

R-HALTENSWERT



Equine Quality Control (EQC)

FINAL REPORT
WORLD CUP FINALS
BASEL 2025



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1. Introduction

From 2 to 6 April 2025, the World Cup finals in dressage, show jumping and vaulting took place in Basel. For the R-Haltenswert initiative, we were active as EQC – Equine Quality Control. The organizer of this tournament - Dr. Thomas Straumann - had declared in advance that the organizing committee is committed to horse welfare and has therefore chosen the R-Haltenswert initiative as the official partner of the FEI World Cup Finals and commissioned it with internal quality control.

The R-Haltenswert initiative was founded because grievances in equestrian sports must no longer be accepted and the necessary steps are to be taken by the industry itself. Together with riders, organizers and other actors active in the equestrian scene, changes are to be initiated that guarantee the well-being of the horses and help equestrian sport to implement indispensable ethical standards in a contemporary way and to reinstall a positive, sporty and fair environment.

This resulted in a mandate carried out by the organiser, based on the standards of quality management customary in companies and institutions, to observe and record the tournament operations on the preparation grounds and, if necessary - in the event of acute grievances - to contact the responsible officials.

2. Die EQCs: Mission Statement

The EQCs are master of horse management with different equestrian biographies who are committed to the preservation and development of ethics in equestrian sports. They are active riders and trainers, in leading positions in horse farms and work on the basis of a professional approach to horses and riders in all disciplines. This results in the awareness that all of us who have to do with horses and people are on a path that allows us to learn something new every day. We regularly make mistakes and want to deal with them in a reflective and self-critical way – and thus in an equestrian way – in order to learn from them. We know that riding, handling the horse and learning to ride is a very demanding path, because you have to question yourself very intensively on a regular basis. The horse is regularly the valuable mirror of one's own assets or inability.

We face this responsible task and expect it from our students and all actors around the horse. We want to preserve tournament equestrian sport, promote the qualities worth preserving and help to reduce current grievances.

Despite all our equestrian ambitions, the horse is in its nature at the centre of our consciousness, according to the motto: connected to sport, committed to the horse.

With this inner requirement, we also see our task for the initiative R-haltenswert.

We will not criticize anyone personally, but if there are grievances, we will first name them internally and then look for constructive systematic solutions.



3. The conditions on site

The Locations

The exams took place in the event hall (Main Arena), outside a tent corridor was erected along the building, which led into a 30m x 45m preparation tent (Warm-Up 1). Material and gaiter tests were carried out in the anteroom.

From there, along a municipal sports facility, an approx. 150m long path, on which a path was demarcated especially for the horses and riders, ran to another preparation tent, 20mx60m (Warm-Up 2), and a square lunging tent.

Right next to it were the stable tents.

A camera was installed in each of the three preparation areas (Warm-Up 1 and 2 and lunging), which transmitted live images to three large screens in the immediate vicinity of the R-haltenswert trade fair stand throughout the event. This allowed every spectator to gain insight into the preparation areas and the events there, as only comparatively few people were allowed to be at the preparation areas due to safety regulations, so that the general public could not be granted access.

The schedule provided for free training in the event hall from 5.30 a.m., which was then prepared for the official tournament schedule from about 7.00 a.m., so that further training opportunities could be taken advantage of in clearly defined time windows in the warm-up tents.

There were times when horses from all three disciplines were ridden, and those when training times were divided according to discipline.

As a result, we were able to divide up both in terms of time and place in such a way that the observation of all training activities could be guaranteed.

Processes

We, the three EQCs, were introduced to the FEI's senior officials in a first meeting in a round of introductions. Essential agreements were that we should not approach any riders (this is the responsibility of the stewards of the FEI), that we should not appear in groups of three in one place (because we were worried that the riders might otherwise feel uncomfortable) and that we should express concerns in a chat group with the main persons responsible for the respective discipline, so that we can communicate and react as quickly as possible.

Unfortunately, even at the express suggestion, we were not allowed to attend the meeting with the riders to present the project or ourselves. This was not desired by the FEI and instead communicated to the riders without our presence and led, as it turned out in the further course of the tournament, to great mistrust on the part of the athletes and also on the part of the individual stewards responsible for the warm-up tents.

The FEI stewards are responsible for the implementation of the FEI rules at such a tournament. They are to check the horses, the material and also the handling of the horses



both systematically and randomly. There is a [Code of Conduct](#) for this purpose, which the FEI has prescribed for itself and made public accordingly (see Annex I).

It outlines a grown structure within the FEI and a clear profile of the officials.

Unfortunately, our personal experience on site did not correspond to these specifications in large parts. In particular, the cooperation with us as an official partner of the organizer could not be implemented as the Code of Conduct actually provides.

4. Overall impression Disciplines

Dressage

The horses were usually prepared quite harmoniously in the first moments of the respective warm-up phase. As the first positive impression progressed, negative tension arose more and more frequently as a result of strict technical corrections and intensive, sometimes very unnatural-looking shaping of the basic gaits. Especially in the approaching haze of the upcoming test, the stress level increased, which was expressed by disharmonious correction moments, which became visible with increasing tension in disproportionately strong pressure on the horses' mouths and could be heard through stressed, often loud breathing. Blocking lower jaws and visibly strongly pressed tongues give the very dynamic and athletic movement the stale aftertaste of overtaxing and sometimes unsightly treatment of the horses.

Through often excessive harnessing between exaggeratedly sensitized forward impulse and unyielding and thus backward reins, mistrust in the permeability of horses is dictated to unconditional obedience. Unfortunately, the desired motivation of the horse often becomes a permanent criticism of the horse and thus permanent stress. The emerging "Competition Mode" stands in stark contradiction to classical riding theory and its understanding of gait assembly. It is precisely for this reason that this would have to be recognised by the judges in the examination and punished with clear severity even if this widespread mode were to be carried out.

In addition, the curb was not buckled correctly in many cases. Brimming or sagging curb chains visibly contributed to the deterioration of the contact in the sense of a contented, lively mouth and a soft, supple neck. In our opinion, both the issue of the incorrectly strapped bridles, as well as the often too tight head-neck posture on the part of the stewards were clearly not paid enough attention to or influenced, this also applies to visibly discolored tongues of some horses.

Furthermore, the riders regularly acted so clumsily that the horses' gait and walking through the body were massively impaired with the supposed desire for increased concentration and increasing positive tension. In many sequences, there were strong rhythm errors and also actively tense sequences of movements, which in turn became a double disadvantage for the horses due to incorrectly buckled bridles.

Exercises of high assembly and high reinforcement were often trained or called up differently than in the classical sense. The degree of balance and purity of the gaits receded into the background in favor of exaggerated, unnatural dynamics and unconditional obedience.



Broken axes of movement (e.g. in trot reinforcement the parallelism of the posterior tubular bone and the front forearm within the diagonal foot sequence) and other unhealthy movement abnormalities (e.g. clear teetering in the endurance moment of the hanging leg phase during movements that are supposed to be like a passage or piaffe) were further forms of expression of technically simply misunderstood prioritization.

Here, too, the aforementioned "Competition mode" was again noticeable, which shook the training topics of tact, suppleness and contact due to the unpermitted willingness to stretch and the extension of the frame. This should be clearly taken into account in the judge's evaluation, because the judges bear a high responsibility for how horses are trained, depending on whether the visible training result in the test is assessed according to classical principles or whether top marks are given for technically incorrect executions.

The criteria for riding, in this case dressage, in the sense of an ethical, moral and pedagogical mission towards the horse were severely neglected by many riders in the warm-up area. The description of dressage written by the FEI in [the preamble to the dressage rules](#) was regularly not sufficiently achieved (see Annex II).

Jump

The equestrian handling of the show jumping horses initially seemed more relaxed and tolerant compared to the dressage horses. Unfortunately, a first dominant impression was that many horses were visually very defined by the bridle. We did not get to see the faces of many horses so easily. Masks, many leather straps, many lever bits, martingale and draw reins - also draw reins through the Pelham strap - determined the appearance.

