

**IJRC URGES RIDERS TO GIVE FEEDBACK**

**ON FEI JUMPING RULE REVISION**

**IJRC General Assembly Geneve 13th of December**

Next year **FEI jumping rules undergo their four-yearly, full review**, with changes taking effect on January, 1, 2026. The International Jumping Riders Club (IJRC) has already undertaken **considerable preparation** for this significant consultation, which spans many months from spring to autumn next year.

**Key topics** were discussed during the **club's annual assembly** in Geneva on December 13, where IJRC director Eleonora Ottaviani and IJRC president Francois Mathy JR urged riders to notify the IJRC office as soon as possible of any suggestions for FEI rules.

**March 1, 2025** is the deadline for stakeholder submissions. Thereafter there is limited opportunity to amend FEI jumping rules until the next four-yearly revision in 2029, ie after the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

The IJRC will re-submit proposals previously publicized [here](https://www.ijrc.org/en/News-results-1/IJRC-REACTS-TO-FEI-FEEDBACK-ON-RULE-CHANGE-PROPOSALS.html)

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Updates were given on them all, including:

* requests for more **proportionate sanctions** for certain cases of minor blood on the horse, brought to attention with the elimination of Pedro Veniss at the Olympic Games. There is a big difference between accident and intent, as one of the fundamental principles of law establishes the proportionality between sanction and violations of the norm.
* a request that **field-of-play protests** be heard by a panel other than the ground jury who issued the original decision. There is now no appeal jury to give a second opinion. The rider should also be allowed to finish the course where, for example there is doubt they jumped the correct side of a flag; that is already common practice in FEI eventing (for example VAR in football, tennis, field Hockey, etc.).
* additional **wild cards for under 25s** at CSI5\*, to be discussed again next year.
* a **30% reduction in prize-money** requirements at 3\* and 4\* CSIs in regions with high inflation or other economic difficulty (as South America, East Europe, Africa).
* alignment of organisers' **fees to riders** with the figures agreed by the FEI, AJO and IJRC it is understood this will be implemented in 2026.

The main theme was the impact on jumping of the FEI’s drive to retain equestrianism's "**social licence to operate”. New welfare-aimed provisions** in FEI General Regulations (the "GRs") apply to all equestrian disciplines and supersede each discipline's sport rules.

There was extensive comment that the **noseband measurement** protocol and out of competition sampling for horses misled the wider public over the extent of welfare concerns across all equestrian sports. Certain measures should apply only to disciplines where these issues were of most concern - doping in endurance, and nosebands in dressage.

However, guest delegate **Klaus Roser,** President of the International Dressage Riders Club and athlete’s representative at the EEF urged all to stick together, cautioning that there was the danger of **"opening the door" to restrictions in other sports** - making double bridles optional in top level dressage Grand Prix could eventually lead to calls to limit or even ban it in other disciplines.

FEI jumping committee chairman **Stephan Ellenbruch** said (via video-link) that he was already aware of **stakeholder misgivings over noseband measuring**. He was hopeful of some compromise and wondered if the consultation process for this "went a little too fast."

The **plastic measuring gauge** - with one size available for horses of types - is inserted under the noseband over the nasal bone and pulled through (and not tested at the side, over the cheeks as traditionally done with two fingers).

**Implementation is delayed until May 1, 2025,** due to supply issues. Klaus Roeser could not yet obtain a sample gauge, while being obliged to provide feedback to the FEI by January 8. Max Kuhner advised that the tool has never been referred to the **tack-app group,** of which he is a member, though Todd Hinde, head of the FEI jumping department, responded it was not a tack item, but a process.

Rodrigo Pessoa, athlete’s representative in the Jumping Committee, also said that this was never discussed in the JC meeting.

IJRC members did not understand the **rationale for testing** every horse with the device after its round, rather than before - especially after Todd Hinde revealed that in one of the testing trials, just three of 600 horses failed on tightness.

