

THE FEI CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE WELFARE OF THE HORSE

The Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) expects all those involved in international equestrian sport to adhere to the FEI's Code of Conduct and to acknowledge and accept that at all times the welfare of the horse must be paramount and must never be subordinated to competitive or commercial influences.

1. At all stages during the preparation and training of competition horses, welfare must take precedence over all other demands.

a) Good horse management

Stabling, feeding and training must be compatible with good horse management and must not compromise welfare. Any practices which could cause physical or mental suffering, in or out of competition, will not be tolerated.

b) Training methods

Horses must only undergo training that matches their physical capabilities and level of maturity for their respective disciplines. They must not be subjected to any training methods which are abusive or cause fear or for which they have not been properly prepared.

c) Farriery and tack

Foot care and shoeing must be of a high standard. Tack must be designed and fitted to avoid the risk of pain or injury.

d) Transport

During transportation, horses must be fully protected against injuries and other health risks. Vehicles must be safe, well ventilated, maintained to a high standard, disinfected regularly and driven by competent staff. Competent handlers must always be available to manage the horses.

e) Transit

All journeys must be planned carefully, and horses allowed regular rest periods with access to food and water in line with current FEI guidelines.

2. Horses and competitors must be fit, competent and in good health before they are allowed to compete.

a) Fitness and competence

Participation in competition must be restricted to fit horses and competitors of proven competence.

b) Health status

No horse showing symptoms of disease, lameness or other significant ailments or pre-existing clinical conditions should compete or continue to compete when to do so would compromise its welfare. Veterinary advice must be sought whenever there is any doubt.

c) Medication

Abuse of medication is a serious welfare issue and will not be tolerated. After any veterinary treatment, sufficient time must be allowed for full recovery before competition.

d) Surgical procedures

Any surgical procedures that threaten a competing horse's welfare or the safety of other horses and/or competitors must not be allowed.

e) Pregnant/recently foaled mares

Mares must not compete after their fourth month of pregnancy or with foal at foot.

f) Misuse of aids

Abuse of a horse using natural riding aids or artificial aids (e.g. whips, spurs etc.) will not be tolerated.

3. Events must not prejudice horse welfare.

a) Competition areas

Horses must only be trained and compete on suitable and safe surfaces. All obstacles must be designed with the safety of the horse in mind.

b) Ground surfaces

All ground surfaces on which horses walk, train or compete must be designed and maintained to reduce factors that could lead to injuries. Particular attention must be paid to the preparation, composition and upkeep of surfaces.

c) Extreme weather

Competitions must not take place in extreme weather conditions if the welfare or safety of the horse may be compromised. Provision must be made for cooling horses quickly after competing in hot or humid conditions.

d) Stabling at events

Stables must be safe, hygienic, comfortable, well ventilated and of sufficient size for the type and disposition of the horse. Clean, good quality and appropriate feed and bedding, fresh drinking water, and washing-down water must always be available.

e) Fitness to travel

After competition, a horse must be fit to travel in accordance with the FEI's guidelines.

4. Every effort must be made to ensure that horses receive proper attention after they have competed and that they are treated humanely when their competition careers are over.

a) Veterinary treatment

Veterinary expertise must always be available at an event. If a horse is injured or exhausted during a competition, the competitor must dismount and a veterinarian must check the horse.

b) Referral centres

Wherever necessary, the horse should be collected by ambulance and transported to the nearest relevant treatment centre for further assessment and therapy. Injured horses must be given full supportive treatment before transport.

c) Competition injuries

The incidence of injuries sustained in competition should be monitored. Ground surface conditions, frequency of competitions and any other risk factors should be examined carefully to indicate ways to minimise injuries.

d) Euthanasia

If injuries are sufficiently severe the horse may need to be euthanased by a veterinarian as soon as possible on humane grounds and with the sole aim of minimising suffering.

e) Retirement

Every effort should be made to ensure that horses are treated sympathetically and humanely when they retire from competition.

f) The FEI urges all those involved in equestrian sport to attain the highest possible levels of education in their areas of expertise relevant to the care and management of the competition horse.

This Code of Conduct for the Welfare of the Horse may be modified from time to time and the views of all are welcomed. Particular attention will be paid to new research findings and the FEI encourages further funding and support for welfare studies.