The horses are prepared for the course in the warm-up before a test, the riding often had no gymnastic character. The bridle was more for control in the course. Some riders gave the impression that they were particularly proficient in approaching and riding over the obstacles, other riding skills were hardly recognizable in the majority of the riders during this time or were delegated to employees during the course of the tournament. Incorrectly strapped spurs (spurs pointing upwards over the horizontal line) were also surprisingly often seen for this athletic level.

Despite many horses in a confined space and many supervisors around the obstacles, the jumping took place interpersonally in always calm and respectful cooperation.

The conspicuously frequent use of corrective reins, elaborate bridles and lever bits has remained impressive. Draw reins were used for walking, working the horses, as well as exam preparation including jumping up to maximum dimensions.

They were applied in different constellations:

- from the girth through the bit rings into the rider's hand
- from the saddle girth through the breastplate through the bit rings into the rider's hand
- from the girth through the throat strap through the bit rings into the rider's hand
- from the saddle girth through the breastplate through the throat strap through the bit rings into the rider's hand
- knotted from the girth through the bit rings and over the poll
- from the girth through the Pelham strap into the rider's hand



- from the belt straps sideways to the front through the bit rings into the rider's hand
- from the chamber of the saddle to the front through the bit rings and back into the rider's hand

Unfortunately, this use is covered by the [rules of the FEI](#) . From our point of view, the use of draw reins in general, but especially in combination with lever bits, represents a considerable safety risk for horse and rider and should be rejected as a whole.

From an ethical point of view, the horse, in its nature as a moving and fleeing animal, must not be brought into a forced position by means of a mechanical lever, thereby impairing the neck as the natural balancing bar, and as a result putting horse and rider in a not inconsiderable danger over the jump.

Unfortunately, the use of the draw reins was seen less as a safety risk by those responsible at the FEI than was regularly stated that the draw reins were virtually indispensable in show jumping due to safety considerations. Interestingly, however, they are fortunately banned in dressage and parasport, an inexplicable contradiction by which the FEI must be measured.

From the rules for show jumping published by the FEI (see Annex III), point 1.4 stands out in particular: "There are no restrictions on bits or nosebands."

The lack of regulations in show jumping in this regard is incomprehensible to us, but rather frightening. It seemed like a comfortable, desensitized and cultureless way of dealing with horses when the mobile phone attracts the full attention of the person sitting on the horse during a walk on draw reins, or this finds its culmination in the fact that a conversation was held via the mobile phone during an entire riding session (also on draw reins) outside of the direct test preparation, which was wedged in the riding helmet, a brutalization of good morals.

This show jumping sport practiced in this way gave us the impression of a microcosm that has completely forgotten or now actively ignores the responsibility and obligation it has towards the horse, but also towards the external image of equestrian sport itself.

Using the example of the excessive use of drawreins, we would like to quote Udo Bürger and the guidelines for riding and driving as a counterweight to this impression:

"But as already mentioned, all auxiliary reins are an admission of weakness or lack of skill. It always works without them. Anyone who uses them habitually and on all horses has capitulated to his own inability and finally given up learning to ride." (Udo Bürger, Vollendete Reitkunst, Müller Rüschnikon Verlag, 1st edition 2006, p. 166ff).

"The inexperienced rider often believes that he can reach his goal faster by auxiliary reins. As a rule, however, he will only put his horse in a forced position and increase the problem in the long run." (Guidelines for Riding and Driving – Volume 2, FN Verlag, 13th edition 2001, p. 125).

Vaulting

In the public perception, the discipline of vaulting was clearly inferior to the other two disciplines shown here. Morning off-peak times led to a quiet, almost isolated preparation



atmosphere. The horses were also ridden as an alternative to lunge work, unfortunately sometimes with draw reins. The gymnastic response was very different in quality, some horses made a mobile, motivated and permeable impression, others were more immobile, or visibly limited and correspondingly less well prepared.

The common variant of lunge work took place by untying with long triangular reins, the lunge buckled in the bit ring (cavesson would be allowed with and without bit). We couldn't understand why the lunge handlers didn't wear gloves, that made an unprofessional impression.

The side reins for vaulting were individual side reins, which are buckled much shorter. This initially had the disadvantage that the horses had to take this shorter frame exclusively in the neck and could not develop via the flowing response from back to front. Some horses were able to compensate for this in the further course, but some were not, and these showed abnormalities in movement and in the lack of acceptance of the bit.

The shorter vaulting side reins were only used for the duration of vaulting without exception and were taken off immediately after completion, but they regularly brought the horses into an absolute and firm contact that works from front to back.

5. List of urgent concerns by the EQC

To explain, we would like to emphasize at this point that we have clearly differentiated between the previous system errors and so-called urgent concerns. In the following, the four urgent concerns from our point of view are explained in detail. We have recorded as urgent concerns those constellations which, in our view, would have required immediate intervention by the stewards to urgently restore animal welfare, which is particularly affected.

NOTE: The urgent concerns are described here, and will only be evaluated in the following chapter 6.

Case 1: Movement and tongue abnormalities

In the morning, two vaulting horses were ridden in Warm-Up 2, loosening work, in which both horses still appeared restrained and not very supple. One horse showed visible tongue movements, both sideways and forward from the mouth and looked as if it had to run in. Later, vaulting was done in Warm-Up 1 and this horse was prepared accordingly on the lunge. In the preparation period, this horse - when it trots - had not become better in gait compared to the morning riding, in the canter you could no longer judge that. Then the shorter side reins for vaulting were strapped in. During the entire course of vaulting, clear resistance could be seen in the mouth with the tongue held. Concerns in connection with the uncertain trot pattern and the visible dissatisfaction in the mouth were expressed to the responsible stewardess on site. She did not make up her own mind about this, but immediately referred to the stewardess, who could be found in the main hall.



We chose the short route via the chat group to the director and he immediately informed the veterinary commission, which then examined the horse.

Our meeting, which took place later in the day, was then also characterized by this situation. First of all, we were informed of the result of the examination. The horse was analyzed on a straight and curved line in the trot and it was found that on the curved line right hand the movement was not quite even. Since this was not the case on the curved line of the left hand and the vaulting test only takes place on the left hand, the horse was released for the test. The tongue behaviour was also carefully examined, the tongue had no injuries and the horse only played with the tongue when it had the bit in its mouth and it would not have been a problem due to the integrity of the tongue.

In this meeting, we were given a vote of no confidence under threat of exclusion from the preparation places, as we were too critical and would indirectly question the FEI procedures. The complaint about the state of health of a horse, which has already been released for the tournament by the FEI veterinary tests, attracts too much attention and, according to the regulations, must also be communicated to the board of the examining judges, which is not conducive to a tournament of this importance. In addition, we were forbidden to contact the stewards on site and to contact the directors exclusively via the chat group.

Case 2: Restricted air supply

One horse caught our eye in the preparation because it showed bloated nostrils beyond the level of sporting effort. This was all the more important because the noseband was strapped very low to just above the nostrils (according to our feeling, about 1-2 fingers wide distance to the nostrils). The horse was bridled with an English-combined noseband, whereby the locking strap was sewn to the noseband, but not into each other to form a narrow connecting piece, but under each other, so that the interface and the transition into the locking strap took up a lot of space. In addition, the noseband in the direction of the nasal bone did not run orthogonally to the zygomatic bone, but was tilted towards the nostrils, i.e. towards the tip of the nose. We had the impression that the horse was restricted in the air supply and now reported this exclusively to the group and not to the responsible steward, who had not become active here either.

Here, too, the reaction came quickly and bindingly and the director for show jumping wanted to get an idea of the situation for himself.

