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January 6, 2014

Dr. Paul McGreevy
The University of Sydney
Rm 206, R.M.C. Gunn Building (B19)
NWS 2006 Australia

Dear Dr. McGreevy,

I am happy to inform you that the Humane Society of the United States has adopted the following endorsement of your noseband taper proposal. We appreciate the work you are doing to help protect horses.

Noseband Taper Endorsement

Based on research conducted by Dr. Paul McGreevy, DVM, the Equine Protection Department of The Humane Society of the United States [HSUS] supports action that would eliminate the use of excessively tight nosebands presently in use in training and competition. The 2011 study conducted by Dr. McGreevy et al titled "The effect of double bridles and jaw-clamping nosebands on temperature of eyes and facial skin of horses" concludes that the commonly used two finger measurement of noseband tightness is flawed because there is no exact standard that clarifies the dimensions of the measurement or the proper placement of the fingers or a gauge on the horse's head.

Any tack or training device that restricts a horse's breathing or movement can negatively affect horse welfare. Nosebands and flash straps that are designed to restrict a horse's mouth from opening are too often used to clamp the jaws of a horse together in an attempt to exert control through pressure and to manufacture an overall "picture" of an ideal outline without consideration of the harm that they can do.

Although the "two fingers" test for the spacing of nosebands has been in use for years by concerned horsemen to avoid tight rather than snug nosebands, it is justifiably seen as vague and subject to interpretation, and therefore unenforceable at a competition level. The ever-evolving standards and demands of competition require, in order to guarantee a fair and level playing field, that all equipment and inspections for usage meet a universal, measureable and exact standard. In the case of nosebands this can be achieved by using one specific gauge to measure noseband tightness.

The HSUS concurs with the conclusions of Dr. McGreevy's research - that the use of nosebands drawn so tightly that they put significant pressure on delicate tissues is not consistent with best practices in training. Such use can constrict the breathing of horses and restrict their natural range of motion, and has been shown to cause visible physical damage to the heads of horses where the nosebands are consistently and persistently applied. Therefore, we hold that all equestrian sport competitions should require that stewards check the tightness of nosebands at the nasal midline and to ensure an objective

measurement, a taper gauge should be used to measure the noseband's tightness. A gauge developed by the International Society for Equitation Science (ISES) is recommended as the industry standard.

The FEI Code of Conduct for the Welfare of the Horse states that welfare should take precedence over competitive demands in all stages of the training of competition horses and that abusive training methods are not allowed. Additionally, the code calls for tack that is fitted to avoid the risk of pain and injury. Clamping a horse's jaws shut with constricting nosebands prevents it from gently chewing its bit or breathing properly. Such misuse can cause long term damage to a horse's mouth, neck, tongue, nose, facial bones and muscles – conditions that are detrimental to the horse's welfare and therefore not acceptable.

As the international governing body of equestrian sport with a clear position on horse welfare, FEI should lead the way forward and adopt a standard that can be accurately applied and easily followed by all riders and stewards with all horses, whether in training or competition. The HSUS urges FEI, using Dr. Mc Greevy's work as a baseline, to adopt the use of a standard taper gauge to check noseband tightness and require its use by stewards at all FEI sanctioned events.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Keith Dane".

Keith Dane
Vice President, Equine Protection