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## FOCUS REVIEW ON SPORT HORSE WELFARE

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### • Abstract

As an overall, horse welfare refers to the well-being and the quality of life of horses. This includes ensuring that horses are provided with proper nutrition, stable, veterinary care, training, and social intra and inter specific interaction. It involves protecting horses from harm, abuse, neglect, and ensuring their physical and emotional needs are met. Horse welfare is essential for promoting health, happiness, and longevity of horses, as well as fostering positive relationships between humans and horses. Welfare in the equestrian activities mirroring the ethical and responsible treatment of horses during mainly in all aspects of training activities. This includes ensuring that horses are provided with proper equipment that fits well and does not cause discomfort or injury, using appropriate training methods that prioritize the horse's physical and mental well-being, and monitoring the horse's health and fitness levels to prevent overexertion or injury. Sport horse welfare involves creating a positive and respectful relationship between the rider and the horse, as well as promoting a safe and supportive environment for both the horse and the rider. Prioritizing welfare in equestrians is essential for the health, happiness, and longevity of the horse, as well as for the enjoyment and safety of the rider.

•**Keywords:** sport horse, welfare, equestrian activities

Almost all over the world and in a large majority of cases, the horses are in the immediately presence of the human being. The welfare of these animals owned as pets, working, sporting for leisure even breeding has a great rising interest over the last century. Especially the equestrianism for any level is under the pressure of the public view and the reports on abuse seems to be rising. Competitive Equine Sport is important to society in terms of spectator enjoyment, benefits to human mental and physical health and economic impact. However, it is so true that the equine sport exposes animals to possible physical and psychological harms. A large number of animals are involved, in sports including horse racing, showjumping, eventing, dressage, polo, endurance, reining, showing and carriage driving, vaulting, working equitation, archery or others.

### • Rules, theories, practice and research

A Code of Conduct was introduced by FEI since 1990 and has subsequently been updated. This Code must be published in schedules of all international events. The FEI also recommends that the Code to be published in the programs of events and that it receives the widest possible publicity. The text of the Code in the moment of born was an ensemble as follows:

- In all equestrian sports the horse must be considered paramount.
- The well-being of the horse shall be above the demands of breeders, trainers, riders, owners, dealers, organizers, sponsors or officials.
- All handling and veterinary treatment must ensure the health and welfare of the horse. The highest standards of nutrition, health, sanitation and safety shall be encouraged and maintained at all times.
- Adequate provision must be made for ventilation, feeding, watering and maintaining a healthy environment during transportation.
- Emphasis should be placed on increasing education in training and equestrian practices and on promoting scientific studies in equine health. In the interests of the horse, the fitness and competence of the rider shall be regarded as essential. All riding and training methods must take account of the horse as a living entity and must not include any technique considered by the FEI to be abusive.
- National Federations should establish adequate controls in order that all persons and bodies under their jurisdiction respect the welfare of the horse. The national and international Rules and Regulations in equestrian sport regarding the health and welfare of the horse must be adhered to not only during national and international events, but also in training.
- Competition Rules and Regulations shall be continually reviewed to ensure such welfare.

### • Conclusions

In terms of improving equine welfare, further research studies exploring the underlying factors causing the discrepancy between equestrian desired and actual horse husbandry practices in some facilities are warranted.

Further studies are needed to explore equestrians' perceptions of equine emotional states. Meanwhile, it is suggested that the dissemination of knowledge about recognizing positive and negative affective states in horses continues as a contribution to safeguarding equine welfare.

### • Introduction



LUCKY OLD BOY - vaulting horse (personal photo)

How we think about the welfare of the competition horses is a topic addressed theme and pointed from various points of view. In 2014 a paper in Equine Veterinary Education, reviewed approaches to assessing equine welfare. The authors focused particularly on the use of the "Five Freedoms" framework, basically developed for use in farm animals and originated from an old welfare British report dated in 1965, developed and adapted as an advice for horse owners and referenced in the Great Britain National Equine Welfare Council's Code of Practice. The five freedoms taken into consideration were:

- Freedom from hunger and thirst
- Freedom from discomfort
- Freedom from pain, injury and disease
- Freedom to express normal behaviour
- Freedom from fear and distress

The Five Freedoms Theory is useful as an accessible and easily adopted framework for analyzing equine management systems, and encourage improvements in equine welfare.

### • Acknowledgements

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