The inspection of the events took place from the edge of the warm-up area, from behind the demarcation fence, by visual inspection, and was classified as unproblematic, since the noseband had been designed by the manufacturer in this way and was therefore correctly buckled and thus compliant with the rules.

When asked whether the horse would get enough air and on repeated expressions of concern that this could not be guaranteed, it was not addressed, but only pointed out the conformity with the rules. Also, no steward was made aware of the noted doubts, who could then have dispelled them, but the course ride of this horse was then observed on a small screen and declared harmless. Thus, this oral reaction to this complaint remained.



Case 3: Too tightly buckled noseband and tongue defect

The next day we had to complain about a show jumper, where the English-combined bridle was clearly visible much too tight. It must be mentioned that most of the horses at this tournament were ridden with bridles that were too tightly buckled in our opinion. In the context of the regulations, the tournament events, and our powers, it was expedient in the sense of our mandate to officially complain about the peaks of such phenomena on site.

With the particularly striking appearance here, it was not only evident in the course of riding how little room for movement the horse's jaw had, but also how skin and tissue around the mouth were squeezed by the leather. The horse also showed its tongue laterally out of the mouth for the duration of the riding time.

Here, too, our doubts were registered in the chat group. The immediate reaction was the information that this would be checked immediately by the stewards and that we would be informed of the result.

For reasons that are not apparent, the announced inspection after complaint was not carried out over the following period of 10 minutes – the time that elapsed until the horse entered the main arena, completed the course with these doubts raised and was then tested.

When we asked in the chat group after 7 minutes that it was still doubtful and that the horse might start with these doubts, the chat group replied that we should please respect the processes and actions of the stewards and that the horse had already been tested by two stewards and would be checked again after the course. In addition, it was pointed out that the stewards would carry out their role professionally and implement the regulations.

After the end of the course, we were informed that the noseband was buckled in accordance with the rules and was seen without a doubt.

Case 4: Too much pressure on the lower jaw due to incorrectly buckled curb chain

In dressage, we complained about a horse in which the curb chain was clearly bursting with the curb. Riding on a curb is not described in the FEI regulations regarding the buckle of the curb chain.

In order to check the correct buckle of the curb chain, it is helpful to be aware of its effect. This is described in Annex IV.

The complained situation was again reported in the chat group and from there directly forwarded to the chief stewardess. Unfortunately, this did not become active before, but immediately after the test ride.

In a deliberately loud, particularly audible voice, the own actions of the inspection process were commented on and then also documented photographically.

This was unique in this tournament and suggested a particularly tense situation, which was to be assumed both by our complaint and our presence during the investigation.

The result was communicated to us in the chat group by the FEI afterwards: "The chief stewardess reported that the curb chain was absolutely pleasingly loose."



As an interim result, we would like to state that the four case studies described here represent a manifestation of the systematic deficits already described at the beginning and that it must be asked here in all clarity how such animal welfare impairments can occur in the first place, which are basically to be avoided precisely by the presence of the stewards.

6. Assessment of urgent concerns

Case 1: Movement and tongue abnormalities

In our opinion, an experienced veterinarian can best assess the unregulated trot pattern and the condition of the tongue from a health-relevant point of view. He came to the decision that the horse could be expected to meet the requirements without any doubt and released the horse for competition.

However, in our view, the assessment of the situation goes beyond this study. Do you want to bring a horse that is restricted in a certain movement (here: trot bent line right hand) into a competition situation at all, even if this particular movement is not required? Shouldn't ethical and moral considerations be included alongside all others in an additional final instance?

Couldn't the tongue behavior, regardless of the integrity of the tongue itself, also be a sign of an active discomfort of the horse? Do we want or have to accept a horse with these apparitions and can we explain this to a general public?

Personally, we interpreted the horse's behavior with the tongue as a clear sign of discomfort and not as a habit. We emphatically ask ourselves here whether in the same cases of visible discomfort a reversal of the burden of proof should not apply, according to which it would have to be clearly proven in the sense of compliance with animal welfare that the horse's obvious defensive reaction is not due to a feeling of discomfort. Otherwise, the slightest detection problems are always at the expense of the horse.

With regard to the tongue behavior, it would also have been possible within the FEI regulations to vault with cavesson instead of vaulting in the snaffle ring and also to do without a bit. (However, if the horse had still remained conspicuous in this respect, the bit alone would not have been able to explain it.)

For the rest of the tournament, the choice fell on rubber rings on the teeth. From our point of view, this had no positive effect on the horse.

We would like to take a position on the expressed mistrust and the prohibition to address the stewards as follows:

We personally have great respect for the organisation of the FEI and each individual employee. It takes a lot of strength, concentration and communication to make the processes within such an important international tournament frictionless.



This is often stressful. If additional circumstances are then made, it becomes even more stressful. We as EQC for R-Haltenswert have been invited by the tournament organizer to critically examine the processes and handling of the horses in cooperation with the FEI - for the benefit of the horses and thus for the benefit of the tournament equestrian sport. The nervousness that has arisen here as a reaction to an action underlying this attitude raises questions.

In our understanding, the ban on approaching the stewards contradicts the FEI's own Officials Code of Conduct. (See Annex I).

Furthermore, Article 1018 of the Veterinary Regulations describes the role of stewards (see Appendix X).

In it point 1: *"Stewards support and safeguard the welfare of the Horses and Athletes. They must prevent any form of illegal practice that may jeopardise Horse welfare and/or disrupt fair play."* can be understood to mean that if the stewards are to prevent all FEI irregular actions against the welfare of the horses, either the FEI actions against the welfare of the horses that comply with the FEI rules are not to be punished, or the FEI claims to have recorded and described all actions that may be against the welfare of the horses in its regulations.

The present case clearly shows the gap and thus a flaw in the system. The horse was released for the tournament in the vet check by being examined in a straight line at a trot. In the course of the tournament, it showed restrictions in the balance of movement and abnormalities in the behavior with the tongue during contact with the rider's hand / the side reins in the trot on a curved line. Both trot on a curved line and the tongue abnormality during contact were not recorded in the vet check. This ensured the professional integrity of the people involved during the vet check.

Case 2: Restricted air supply

From our perception of this situation, it was incomprehensible that the steward did not react. One could say that the situation on the jumping preparation area was the most confusing of all three disciplines, as most of the horses were active in comparison and there was also jumping in the middle of the arena. In addition, many different bit and bridle variations were used. In our opinion, it was all the more important to pay attention to how the horses looked, as the eye of the beholder was desensitized more quickly due to the number and variety. The further course of events then followed positively at first, because action was taken very quickly and bindingly.

The examination took place in the same inadequate way as we were only allowed to do it ourselves, namely by visual inspection. To derive a decision from this was not only disappointing in the matter of doubting horse health, but ignorant. The argumentation of correctness over the specification of a manufacturer's design seemed unimaginative, if not helpless - and left us with the impression of fear of responsibility.

The FEI describes the buckle of the noseband from the point of view of horse welfare in the Manual for Jumping Stewards (see Appendix IX).



In addition, the FEI Jumping Rules (Article 257, point 1.4., see Annex III) provide for the possibility to prohibit bridling on the advice of a veterinarian if it can cause damage to the horse.

In the role of the stewards (Article 1018, Veterinary Regulations, see Appendix X) as responsible support and safeguarding the welfare of the horses, even under the premise "there are no restrictions", the slightest doubt about the functional correctness of a noseband would have to be registered and checked – for one's own protection also with the help of a veterinarian. None of this happened on the initiative of the steward in charge, nor after our complaint by the chairman of the discipline.

The essential core of our concern is precisely described by the FEI in the "Manual for Jumping Stewards – Annex XV – Tack, Saddlery and dress guidelines" (see Appendix IX):

“Furthermore, Stewards must not allow any noseband to be positioned so low and tight that it interferes with the horse’s breathing as this would be against the welfare of the horse.”

