



HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL

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Dr Andrew McLean
Australian Equine Behaviour Centre
730 Clonbinane Road
Clonbinane
VIC 3658

By email: andrewmclean@aebc.com.au

4 June 2013

Dear Dr McLean,

Welfare concerns surrounding restrictive nosebands on horses

Humane Society International (HSI), one of the world's largest conservation and animal welfare organisations, writes on behalf of our 60,000 Australian supporters regarding the use of restrictive nosebands on horses.

HSI strongly supports the position statement of the *International Society for Equitation Science (ISES)* that the practice of over tightening nosebands to avoid penalties in competition is covering up poor training at the expense of horse welfare. Tightening the noseband prevents the horse from opening the jaw and displaying unwanted behaviours, those which would give competitors reduced scores from judges during competitions. Many riders choose to mask these unwanted behaviours by tightening the noseband, resulting in better marks. Horses should not be ridden in nosebands fastened so tight that they cause pain and distress, purely to enable riders to score highly when competing. We believe that this practice is unethical and inhumane.

Recent scientific studies cited by ISES confirm that restricted nosebands present a significant risk to the welfare of horses including physiological stress, reduced blood flow to the region, and possible nasal bone deformities.

HSI supports the recommendation by ISES that all equestrian sports should require that the tightness of a noseband is checked by a steward, preferably through use of the ISES taper gauge or similar, inserted under the noseband at the nasal midline. We strongly urge for a change in competition rules to ensure that the use of tight nosebands on horses is not permitted in any equestrian sport, particularly dressage competitions. During training, we suggest that riders re-establish the practice of placing two fingers underneath the noseband to ensure it is not too tight. These small changes would go a long way towards improved equine welfare and the prevention of unnecessary suffering.

With thanks and regards

Verna Simpson
Director
HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL