



## **10<sup>th</sup> International Equitation Science Conference**

### **Equine Stress, Learning and Training**

**ISES – Denmark 2014 August 7-9**

<http://www.equitationsscience.com/press-releases>

#### **Objectivity in dressage judging: New horizons that arise from learning theory**

Many people agree that dressage is rife with subjectivity and that there currently exists a large degree of disenchantment amongst both participants and audiences with the FEI judging criteria (also known as the German Training Scale which was created in 1912) being based on a mixture of subjective and objective elements.

The fundamental objective of dressage is to develop through a standardized progression of training methods, a horse's physique and ability. The aim is to produce a horse that is calm, supple, and flexible, and confident and willing to perform to its full potential.

Under FEI rules, dressage is judged on 8 elements – precision, rhythm, suppleness, contact, impulsion, straightness, collection and submission.

Presenting at the 10th International Equitation Science Conference in Denmark, Director of the Australian Equine Behaviour Centre and Senior Vice President of the International Society for Equitation Science (ISES) – Andrew McLean , PhD, sets out to

evaluate the German Training Scale taking into account various scientific view points, including an appraisal of shaping (reinforcing successive incremental approximations of a target behaviour), identifying subjective as opposed to objective elements of each scale and highlighting subjective, ambiguous and scientifically flawed terminology that interferes with the judging process.

McLean states that “the elements of a training scale should be objective and directly observable” and that they “should allow judges to distinguish training successes and errors in a systematic way”. As such he wants to enhance the existing FEI training scale with the Principles of Learning Theory in Equitation (as outlined by ISES) by integrating an objective and justifiable judging scale, that will allow the analysis/markings of a horse’s trained responses. A revised evidence-based scale will allow judging to become more accurate and fair; and will be able to be used in all equestrian sports. McLean believes that judging and horse welfare should go hand-in-hand and that the proposed judging scale will improve the welfare of horses. The use of a more horse facing judging criteria which will ultimately improve the longevity of equestrian sports which are currently threatened by the inconsistent use of potentially vague criteria for assessing performance.

**- END -**

The International Society for Equitation Science conference offers an outstanding international platform for scientists and professional practitioners to present and discuss research related to the field of equitation science. For more information about the conference, venue and programme: [www.ISES2014.com](http://www.ISES2014.com)

The International Society for Equitation Science (ISES) is a not-for-profit organisation that aims to facilitate research into the training of horses to enhance horse welfare and improve the horse-rider relationship.

For more information regarding the International Society for Equitation Science contact:

ISES President: [presidents@equitationsscience.com](mailto:presidents@equitationsscience.com)

ISES Media Officer: [media@equitationsscience.com](mailto:media@equitationsscience.com)

Website: <http://www.equitationsscience.com>

Twitter: Equitation Science @equitationsscien - <https://twitter.com/equitationsscien>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/EquitationScience>