It was also explained how difficult it was for the FEI to respond to the dynamics of the manufacturers of nosebands, as they are bringing new models to the market faster and faster and so far regulations could only be adjusted once a year. This has now been improved by a digital app, where information is provided about innovations and their permission in monthly cycles.

Case 3: Too tightly buckled noseband and tongue issue

For us, it was no longer surprising that the steward in charge did not react. We had understood that the regulations were the decisive measure.

Here we state: We have a different measure of correct buckles and sensible use of bridles and bits than the FEI regulations.

The rule for the buckle of the noseband applicable to this tournament is described by the FEI in the Manual for Jumping Stewards (Annex XV – Tack, saddlery and dress guidelines, 6. Auxiliary Reins and Noseband, see Appendix XI)

From May 1, 2025, there will be a new regulation with the help of a measuring device, which will then no longer be applied to the side of the cheek, but to the front of the nasal bone.

The mere fact that measurements are now being taken where the significant impact occurs can be seen as progress – even if, in our expert opinion, it is not possible to explain why this finding will not be included until 2025. The test of the noseband on the nasal bone has generally been taught for a long time and it is generally true that an effect should be tested where it occurs. Furthermore, we do not understand why two fingers are indicated but check them side by side. The finger thickness in a unit of length is not changed with two fingers next to each other.

Unfortunately, we did not see the correct implementation of the procedure described and illustrated in the instructions for use during the entire tournament, or only saw different methods.



After the tournament, we tested the measuring device to be used from 1.5.2025, a hard plastic wedge, on various nosebands of different strength and, depending on the amount of force required, we were able to move the wedge even under bridles that were clearly too tightly fastened by our standards. The smooth plastic slid along the scalp and the streamlined wedge shape displaced both the horse's skin tissue and the elasticity of the bridle material (especially in heavily padded variants) much easier than you could do with the back of your finger. There is an imminent danger here that the desirable approach of a standardizing regulation can be implemented to the detriment of the horse! Once again, it is not the material alone that is decisive, but its application.

In the FEI's video instructions on how to use this wedge, noseband buckles can be observed, which deviate significantly from the practice seen here (<https://inside.fei.org/fei/equine-welfare/examinations-controls-tools/fei-measuring-device>). In the practice seen at this World Cup final, these are much tighter!

We are disappointed with the response to this complaint. From our point of view, clear violations of technically correct buckles took place at this tournament, which, despite the possibility and the obligation from our own rules, were not examined at all, and after complaint was not immediately and with sufficient competence. In the discipline of show jumping, reference was always made only to compliance with the rules, without allowing doubts about the usefulness of the buckles. The impression arose that the horse's health was assessed with other professional standards and that the vulnerability of the entire equestrian system did not want to be seen in the face of such doubts. The perception of the complaint as an inconvenience or disruption of the process predominated.

Case 4: Too much pressure on the lower jaw due to incorrectly buckled curb chain

One would also have had to doubt other buckles of curb chains or nosebands, this was an obvious case in the matter. Why this was not proactively punished must be understood due to the lack of regulation and thus the incomplete FEI regulations – from a purely technical point of view, it could not be explained.

Article 434 of the FEI Dressage Rules specifies the curb bridle and bit (see Appendix XII).

We are talking about the correct buckle in detail here, because it is visible to every spectator and thus takes up an essential objective part of the external effect.

Essentially, however, it is less about the correct fastening of this chain, but about the quality of the riding itself. Of course, you don't automatically have to ride badly with a wrong curb chain. The predominant snaffle should have the greater influence in the effect of weight and thigh aids. Conversely, the correct buckle is not an indication of good riding, rather actively bad riding is just as possible. However, it is part of the basic respect for the horse and the cause to buckle the material used correctly. With an incorrectly buckled curb bit, you make yourself and your own riding unnecessarily vulnerable. Interested observers have questions about such connections and it can arouse suspicion, as one must assume that such details do not happen unknowingly and unconsciously at the level sought here.

In addition, in our opinion, all participants in a World Cup final, with this position within equestrian sport in general, which is exposed to the external perception, have the obligation



to live up to their special responsibility towards the representation of tournament equestrian sport.

How, as with the other concerns, could such a contradictory assessment by the EQCs on the one hand and the FEI on the other hand come about? The answer to this arises when you have seen how the examination was carried out and how this was also commented on and documented (deliberately loudly): Only the curb chain was moved, i.e. reached under it with the fingers, so that at that moment the relaxed (!) The lower tree rotated very clearly forwards and the upper tree rotated backwards.

To use this process exclusively as a test for the curb chain does not make sense from the described mode of action of this set of teeth (see Appendix IV). The curb chain does not act on its own, but through the leverage effect of the lower tree on the upper tree around the pivot point of the caps of the mouthpiece. From a physical point of view, the principle of a two-sided lever, a law that Archimedes already formulated in antiquity.

This plot of a function as FEI Chief Stewardess and the repeated comment that not only two, but five fingers would fit underneath leaves questions. In addition, photographically documented out of his own motivation.

The sentence formulated in the Dressage Rules, Article 434 under 2.1.7. "*Neither a cavesson noseband nor a curb chain may ever be as tightly fixed so as to harm the Horse.*" is important here. We expressed doubts by visual inspection that the curb chain was buckled clearly too short. The official inspection of the curb chain, despite its disqualifying implementation, substantiated these doubts by the fact that the curb chain buckle was recognizable as so short that in order to get under it with the fingers, the relaxed lower tree had to rotate well in front of the mouth gap.

The very tense state of mind could also be understood with the importance of this tournament test. It was a final test, it was live, the processes did not want to be interrupted, possible consequences from irregular situations could have been far-recurring. We respect this circumstance and the special responsibility and strain under which work is carried out here. It was an exceptional mental situation.

However, the reactions observed here went beyond any measure of comprehensible explanations. Here, structural grievances became apparent, from which an urgent need for action must be derived!

7. Constructive suggestions for the revision of the RDI Guidelines

Observed behaviour of FEI officials	Proposal
No reaction to abnormalities in the gait pattern	Clear, precise and regular instruction and instruction of the stewards in order to sensitize the perception of the well-being of the horses, as well as the awareness of the



	external effect and explainability of the competition sport.
Veterinary evaluation of abnormalities in gait patterns	The decision on the situation must include the veterinary assessment, and the FEI must also create a higher authority that takes ethical and public-relevant arguments into account and makes a final decision.
Veterinary evaluation of abnormal tongue behavior	In addition to the mere physical analysis of the integrity of the tongue itself, the psychological component that the horse expresses through the tongue should also be taken into account in a higher authority and finally decided.
No reaction to visible signs of discomfort	Reversal of the burden of proof, according to which, in the sense of compliance with animal welfare, it would have to be clearly proven that the horse's obvious defensive reaction is not due to a feeling of discomfort. Otherwise, the slightest detection problems are always at the expense of the horse.
No reaction to abnormalities against the purpose of the welfare of the horse	Empowering and empowering stewards to object to ALL actions that are against the welfare of the horses, not just the actions that violate FEI rules.
No reaction to abnormalities against the purpose of the welfare of the horse	Empowering and empowering stewards to document ALL actions that they personally consider to be doubtful of the welfare of the horses, in order to bring this within an FEI or independent ethics committee.