**Francois Mathy Jr** wants the FEI to still allow a two-finger check and “to trust a little bit the horsemanship of the stewards." He added: "If there is a disagreement between the rider and the official, the tool would be the way to solve the problem. If we test every horse, every class, every show for nosebands, we send a message that everyone is tightening it too much, that there is a real problem with the noseband in our [jumping] sport, when there is not”.

**Ludger Beerbaum** spoke for many when articulating the lack of understanding of the purpose of nosebands. "Why are we using nosebands? It is to make sure our aids to the horse's mouth are coming in the right doses, so we end up in a good control and with a good connection," he said. "Now we are destroying this, only because a vet or horse welfare people are saying that we need this wide-open noseband, so the horses can play with the tongue, and the jaw is going left and right.

"Of course, we don't want a super-tight noseband, but the goal of a noseband is to be productive. We need the well fitted noseband, and not a loose one where you put the tool in and come up with a new way to give someone a yellow warning card!"

Todd Hinde said Ludger made a "fair point" but the tool would show that“ everyone is doing the right thing."

**Karl Cook** observed: "The FEI should help market our sport and be our advocates. Its the use of the equipment that is important and I believe **it’s the job of the FEI to tell people about our sport,** how and why things are used, and why some people's immediate perception might not be correct."

**Out-of-competition** sampling, for banned substances only, is now in the FEI equine anti doping and controlled medication rules but may not be fully implemented for a year or even two, according to Todd Hinde. It will be rolled out in endurance initially, where there has been mandatory FEI registration of trainers since 2019; they are the Persons Responsible for a positive out of competition test.

In all other sports, which generally involve horses in more frequent long-distance travel, identifying the Person Responsible for managing the horse and advising of its whereabouts out of competition is problematic.

The **whereabouts obligations** will be similar to those in WADA human athlete sampling. At any time, the location of horses selected for the FEI program must be entered into an app so that a testing vet can visit at short notice. This year alone two FEI riders have been suspended by their national doping agencies for 18 months and four years respectively for errors and omissions in their whereabouts data.

**McLain Ward** wondered how whereabouts could be accurately recorded if a horse was stuck in a traffic jam. He flagged up the extra administrative burden on a large stable; he already employs a full-time administrator to deal with his athlete out of competition testing obligations.

"Established riders have the resources to cope but hiring one or two new staff members to stay up to date with requriments is an obstacle to the developing youth of our sport," said McLain. "You [the FEI] keep loading on the extra work and the uncertainty. Are you aiming to solve something or just to look good?"

The meeting wondered if doping between competitions really such a big problem was. **Eleonora Ottaviani** suggested that if there were only a handful of cases after two years, out of competition testing should be reviewed.

Other topics at the assembly included an explanation for the previously announced changes to the **ranking formula.** In particular Nations Cup points had been too generous, and a coefficient will be applied to reflect the number of clear rounds in the class.

**Rodrigo Pessoa** continues to lobby to get a fourth team-member reinstated in the **OLYMPIC FORMAT,** but Todd Hinde advised this will always be bound by the IOC quotas.

Concerns were expressed about the likely **temperature at the 2028 Olympic horse park,** 80 miles south of downtown LA at Temecula. Karl Cook said that during Paris, he monitored the weather at Temecula. The "coldest" day was 38 deg; even at night it was 35 deg. "It hot. Like, really hot," he advised.

So, if during the Olympics there will be more then 40°, what about the horses’ welfare on which a lot has been debated?

The IJRC livestreams its annual assembly and it is available on replay [HERE](https://www.ijrc.org/en/News-results-1/IJRC-General-Assembly-Replay.html) (<https://www.ijrc.org/en/News-results-1/IJRC-General-Assembly-Replay.html>)

Francois Mathy's reflection on the recent FEI General Assembly can be read [HERE](https://www.ijrc.org/en/News-results-1/MATHY-S-JR-REFLECTS-ON-THE-FEI-GENERAL-ASSEMBLY.html) (https://www.ijrc.org/en/News-results-1/MATHY-S-JR-REFLECTS-ON-THE-FEI-GENERAL-ASSEMBLY.html)

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