



### Session 7 – FEI Event Standards

FEI Director of Games Operations Tim Hadaway opened the Session with an overview of and background to the FEI Event Standards project, an idea that was first discussed during the Jumping Round Table meeting in 2019 in Lausanne (SUI). Stakeholders in attendance of the meeting had agreed that there was a need for stronger minimum requirements to improve the overall standard of FEI Events, particularly with regards to stabling, security and biosecurity.

- The **first step** in the project was a mapping exercise to establish what framework is already in place for defining and monitoring standards. Tim Hadaway explained that the broad range of subject areas covered included stabling, training, field of play, horse inspections, accommodation, transport, catering etc.
- The **second step** was to present the results of the mapping exercise to technical committees which resulted in an initial shortlist of topics requiring attention i.e. review/tightening up of regulations, areas which require more effective monitoring and follow-up.
- After scrutinising the outcomes, it was decided to broaden the consultation. Accordingly, the **third step** was the launch of a global stakeholder survey that was launched in December 2021. The survey was conducted across all stakeholder groups, disciplines, and geographical regions, covering 54 specific event delivery aspects.

The questions of the survey and the overall participation results were presented, along with the summary break-up by stakeholder groups, disciplines, and geographical regions. Detailed break-up and analysis was made available to the participants as session annex, two weeks in advance of the Sports Forum session.

Tim Hadaway explained that it was not practically feasible to discuss all 54 topics during the Sports Forum session. Accordingly, a list of **'Top 20'** event delivery aspects, grouped under five categories was then presented as the focus of discussion during the session. The direction and principles agreed to be then applied to all 54 aspects. The five categories introduced were:

1. Security & access control
2. Training & exercise provision
3. Stabling provisions
4. Event facilities & services
5. Cleanliness & biosecurity

During the discussion period, delegates were asked to consider the following three questions:

1. Are existing regulations sufficiently clear and objective?
2. If regulations do not exist, how do we ensure that these aspects are delivered in line with expectations? Is regulation and/or clear guidance required?
3. What should be done when requirements and/or expectations are not met?



Before discussing each of the five categories of event delivery aspects, the participants were informed that two common findings from the survey were:

- Generally, the issues faced were cited to be 'across all events' and not at 'specific levels of events'
- 'Financial constraints' was the challenge Event organisers cited across the majority of these Top 20 event delivery aspects

The discussion for the event delivery aspects was then opened. Presented below is a summary of discussion for each topic. The introduction for each topic followed a common structure – the most relevant excerpts from the existing regulations for each aspect were presented, followed by a selection of the topic-related comments received through the survey.

### **Security & access control**

Kevin Staut (FRA) mentioned that there is big gap between different levels of events. However, even at high level events at times it is problematic with too many persons in stables (sponsors, children, others who do not necessarily need to be in the stables). At lower level events, there are less restrictions, making it difficult for the Grooms to take care of Horses and to rest.

Peter Bollen (BEL) presented his thoughts as an event organiser, mentioning that mostly the security and access control is satisfactory at higher level events, and more of an issue at lower level events. He also suggested that this is not an issue of cost, but that this just needs to be done better. The rules are clear but are not followed consistently.

Stéphane Montavon (SUI) added that doping and medication control are the basis for stable security, and additional communication and education could be helpful.

Patrick Kittel (SWE) shared recent event experiences including examples of where there were very few checks when accessing stables and underlined the great risk of contamination and damage of reputation.

Cesar Hirsch (VEN) shared the view as an FEI Official and emphasised the lack of enforcement of rules has human and financial implications. Additionally, currently officials are pressed on time to fix issues reactively after they arrive at the events. He recommended consistency in approach and use of technology to be considered.

Key take-away from the discussion:

- While regulations are in place for stable security, the rules are not adequately applied or enforced consistently.
- There can be significant difference in stable security standards across shows.
- Delegates called for better systems of access control at Events and the need to take a closer look at the ways in which technology can be used to create a more robust accreditation system.

### Training & exercise provision

Patrick Kittel (SWE) shared that there has been considerable improvement in this regard over the last two decades, while acknowledging that competition scheduling and space availability are constraints.

Tomas Torgersen (NOR) mentioned that the venue is a major consideration; organising a multi-discipline indoor event in the city relies a lot on Stewards, training times and detailed planning to make training work well.

Michael Stone (IRL) emphasised the difference in events across the globe, and encouraged that regulatory considerations be made with the thinking that one size does not fit all. Cesar Hirsch (VEN) added that it was important to acknowledge the difference in levels, and to consider a collaborative approach, providing regular support and possibly education programmes via FEI Campus.

Key take-away from the discussion:

- While there are discipline specific rules that exist on training areas, there is no one-size-fits-all approach and it will be difficult to be overly prescriptive about training area numbers, sizes etc. Therefore a degree of flexibility would be necessary to take account of varying capacities across venues.
- Organisers need more regular advice from the FEI on what they provide during Events, although the general feedback was that training and exercise areas are improving in quality.
- Number of officials (Stewards) needs to be considered, as well as a detailed training timetable – in relation to available areas – so as to provide all athletes equal opportunity to access these for training, warm-up, cool down etc.
- Organisers present at the Sports Forum cautioned that an increase in regulations on training and exercise areas could increase financial costs.