Observed handling of horses or material	Proposal
Vaulting: lunge in the snaffle ring	Lunge in cavesson, or an extra ring on the noseband of the snaffle



<p>Vaulting: A horse is doubtful in its mental or physical integrity during training or preparation</p>	<p>When in doubt, always act in the interests of the horse's welfare and only then, if possible, in the interests of the athlete. Provide a replacement horse, which could protect and rehabilitate the horse, which is not entirely undoubted for the competition. The athletes would have no disadvantage and can start. Substitution avoids the risk of misinterpreting the situation and thus publicly ignoring the welfare of the horse.</p>
<p>Show jumping: bridles and bits without restrictions</p>	<p>The slightest doubt about the functional correctness of a noseband or bit must be registered and checked – for your own safety also with the help of a veterinarian. The reversal of the burden of proof and the ethical authority are then to be reintroduced.</p>
<p>Show jumping: bridles and bits without restrictions</p>	<p>The approval of a few selected bits and bridles and their precisely described correct buckle could change a reactive to a proactive role. A mission statement of what modern show jumping should ideally look like could be helpful for this.</p>
<p>Show jumping: bridles and bits without restrictions</p>	<p>In a mission statement, the question should be discussed as to how demanding the course requirements must or may be in order to find a better balance between sporting comparison and appropriate aids as well as the use of materials - from an ethical point of view. There must still be alternative criteria as higher, faster and more technical in order to present and market show jumping in its positive qualities to the public.</p>
<p>Show jumping: draw reins</p>	<p>Urgently needed adaptation and standardisation of the rules so that the draw reins are completely banned.</p>



<p>Noseband buckle: how tight? Measure device ab 01.05.2025</p>	<p>The urgently needed logical further development of the measuring device must be a defined measure of how much pressure may be exerted on the wedge when it is under the noseband, or with how much force it may be moved under the noseband. This would be a measure that takes into account the perception of the horse, the application tolerance would be limited and the equestrian sport would be more transparent and uniform in this respect.</p> <p>If measurement with the wedge is not immediately developed, it would be a step in the wrong direction!</p>
<p>Buckle of the curb chain for lever bits</p>	<p>Employees urgently need better training. The rules must be expanded here by precisely describing the buckle of the curb chain and how to check it.</p> <p>Since the curb bridle is currently prescribed in dressage and the curb chain is an essential element of this bridle, the scope for abuse must not be left open and thus indirectly tolerated.</p>
<p>Dressage: "Competition Mode" in the preparation and in the test</p>	<p>The stewards and judges empower and empower them to identify, name and punish dubious training methods.</p>

Perceived structural problems	Proposal
<p>Stewards' Responsibility</p>	<p>To provide the stewards with other specialist staff, especially for riding lessons, in order to share their responsibilities.</p>
<p>Communication and independence towards the riders</p>	<p>Riders' commitment to adhering to basic ethical rules and the willingness to work together to keep them alive</p>
<p>Risk of corruption due to conflicting interests of overlapping equestrian and promoter sponsors</p>	<p>Establish controls and rules that ensure equality before the rules of all participants and uncover and regulate personal dependencies</p>



Connection of top-class sport to the grassroots has been broken off	Regular exchange of the active riders with riding clubs, but also outside of equestrian sports, while still being able to explain one's own actions

8. Summary and outlook

Illuminating different perspectives

The horse can continue to retain a special and particularly positive meaning in today's society. Classical riding theory, which is recognised as an intangible world cultural heritage, testifies to a wealth of knowledge that has grown over time, which must be preserved through disciplined implementation and explained with the help of modern scientific methods. This can lead to a broad acceptance, supported by an increasingly less animal-oriented society, to breed, keep and use horses in equestrian and tournament sports.

The current challenge is evident in events such as this World Cup final, where particularly strong media interest offers top-class competition equestrian sport a showcase that significantly shapes the general public perception of equestrian sport. Here, the equestrian image has suffered greatly in recent years due to scandals and their increasing visibility on the Internet. Public pressure is increasing and requires all players within the horse industry to deal with habits in a reflective manner.

As in other sports, there is also the danger in equestrian sport that top-class sport will become a microcosm of the broad base and that its rules can no longer be united by a more general understanding of how to deal with horses or even that they can no longer be explained technically in the sense of classical riding theory.

All players in the equestrian industry must have an interest in ensuring that equestrian sport continues to be supported and accepted by the public in the future.

In contrast to other sports, the horse as a living being should always be the focus of attention and should be more than sports equipment by including an ethical perspective. The needs of the horse must therefore always be weighted more strongly than the personal goals of riders, expectations of horse owners, trainers or even organizers. This is a moral tension between personal success or failure, financial gain or loss, and responsibility towards the horse.

The FEI, as the International Equestrian Federation, has grown over more than 100 years in a cross-generational process and maintains a very comprehensive set of rules.



In all rules, regulations, instructions, etc., the well-being of the horse is always described as the highest good, abuse is defined and many possibilities are recorded to recognize and punish it. This is particularly evident in excerpts from the General Regulations (see Appendix V).

The control mechanisms are also described in detail, so that it is easier than on other occasions to protest officially, especially against abuse (General Regulations, Article 161.5, see Annex V). Furthermore, in this regard, there are further texts in each discipline-specific rule, unfortunately developed from practice, such as in the rules for show jumping (see Appendix VI).

We see a great challenge in adapting a structure that has grown over such a long period of time to the needs of a modern, faster and digital society.

We continue to see the dangers of abuse in many ways and the need to increase the speed at which rules are questioned, reviewed and adapted.

Based on the impressions on site, the practical implementation of the FEI seemed to us more like an administration of established habits and increasingly threatens to lose credibility by the fact that existing rules are not sufficiently implemented in the interests of the horses, but also by the fact that there is too little rule consistency between the disciplines, as well as international (FEI) and national rules (FN).

In show jumping, for example, the draw reins are allowed internationally except during the completion of the show jumping course (during the award ceremony also allowed in the course), nationally (Germany) overcoming obstacles with draw reins is prohibited, in dressage the draw reins is strictly prohibited internationally and nationally (Germany) throughout (even during the award ceremony). This unequal treatment cannot be explained professionally and leads to dissatisfaction inside and outside the organization.

The lack of rule execution for the correct tightening of the curb is also a loophole that indirectly tolerates abuse.

In dressage, the judging eye should know and measure the classical basics again. Presented movements must be discussed transparently between judges, trainers and riders so that the training of the horses can be carried out with uniform objectives in the interests of the horses.

We would like to see a federation that manages less reactively, but proactively - with a clear corporate philosophy that focuses on the horse and a transparent, self-confident and professionally sound communication strategy. From this, the bridge between aspiration and reality can be made possible - and the mediation of both internally and externally.

The marketing strategy "be a guardian" aims to convey this character, but it is still doubtful whether the intention can be exemplified by the FEI officials and internalized by all stakeholders.

There is an institution, the Equestrian Community Integrity Unit (ECIU), which is supposed to ensure the integrity of equestrian sports, but only in dependence on the FEI (see Appendix VII).



We as the EQC and as the organization R-Haltenswert were seen more as opponents in terms of communication, one had more doubt, if not fear.

It seemed like an institutional guilty conscience when very nervous, distrustful, and also anxious reactions were shown to critical inquiries or in cooperation with another supervisory body. And so it seemed very unhealthy in which tension the FEI worked torn between public pressure, sponsors and riders and appeared with inconsistent and inexplicable rules in a reactive compulsion to justify itself.

What are those responsible afraid of? Our impression is that the dependence on the riders and the sponsors must be solved. The FEI as an institution should promote its independence.

We would like to see a direction like the FEI itself formulates as a guideline for its stewards, but more offensive and binding in the interests of the horses. In addition, the impression was created that the stewards have to bear a great deal of responsibility for a disproportionately large number of sensitive issues (see Annex VIII). Here, the role of the stewards should be rethought in order to distribute the burden on several shoulders.

A precise definition of goals can improve the implementation problem, in particular riders should be motivated to make a voluntary commitment to prioritize ethical standards, so that riding no longer has to be publicly justified, but can stand up for equestrian values together.

In the practical implementation, there was no clear corporate philosophy for the welfare of the horse recognizable and the prevailing culture had signs of hiding, covering up, justifying and especially wanting to please the riders, without the implementation of its own clear position, its own, transparently communicated profile - in the interests of the horses - having been recognizably implemented.

