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Professor Paul McGeevey
President, International Society for
Equitation Science
Room 206, R.M.C. Gunn Building (B19)
Faculty of Veterinary Science
University of Sydney NSW 2006
Australia

23 January 2013

Dear Professor McGeevey,

Re: restrictive nosebands on horses

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) supports the position of the International Society for Equitation Science (ISES) regarding the use of nosebands on horses in training and competitions. IFAW firmly believes in the five animal freedoms. The use of restrictive nosebands contravenes three of those five freedoms: freedom from pain, injury and disease, freedom to express normal behaviour, and freedom from fear and distress. It is a failure of guardianship by all involved with the ownership, training, and competing of a horse to tighten, or permit to be tightened, a horse's noseband so as to restrict its ability to display physical or behavioural resistance, and to cause or risk causing the horse pain, distress, physiological stress and injury in the process – all for the sake of a few penalty points in a competition.

Those in charge of equine competitions have a duty to ensure that the welfare of the horses is provided for in their rules. To permit restrictive nosebands, or to fail to investigate the practice in their competitions, is both a dereliction of the duties of horse guardianship and an undermining of the good horsemanship that people pay to see and enjoy.

IFAW is opposed to this practice, and supports ISES' recommendation that gear stewards, in addition to the other checks they perform, check all nosebands with a standardised taper gauge to ensure that the 'two-fingers' rule is applied. We also call for ISES' recommendation to be enshrined in all equine competition rules and regulations.

Yours sincerely,

Robbie Marsland
UK Director, IFAW