### Stabling provisions

Tim Hadaway presented the excerpts of stabling provisions covered in FEI Veterinary Regulations Article 1008. It was acknowledged that they are open to interpretation. In comparison, Tim Hadaway presented the very clearly defined specifications in the FEI Olympic Venue requirements to draw a comparison at the other end of the spectrum and opened the discussion to the participants on whether there is a need to become more prescriptive especially at higher level events.

Lucy Katan (GBR) mentioned that stable conditions vary hugely, but often poor when it comes to power availability, footing in the stable area etc.

Andrew Hoy (AUS) emphasized that ventilation, roof height, lighting, are equally safety and welfare points.

Peter Bollen (BEL) acknowledged, while mentioning that especially indoor events have to work with the conditions they have at the venue, that it is more feasible to provide improvements for outdoor events. Tom Gordin (FIN) highlighted expenses associated with

such provisions. It was also mentioned that local requirements vary, particularly with respect to power provisions.

Key take-away from the discussion:

- Current regulations are mostly unspecific and therefore left to the interpretation of Organising Committees working with the officials. Stabling standards vary hugely across levels of events. Air flow, lighting, stable size were put forward as key concerns for horses and grooms.
- From the Organisers perspective it was noted that becoming too prescriptive in some areas (eg. power outlets) may result in discrepancy between such FEI requirements and local health and safety requirements and legislation.
- The way forward to consider an appropriate mix of more specific requirements, while recognising the need for flexibility depending on local factors, combined with clearer guidance, sharing of best practice and communication/education.

### **Event facilities & services**

Tim Hadaway emphasised four of the first six of the top issues identified through the survey covered general event facilities and services including WiFi access, screens covering FoP, showers, refreshments in stable areas, and WCs.

Andrew Hoy (AUS) mentioned that WiFi is no longer a luxury and important event related matters also depend on it such as accessing the FEI HorseApp. He also recognised that events are making a conscious effort to improve showers and WCs, acknowledging that improvements can be made without necessarily significant additional finance.

Lucy Katan (GBR) said that tea/coffee without charge, easy access to food and showers are issues not necessarily expensive to solve.

Simone Perillo (ITA) added that recommendations and not strict regulations would be better to address this.

Key take-away from the discussion:

- WiFi is particularly important in current times. Often for example Grooms/Athletes are unable to register the required horse biosecurity information in the FEI HorseApp because they do not have WiFi or network access.
- There are many examples of best practice in this respect that improve conditions in particular for Grooms that do not necessarily require a lot of money.
- There was general agreement that this aspect of event standards should be addressed through guidelines, sharing of best practice, education and communication.

### **Cleanliness & biosecurity**

In the context of the developments in the last 12-14 months, especially the EHV-1 situation, a detailed discussion on this topic was deferred to the following session of the FEI Sports Forum 2022, Veterinary Regulations.

### **Monitoring & Follow-Up**

Tim Hadaway briefly explained that a number of officials' reports exist to highlight concerns on all of the event delivery aspects discussed during the session, to the respective FEI discipline department at the FEI HQ, though the questions that are posed in these reports could be more objective.

Bettina De Rahm (FEI Director Dressage, Para Dressage, Vaulting) explained how the process works. If an issue is reported in one or more reports, the official is contacted. After further clarifications and background have been determined a letter flagging the issue(s) is sent to the event organiser. There is a need to improve systems of follow-up after this step. For example for resource issues it is easier to ensure effective follow-up in a smaller discipline such as vaulting in comparison to dressage given the much larger volume of events in this discipline each year around the World.

Sabrina Ibanez (FEI Secretary General) mentioned that the FEI General Regulations allow for a competition or event to be removed from the calendar under justifiable circumstances. However, this is not specific and very rarely has there been an escalation reaching the FEI Secretary General. Any example historically tend to involve non-payment of prize money. Peter Bollen (BEL) and Michael Stone (IRL) recommended for the ECS to be a part of the way forward acknowledging that publication of scores would in itself encourage Organisers to improve standards and could provide useful marketing material. However perhaps the system could have fewer yet more objective criteria. George Dimaras (GRE) also recommended that the ECS be reviewed.

FEI President Ingmar De Vos mentioned that currently there is no system of sanctions, and only the letter or perhaps a warning. Review and improvement of the ECS should be looked into as well as the publishing of ECS scores. However ECS would not become the sole mechanism determining the star level classification currently given its aspects of subjective evaluation of criteria, but could be combined with the system of prize money levels.

Key take-away from the discussion:

- Although relatively thorough monitoring of event standards exists through the established post event reporting systems, effective follow up to ensure issues raised through this are addressed prior to the next event is varied.
- Although FEI regulations allow in theory for sanctioning events for not meeting requirements as defined in FEI rules, this is difficult to action without a clear, fair, objective and accountable process for addressing issues with Organisers.
- Clearly defined requirements could be considered for such a process and could also be included alongside for example prizemoney levels when determining the rating of events.



- There was strong consensus that the Event Classification System (ECS) remains an important tool in the monitoring and feedback process for Organisers. Organisers expressed support for publication of ECS results and see this as a benefit for the promotion of their events. It was acknowledged that publication would encourage Organisers to improve standards in weaker areas.
- The ECS should be reviewed to ensure objectivity wherever possible and that consideration be given to extending the ECS to other FEI disciplines.