The regulations urgently need to be adapted in order to become capable of acting vis-à-vis the manufacturers (of bridles, auxiliary/corrective reins and bits) and the public. A proactive, independent ethical control body, as well as ethical and moral controlling, could examine and secure a positive mission statement or resolve the risk of corruption due to conflicting interests of overlapping rider and organizer sponsors.

The all-important factor remains the correct implementation. A transparent and high-profile audit of this implementation with a corresponding quality seal can enhance compliance and reveal the habituation to weaknesses. This examination must also be carried out independently.

The many positive and grateful feedbacks in the course of our work for the organization R-Haltenswert reinforce our perception that the current topics in equestrian sports are highly topical and important - and thus have a great significance.

This is a scope that goes far beyond equestrian sports. All players in equestrian sport must be aware of their responsibility to ensure that their behaviour and its external impact are also perceived outside equestrian sport.

The greatest danger to the urgently needed observance of the welfare of the horses is the belief that enough has already been done to achieve this.



9. Appendix

Annex I

(<https://inside.fei.org/sites/default/files/FEI%20General%20Regulations%20-Effective%201%20January2025%20-%20clean.pdf>)

General Regulations, 24th edition, 1 January 2020, updates effective 1 January 2025

APPENDIX H - FEI OFFICIALS' CODE OF CONDUCT

As an FEI Official I undertake to respect all FEI Rules and Regulations at all times, and in particular the FEI Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest Policy and the FEI Code of Conduct for the Welfare of the Horse.

I am aware that I am a representative of the FEI while officiating at any FEI Event (hereinafter the "Event/s"). I am also conscious of my role as an authority and of the associated obligation to have adequate knowledge of the principles of equestrian sport and the relevant FEI Rules and Regulations, and to apply them at all times in a fair and consistent way.

I will fulfill all FEI requirements (including maintaining the necessary qualification) relevant to each Event to which I am appointed.

While I am officiating:

- I will act in an appropriate and respectful manner towards humans and animals, paying constant attention to their safety and I will carry out all duties in a professional manner.
- I will refrain from consuming alcohol and I will not use any substances and/or medications that would impair my judgement.
- I will not compete at the Event.
- I will be willing to answer the questions of stakeholders (including but not limited to Athletes, Owners and Trainers, Organisers, Grooms and my colleagues). I will take the time to politely and objectively explain my decisions where possible.



- I will be familiar with all the relevant FEI Rules and Regulations and will be well prepared for every Event.
- I will cooperate with the Organiser of the Event and with my colleagues.
- I will be punctual and dress appropriately.

I commit to avoid any actual or perceived conflict of interest. A conflict of interest is defined as any personal, professional or financial relationship, including relationships of family members that could influence or be perceived to influence objectivity when representing or conducting business or other dealings for or on behalf of the FEI.

I will maintain a neutral, independent and fair position towards Athletes, Owners, Trainers, Grooms, Organisers, other Officials and stakeholders. Financial and/or personal interests will never influence my officiating duties and I will spare no effort to avoid any such perception. I agree not to make any financial contributions, donations in cash or in-kind or otherwise to an Organiser in exchange for being appointed as an Official to the Event. For the avoidance of any doubt, the direct payment of travel expenses and/or accommodation expenses by an FEI Official is acceptable.

I will not engage in nationalistic judging. Activities that lead or may lead to a conflict of interest when officiating at an FEI Event include but are not limited to:

- Acting as a Chef d'Equipe or being responsible /co-responsible for selecting teams and/or individuals or training Athletes within a NF present at the Event, if the teams and/or individuals participate in a competition falling within the level and age group of the authority of the Official.
- Being the Owner/part-Owner of a Horse taking part in a competition that I am officiating at.
- Being in a situation of financial dependence or gaining financial profit from participating Owners, Athletes, Trainers or Organisers (excluding any payment(s) permitted under the FEI Rules and Regulations, such as per diems). The same rule applies with regard to National Federations or other organisations involved in the Event, if the dependence exceeds a regular employment. Employees of participating National Federations cannot act as President of the Ground Jury, Chief Steward, Veterinary Delegates, or Course Designer at Official International Events, International Championships and Games.
- Having a close personal relationship with an Athlete competing in a competition that I am officiating at.
- Having recently treated a Horse competing in a Competition that I am officiating at.

On becoming aware of a potential Conflict of Interest I undertake to promptly notify the FEI HQ (or where the conflict only arises and/or is identified on-site, the President of the Ground Jury) of any of the above or other possible conflicts of interest or circumstances that may be perceived as such. Conflicts must be avoided whenever practicable. However, conflicts may be linked to experience and expertise that is necessary to qualify Officials. The specific balance between conflict and expertise is regulated by the General Regulations and the relevant Sport Rules.

In the course of my duties or when representing the FEI I will refrain from making any public statements, including to the media or in social media, that might cause harm to the FEI or to equestrian sport in general. This includes statements that might create a perception of bias.

I will not place bets on Athletes and Horses competing at FEI Events or otherwise receive any financial or other gain as a product of a particular result.



The breach of any obligation assumed under this Code of Conduct and/or any breach of the FEI Rules and Regulations may lead to any of the following sanctions as stipulated in the FEI Rules:

- Warning letter
- Obligation to attend an FEI course and/or to pass an exam
- End
- Suspension from officiating duties (provisional or for a stated period of time)
- Removal from the relevant and appropriate FEI lists of Officials
- Any other sanctions as stated in the relevant FEI Rules and Regulations.

Annex II

(https://inside.fei.org/sites/default/files/FEI_Dressage_Rules_2025_Clean_Version.pdf)

PREAMBLE

The object of Dressage is the development of the horse as a happy athlete in a positive mental & physical state through harmonious education, allowing the horse to be calm, supple, loose and flexible, but also confident, attentive and keen, thus achieving perfect understanding with the rider.

These qualities are revealed by:

- The freedom and regularity of the paces,
- The harmony, lightness and ease of the movements,
- The lightness of the forehand and the engagement of the hindquarters, originating from a lively impulsion,
- The acceptance of the bridle, with throughness without any tension or resistance.

Annex III

(https://inside.fei.org/sites/default/files/Jumping_Rules_2025_clean.pdf)

JUMPING RULES

27th edition, effective 1 January 2022

Updates effective 1 January 2025

ITEM 257 SADDLERY



1. In the Competition arena

1.1. Blinkers and fly masks that cover the Horse's eyes are forbidden.

1.2. Leather, sheepskin or similar material may be used on each cheek piece of the bridle providing the material does not exceed

three centimetres in diameter measured from the Horse's cheek.

1.3. Only unrestricted running martingales are allowed; no more than one martingale stopper per rein may be used. Reins may

not be configured in such a way as to cause a running martingale to function as a standing martingale.

1.4. There are no restrictions on bits or nosebands. However, the Ground Jury has the right, based on veterinary advice, to forbid

the use of a bit or noseband that may cause injury to the Horse. Art. 1044.8 of the Veterinary Regulations applies in relation

to the permitted tightness of the noseband.

Reins must be attached to the bit(s) or directly to the bridle. A maximum of two pairs of reins may be used. If two pairs of

reins are used, one pair must be attached to the bit or directly to the bridle. Gags and hackamores are allowed.

1.5. Draw reins (running reins) are forbidden in the Competition arena except during prize giving ceremonies and march-past

parades.

1.6 Failure to comply with any of the provisions listed in Art. 257.1.1 – 257.1.5 will incur elimination (see JRs Art. 241.3.21).

Annex IV

Effect and application of the curb

The curb reins are buckled in the rings at the bottom of the lower tree. On the one hand, the cheek pieces are attached to the eyelet of the upper tree, which then merge further into the headpiece. On the other hand, there are also the curb chain hooks in which the curb chain is hooked.

This results in the assumption of the curb reins that the lower tree rotates backwards and the upper tree forwards from the rider's point of view. The length ratio of the upper to the lower tree determines the power of the leverage effect. A ratio of 1:1 to 1:2, or specifically up to 5cm long upper tree and up to 10 cm long lower tree is permitted.



