

26 October 2015

International Society for Equitation Science

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Position Statement on Restrictive Nosebands

Animals Australia is a peak animal protection organisation in Australia. On behalf of our member societies and many thousands of individual members and supporters, we wish to indicate our strong support for the ISES position on restrictive nosebands.

We understand that unfortunately equestrian competitions where noseband checking is no longer adopted are increasingly common. Regrettably, it is clear that nosebands are tightened by many individuals because tightened nosebands increase the horses' responsiveness to the bits and they also stop the horses from opening their mouths to express discomfort, a response that attracts penalties in many competitions. Restrictive nosebands effectively deny the horses wearing them a voice; their pain and discomfort from rough riding that forces pieces of metal into the soft tissues of their mouths is masked for the sake of competition. Horses hold a special place in the hearts of most people, and there is no doubt that if it was more widely understood in the community that such a (tightened) device was being regularly used despite the suffering inflicted, equine sports and its participants would be widely criticized.

Of further concern is that most observers agree that nosebands are more padded than ever, and that the primary reason for this is that they are extremely tight and so must be padded to avoid pressure sores. Sadly, the padding pushes more of the cheek lining against the molar teeth, increasing pain.

We are advised that the digital checking for over-tightened nosebands is considered too imprecise for FEI stewards, so this has become the riders' responsibility. With perceived competitive advantages ensuing from tightened nosebands, riders have a clear conflict of interest, and are particularly unlikely to opt for loose nosebands if other competitors are gaining a perceived advantage from the practice. FEI stewards must undertake this task with the measuring tool now available and we urge this occurs at all events.

Animals Australia opposes any activity or practice which leads to the unnecessary suffering of animals, including where they are involved in sporting pursuits, and therefore welcome any and all efforts of ISES. We anticipate that the ISES policy if broadly adopted would reduce the suffering of horses and we commend its prompt and fulsome adoption.

Yours sincerely,



Glenys Oogjes
Executive Director