



FEI
Mr.
Ingmar de Vos
Secretary General
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1006 Lausanne

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Endurance and Animal Welfare and Sport Equity

Dear Secretary General, Dear Ingmar

On behalf of many worried riders, trainers and officials, but also observers in the public, media and animal protection circles, the Swiss Equestrian Federation feels obliged to broach the issue of the negative evolution of the FEI discipline Endurance in the last years.

Without accusing most of the riders and officials, themselves trying to perform an equestrian sport respecting the well being of their horses in a correct and fair manner, the actual situation of FEI Endurance is taking forms that the Swiss Equestrian Federation cannot accept any longer. Reasons for this statement are due to severe conditions not respecting a) animal welfare and b) the equity of competitions.

Hereby we abstain from listing the multitude of witnessed and documented cruelties to horses (partially documented on the web), including shocking veterinarian reports concerning health issues, tremendous fracture frequencies (see also Nagy et al., 2012; Coombs and Fisher, 2012; Mishef et al., 2010) and dangerous treatment protocols, speed-inducing changes in topography of the competitions, as well as cheating actions before and during the Endurance races, in parallel with the non-taking of responsibility and function of certain officials (eg. non-reporting of irregularities and problems) and FEI staff.

In this light, only two facts occurring in the last years are brought exemplary and concretely forward:

Example no 1: Incidences against the animal welfare and FEI code of conduct

At this time we observe a dramatic incidence of positive medication and doping cases, making Endurance the clear "leader" of detected use of forbidden substances.

According to the FEI webpage (www.fei.org, Tables 1 - 4), from the 1.1.2010 until the 31.12.2012, 41 Endurance horses were found to be positive, 31.7 % of those with "Banned Substances" like various anabolic substances and 68.3% with so-called "Controlled Medication Substances", a lot of them given as cocktail mixtures. This resulted in 10 "Administrative Procedures" (= provided that: no more than one Controlled Medication Substance (including its metabolites) is detected in the sample; the Person Responsible and/or member of the Support Personnel (where applicable)

and the horse are first-time offenders; the event during which the sample was taken from the horse is not part of the Olympic Games, Paralympic Games or World Equestrian Games) and not less than 31 Tribunal cases (75.6%). In comparison to these numbers in the same period, the FEI discipline Jumping - with 31064 FEI registered horses in 2011 vs. 9656 Endurance horses (EEF 2012) - counts a total of 29 cases (27.5 % due to the use of banned substances), resulting in 17 Administrative Procedures and only 12 Tribunal cases (41.4 % vs. 75.6% in Endurance). Notably 82.9 % of the Endurance cases originate from horses attributed to nations of FEI zone VII (eg. UAE, KSA, BRN, QAT and JOR). On the 28.2.2013 , 13 (= 65%) of the total 20 suspended riders are Endurance riders (vs. 3 x Jumping, 2 x Driving, 1x Dressage, 1 x Vaulting) and are coming from UAE (7), KSA (2), BRN (2), JOR (1) and POR (1) (Table 5: Table of Suspensions, last update: 22.2.2013, www.fei.org). Also worth mentioning is that not less than three medal winners (all of them riders from the UAE) at Endurance World and Open European Championships in the last 8 years have been found to be positive (Gold Medal WEC Dubai, UAE, 2005; Bronze Medal Open EEC Compiègne, FRA, 2005; Gold Medal Open EEC Barroca d'Alva, POR, 2007). This high number of observations is to be interpreted as only the tip of the iceberg and demonstrates a clear disrespect of certain riders, trainers and veterinarians concerning the welfare of horses in sport and the FEI code of conduct.

Example no 2: Incidences against equity in competition

Mostly in relation to sponsorships/ supporting of organizers it has become usual that closed tent houses are constructed, surrounding the vet gates and serving as recovery space, offering all possible comfort for certain riders (Fig 1 - 3. World Championships Euston Park 2012). Officially and at a further distance from the vet gate zone, organizers put tents that are open and unprotected from the weather at disposal for all (other) riders. This situation is in extreme contrast to all sporting rules aiming for equal conditions for all participants at an event. Notably all the winners of the individual medals as well as the team gold medal winners at the World Championships 2012 profited from such luxurious conditions in the vet gate.

We therefore ask the FEI to take immediate and rigorous efficient measures against the

- misuse of Endurance horses by intensifying medication controls, especially in horses from nations known to have a high frequency of positive cases and disrespect of the FEI code of conduct, and strict application of the foreseen FEI penalty system in case of positive findings, equally for all competitors
- non-equity of competition and competitor conditions by generally forbidding private and closed housing on the sporting venue, allowing fair competition, and strict and equal application of competition regulations (eg. regulated access of persons per horse, control of manipulations and actions against isolation of horses by surrounding personnel, equal procedure of horse exams, no officials with conflict of interest, etc.) with severe sanctions in case of non-conformity, equally for all competitors and officials

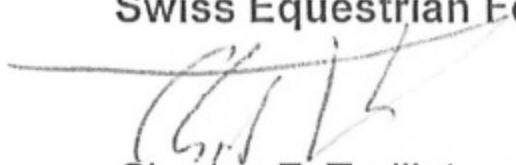
In addition, a system should be approved for temporarily excluding nations with high doping and non-conformity frequencies from international championships. Alternatively, a transparent separation of Endurance into official FEI Endurance, national Endurance and private Endurance (without qualifying status for FEI competitions) should be considered.

In this context, we inform you, that an international movement shall be created by riders, trainers and officials, who are not willing to accept the described situation of FEI Endurance any longer. This broad movement of actives in the sport will aim for decent actions at the competitions as well as via the social media.


The nature of this letter is not of intent accusing involved persons or even excluding them from the sport. However, it is only when these urgent and vital important measures shall be met, that FEI Endurance will be allowed to take a necessary and positive turn, hence leading to a fair and above all clean sport respecting sport equity and the well-being and integrity of horses and riders alike. In addition, this critical situation described above is of highest potential explosive relevance, putting at risk the image of all other FEI equestrian disciplines, with 66.5% (EEF 2012) of the events 2011 based in Europe. Therefore immediate action by the FEI is indispensable.

With best regards

Swiss Equestrian Federation



Charles F. Trollet
President



Peter Christen
Member of the Board

Sources:

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