The forward rotation of the upper tree causes a pull over the cheek piece to the headpiece, which is limited by the curb chain. If the curb chain is buckled shorter, i.e. fewer chain links from one hook to the other, the curb bit rotates less and the pressure on the lower jaw (curb chain), tongue and chest (mouthpiece, i.e. rod) acts earlier and more directly. If the curb chain is buckled longer, i.e. more chain links from one hook to the other, then the curb bit rotates more strongly and the pull on the headpiece increases until the limiting effect of the curb chain begins.

The balanced measure by the rotation of the upper tree (by the lever of the lower tree) with effect on the headpiece on the one hand and effect on the lower jaw, the tongue and the drawers on the other side is a rotation angle of 45 degrees to the mouth gap.

If this angle is not reached when the curb chain begins to take effect, it is called a bristling curb, if the angle is greater until the curb chain acts, it is called a falling curb.

The curb is introduced in dressage competition in Germany from class L and this information on the effect and correct fastening of the curb bit is a pedagogical prerequisite for the use of this bridle.

Thus, they are also known to a larger audience than just those within Grand Prix racing. For example, it is a theoretical and practical component of the exam for the profession of horse keeper classic riding training, or the riding badge class 2.

The use of the curb should be an indication of advanced skill in riding. There is the term "curb maturity" for this - both for humans and horses.

A balanced base seat, which allows independent rein aids, as well as a particularly sensitive rein action, which dominates the distinction between snaffle and curb action, is considered a general feature.

Annex V

(<https://inside.fei.org/sites/default/files/FEI%20General%20Regulations%20-Effective%201%20January2025%20-%20clean.pdf>)

GENERAL REGULATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Article 100 - General Regulations and Sport Rules

1. The General Regulations (GRs) are established so that individual Athletes and teams of Athletes from different National Federations (NFs) may compete against each other under fair and equal conditions with the welfare of Horse as paramount. At multi-disciplinary FEI



World and/or Continental Championships, the Organiser must provide similar benefits and conditions to all participating Horses and Athletes, for example in relation to transport, accommodation, meals etc.

7. Responsibilities of NFs:

7.1. To ensure that the welfare of the Horse is paramount and that it is never subordinated to competitive or commercial influence.

Article 141 - Protection of Horses

In cases of illness or injury during an Event, the Ground Jury will decide, after consulting the Veterinary Delegate or Commission, whether the Horse may continue in that or subsequent Competitions.

Article 142 - Abuse of Horses

1. No person may abuse a Horse during an Event or at any other time. "Abuse" means an action or omission which causes or is likely to cause pain or unnecessary discomfort to a Horse, including, but not limited to:

- (i) To whip or beat a Horse excessively;
- (ii) To subject a Horse to any kind of electric shock device;
- (iii) To use spurs excessively or persistently;
- (iv) To jab the Horse in the mouth with the bit or any other device;
- (v) To compete using an exhausted, lame or injured Horse;
- (vi) To "rap" a Horse.
- (vii) To abnormally sensitise or desensitise any part of a Horse;
- (viii) To leave a Horse without adequate food, drink or exercise;
- (ix) To use any device or equipment which causes excessive pain to the Horse upon knocking down an obstacle.

2. Any person witnessing an Abuse must report it without delay. If an Abuse is witnessed during or in direct connection with an Event, it should be reported as a Protest (Article 161) to an Official. If the Abuse is witnessed at any other time it should be reported to the FEI through the FEI Horse Abuse Reporting Form available on inside.fei.org. Following a review of the report, the FEI shall take a Decision as to whether or not to open disciplinary proceedings (either through the Administrative Disciplinary Procedure or by referring the matter to the FEI Tribunal).

Article 161 - Protests

General Principles

161.1 Protests may be lodged against any person or body involved in any capacity in an International Event or otherwise subject to the jurisdiction of the FEI including for failure to observe the Statutes, GRs or Sport Rules or violation of the common principles of behaviour, fairness, or accepted standards of sportsmanship, whether occurring during or in connection with an International Event or, in the case of Abuse of Horse, at any other time.



Authority to File Protests

161.4 Protests may only be lodged by:

- the FEI,
- Presidents or Secretary Generals of NFs,
- Officials,
- Chefs d'Equipe or, if there is no Chef d'Equipe, by a Person Responsible or a Team Veterinarian responsible for Horses taking part in the Event.

161.5 Protests concerning an abuse of Horse may be lodged by any person or body. See Article 142 (Abuse of Horse).

Annex VI

(https://inside.fei.org/sites/default/files/Jumping_Rules_2025_clean.pdf)

JUMPING RULES

27th edition, effective 1 January 2022

Updates effective 1 January 2025

ARTICLE 243 ABUSE OF HORSES (SEE ALSO GRs ART. 142)

2.2. Excessive use of the whip

- The whip may not be used to vent an Athlete's temper. Such use is always excessive;
- The use of a whip on a Horse's head is always excessive use;
- A Horse should never be hit more than three times in a row. If a Horse's skin is broken, it is always considered excessive use of the whip;
- The whip is not to be used after Elimination;

An Athlete identified as misusing or excessively using the whip will be disqualified and may be fined at the discretion of the Ground Jury

Annex VII

(<https://inside.fei.org/fei/fei-reporting-hub/eciu:>)

The Equestrian Community Integrity Unit (ECIU)

The Equestrian Community Integrity Unit (ECIU) supports the FEI in the investigation of any potential violation brought to their attention. For the purposes of such review, the ECIU may



upon the FEI's request and approval, conduct specific investigations and collaborate with relevant public authorities.

The role of the ECIU is to perform the following functions:

- Review and/or investigate (if applicable) any alleged breaches of the FEI Codes of Conduct, FEI Code of Ethics, or any other FEI Rules and Regulations that are referred to the ECIU by the FEI; The ECIU is authorised to appoint third parties to conduct the investigation and/or assist them with conducting the investigation, subject to FEI's prior approval.
- May review and/or enquire regarding investigations conducted by the FEI and/or on behalf of the FEI and/or in cooperation with the FEI to ensure that they are reasonable, proportionate, and in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies of the FEI.
- The ECIU must not disclose any confidential information to third-parties other than persons under appropriate burden of confidentiality and who are required to have the information in order to carry out the discussions regarding the investigation. In particular, the ECIU shall not communicate publicly on any investigation unless agreed by the FEI or required by law to do so.
- If necessary, propose to the FEI specific expertise that may be needed in support of the investigation.
- Provide an independent report to the FEI following an ECIU investigation, if requested by the FEI.
- Report to the FEI President or their designee(s) and in accordance with Article 43.3 of the FEI Statutes if applicable; and
- Provide a written Report to the FEI General Assembly on the activities of the ECIU.

Annex VIII

(https://inside.fei.org/system/files/Dressage_Stewards%20Guidelines.pdf).

THE STEWARDS GUIDELINES

Be friendly, do not disturb the riders

Impartiality: same way of stewarding for all disciplines

No politics: no influence from external factors (Press, Gossip...)

A neutral, keen, watchful eye

Presence more important than intervention

Discretion in case of intervention

Explain to the riders instead of negative remarks

Police manner to be avoided

In case of intervention: as soon as possible a psychological approach (do not wait until the rider has to go into the main arena)



All Depends on the way you intervene

It is impossible to make exact rules in relation to what can be accepted and what cannot be accepted.

To deal with the tension of competition as well as trainers and competitors (and owners) the intervention has to be done with diplomacy, with a kind eye towards the horses.

All depends on:

- * The behaviour of a rider, on a specific day, in specific weather and footing conditions?
- * Knowledge of the rules by the rider/trainer?
- * Do they know they are violating rules?
- * Do they violate the rules on purpose?
- * What will be the reaction when you intervene:
 - Do they agree with the remark you made?
 - Do they want some more explanation?
 - Do they not accept? Do they protest? Are they rude?

