or a double bridle, was introduced in 2019.~~ **(Updated 24 October 2022)**

### 3. Spurs should not to be compulsory in any Discipline

#### - Existing FEI Rules and FEI Technical Committees Feedback

##### • JUMPING:

- Article 256. 1.11.1. Spurs are not compulsory.

##### • DRESSAGE:

- The Dressage Committee discussed this point on 20 September 2022. In the current Dressage Rules, spurts are compulsory in Dressage in all categories, except Ponies and Children.

The Dressage Committee would be ready to consider making the use of spurs optional, as the rules already allow the use of dummy spurs.

The Dressage Committee however would like to point out that using spurs allows for a use of refined and discreet aids and that allowing to ride without spurs may lead to images of strong use of legs on horses, which is not in line with the general principles of the discipline (discreet aids).

##### • PARA DRESSAGE:

- Article 8427.7. Spurs are optional.

##### • EVENTING:

- Articles 538.1.3. Spurs are optional for all three tests.

##### • ENDURANCE:

- Article 825.3.5: Spurs are prohibited at all times on the Field of Play and in training areas.

##### • VAULTING:

- Not applicable.

##### • DRIVING:

- Article 940: Spurs are not compulsory.

**APPENDIX I****INTERNATIONAL DRESSAGE RIDERS CLUB  
&  
INTERNATIONAL DRESSAGE TRAINERS CLUB LETTER  
TO FEI BOARD & EEWB COMMISSION  
16 September 2022**

Dear FEI Board Members and Members of the Equine Ethics and Wellbeing Commission,

We are writing to you on behalf of the International Dressage Riders Club and the International Dressage Trainers Club.

We understand that there is discussion around making the double bridle and spurs optional for Grand Prix dressage tests. We respectfully ask you to consider the input of the primary stakeholders regarding this proposal.

The opposition to the double bridle comes from a lack of understanding regarding how and why the double bridle is used.

Yes, the misuse of the double bridle can lead to force and injury, this is true with the snaffle or any other bit or even a hackamore. It is for this reason that there are restrictions on exactly which bits can be used e.g. length of shank, size of port etc. and there is close scrutiny of the horse at the end of any test. Any indication of injury to the horse results in elimination. This is a powerful incentive to ensure riders are judicious in their use of the reins.

The anatomy of the horse determines the effect of the bit (s) on the horse and the snaffle and curb bit function in different ways. The snaffle produces the flexion and exercises the muscles whereas the double bridle produces the bending of the haunches. It allows the shoulders to be framed to improve self-carriage and posture. This leads to a better balance of the horse and suppleness in exercises which require a high degree of collection. The double bridle enables the rider to improve the precision of his aids and to establish a refined communication with his horse. It literally 'lies in the hand' of the rider as the mobility and dexterity of the hands are the result of a correct seat and fine feeling. This evidences a high level of skill and training and why it is required at **top** level of competition. Proper use of the double bridle demonstrates the ultimate in expertise.

Similarly spurs give the rider the opportunity to give subtle and refined leg aids. And again, there are currently significant welfare measures in place; specifications regarding the type of spur e.g. length of branch, type of rowel etc., inspections after each test and the penalty for misuse is punished by elimination.

Therefore, we believe that neither the double bridle nor spurs represent a welfare risk to horses and there exist sufficient controls to ensure against their misuse.

To make these two pieces of equipment optional would have no positive impact on horse welfare.

While it might be tempting to make these items optional as a 'peace offering' to critics in the hope that they will be satisfied that approach is incorrect and naive. But more importantly giving in to unwarranted or ignorant criticism is practically and ethically wrong. To institute a rule under the guise of horse welfare which has no positive impact on horse welfare would be disingenuous and cynical. It would reduce the FEI's credibility as an



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organization guided by principles and evidence. Simply stated it would be an irrational decision. Further as with most compromises of principles, it would have negative long-term effects as it would endorse the unjustified criticism which would encourage even more unjustified attacks.

While it may be uncomfortable to endure unfounded attacks, the only real defence is to adhere to the principle of using objective scientific evidence to establish rules regarding welfare. This is the only way the FEI can maintain its integrity and demonstrate good corporate governance. Further we urge that when considering welfare measures the options are evaluated in the context of the all the FEI disciplines. To suggest that one discipline needs to be more controlled in regard to welfare than another is misleading and false.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you would like further information regarding bits and spurs, design, function and effect on horses and evidence of misuse we are happy to provide more detailed information.

Kind regards,

Linda Keenan  
Secretary General  
International Dressage Trainers Club  
Club

Klaus Roeser  
Secretary General  
International Dressage Riders