In case of abuse or maltreat: no excuse

Where there is an abuse or ill-treatment of horse: act immediately with discretion and tact;

Immediately put a stop to the abuse and explain to the rider the reason for the intervention;

Inform the President of the Ground Jury of the incident and of the action taken;

Draw the attention of the Treating Veterinarian (define exactly the circumstances) to the incident (injuries, irregular breathing, excessive sweating, general health problems);

Carry out the decision of the President of the Ground Jury.

The Steward must understand the difference between “abuse” and “correction”.

The Steward must be able to go into the schooling area and stop rough riding, rough and discourteous behaviour.

Always immediately act in cases of exaggerated sweating, irregular breathing (take into account the weather conditions).

Always immediately act in case of overriding, signs of exhaustion (if necessary ask the assistance of the Treating Veterinarian).

Long, deep and round riding is accepted, unless used excessively or prolonged (hyper-flexion of the neck). There is a danger when copied by unskilled riders. There is a fine line between training and overtraining!

Stewards must be vigilant in the stables, reporting to the FEI Veterinarian/ Ground Jury items with which they feel uncomfortable, such as the use of poultice on a horse’s lip to reduce swelling and pain.

Trainers are not permitted to ride horses at events in the back arena using prohibited tack etc...

It is not permitted to return to the schooling arena following a poor performance in the competitions arena and school the horse abusively.

The Steward should intervene if the whip is used three times.

What are injuries:



- Blood on the spur(s)/ flank(s)
- Blood in the bit/ mouth
- Swelling on the flank(s) (spurs)
- Burn behind the ears (from sweating/ scouring)
- Swelling on the flanks/ hind quarters (use of the whip)
- Burn at the girth (from sweating/ scouring)
- Wounds on the leg/ feet/ hoofs
- Blood coming from the nose

Team spirit

- Cooperate with athlete/ trainers
- Cooperate with other Officials
- Cooperate with Organisation Committee

Each member, within her/his own responsibilities, has to try to work together with the others with only one idea in mind:

To participate in an event, where everybody wants to help each other, and where horses and sportsmanship are more important than personal profit.

We must understand that we also represent the rights of the riders to ensure fair competition for all.

The athlete should understand that Stewards are there to help/ assist

General information

Starting order (call up)

Paddock schedule

Stable security

Help in solving personal problems

Help with contacts (names, telephone numbers, addresses...)

Intermediary to help and solve problems between riders-organizers-Ground Jury

Help with information concerning the Rules (FEI Dressage Regulations, FEI General Regulations, FEI Dressage Stewarding Manual...)

A Steward has an educational role

Making the athletes apply the Rules minding the spirit behind those Rules;

Strict but human;

Impartiality;

Give them the benefit of the doubt;

Never discuss when feelings start running high;

Keep in mind that athletes/ trainers are under a lot of pressure and that they don't need much to overreact.

Your behaviour will be crucial here!!! (control yourself).

Avoid a quarrel that will end up in having a blazing row.

If you have to make a remark:

- Be polite
- Be discrete
- Not in public

External factors in stewarding

Third party (family, fans, friends): Partiality

Press and television: Sensation

Other athletes/ trainers: Jealousy



Contradiction in communication: Be Clear and unanimous

Organizer: Conflict regulations – Rules

EADCMR control: Apply the Rules

Extreme weather conditions:

In close consultation with the President of the Ground Jury and the Organizer, we can make propositions (very early warming up, change of training areas, longer training sessions in the main arena...).

Epidemics:

Guidelines from the Health Department through the Treating Vet.

Annex IX

(https://inside.fei.org/sites/default/files/Annexes_Stewards_Manual_Jumping_Mark-Up_23_June_2020.pdf)

Manual for Jumping Stewards – Annexes (November 2009, updated 23 June 2020)

ANNEX XV - TACK, SADDLERY AND DRESS GUIDELINES

To protect the welfare of the horse, Stewards must ensure that the tack is fitted properly so that it does not cause pain or injury to the horse. Special care must be taken concerning nosebands that have been excessively tightened, regardless of their position. It must be possible to place two fingers between the horse's cheek and the noseband; both fingers are to be placed side by side, flat against the horse's cheek. Furthermore, Stewards must not allow any noseband to be positioned so low and tight that it interferes with the horse's breathing as this would be against the welfare of the horse.

Appendix X

(<https://inside.fei.org/sites/default/files/2025%20Veterinary%20Regulations%20-%20clean.pdf>)

Veterinary Regulations

PART III: STEWARDING



Article 1018

Stewards' Role

1. Stewards support and safeguard the welfare of the Horses and Athletes. They must prevent any form of illegal practice that may jeopardise Horse welfare and/or disrupt fair play.
2. VR violations witnessed must be immediately reported to the VD and/or GJ through the Chief Steward where possible.

Annex XI

(https://inside.fei.org/sites/default/files/Annexes_Stewards_Manual_Jumping_Mark-Up_23_June_2020.pdf)

Manual for Jumping Stewards – Annexes (November 2009, updated 23 June 2020)

ANNEX XV - TACK, SADDLERY AND DRESS GUIDELINES

6. Auxiliary Reins and Nosebands

A maximum of two pairs of reins may be used. If two pairs of reins are used, one pair must be

attached to the bit or directly to the bridle. If one pair of reins is used, they must be attached to the bit(s) or directly to the bridle as per Art. 257.1.4; they may not be run through rings without a fixed point of attachment to the bridle. In the competition arena only one martingale stopper per rein is allowed. The stopper must be positioned between the ring of the martingale and the attachment of the rein to the bit, hackamore or bridle. Reins may not be configured in such a way as to cause a running martingale to function as a standing martingale.

The Thiedemann rein as pictured below is not allowed in the competition arena, however is allowed in the practice/warm-up arena.

To protect the welfare of the horse, Stewards must ensure that the tack is fitted properly so that it does not cause pain or injury to the horse. Special care must be taken concerning nosebands that have been excessively tightened, regardless of their position. It must be possible to place two fingers between the horse's cheek and the noseband; both fingers are to be placed side by side, flat against the horse's cheek. Furthermore, Stewards must not allow any noseband to be positioned so low and tight that it interferes with the horse's breathing as this would be against the welfare of the horse.



Annex XII

(https://inside.fei.org/sites/default/files/FEI_Dressage_Rules_2025_Clean_Version.pdf)

FEI Dressage Rules (26th edition, 1 January 2023, including updates effective 1 January 2025)

ARTICLE 434 SADDLERY – EQUIPMENT

2. Bridle with noseband.

2.1.7. A double bridle must have a cavesson noseband and bridoon and curb with curb chain. A combined noseband may be used without the lower “flash” strap. Neither a cavesson noseband nor a curb chain may ever be as tightly fixed so as to harm the Horse.

3.3. Curb Bits.

3.3.1. The length of the lever arm below the mouth piece of the curb bit is limited to ten centimetres (10 cm). The upper cheek must not be longer than the lower cheek and must not exceed five centimetres (5 cm). If the curb has a sliding mouthpiece, the lever arm of the curb bit below the mouth piece should not measure more than ten centimetres (10 cm) when the mouth piece is at the uppermost position.

3.3.2. Curbs may have straight or S-shaped cheeks. They may have rotating lever arms.

3.3.3. The mouthpiece may be straight or shaped to allow tongue relief. The maximum height of the deviation is thirty millimetres (30mm) from the lower part of tongue side to the highest part of the deviation. The widest part of the deviation must be where the mouthpiece contacts the tongue and must have a minimum width of thirty millimetres (30mm).

3.3.4. The curb chain can be made of metal or leather or a combination. Cover for curb chain can be made of leather, rubber or sheep skin. Curb chain hooks can be fixed or not fixed. Lip strap and rubber, leather or sheepskin cover for curb chain are optional.