

Dr Mark Kennedy

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

14th January 2013


Dear Professor McGreevy,

RE: Welfare concerns surrounding restrictive nosebands

Recent scientific evidence has supported the hypothesis that the use of restrictive nosebands, such as 'clamp' nosebands, presents a significant risk to the welfare of horses. Clamping the mouth shut prevents horses from performing normal patterns of oral behaviour. For a ridden horse this includes behaviour such as licking, chewing and resalivation of the tongue, which may allow the horse to attempt to accommodate the bit in a more comfortable manner. It should also be noted that the ability to exhibit normal behaviour patterns is identified as a need under Section 9 (Clause 2c) of the United Kingdom Animal Welfare Act (2006). Preventing oral comfort behaviour by clamping the mouth shut may infringe the duty of persons responsible for horses to ensure their welfare, and may constitute an offence under the Act. In addition, oral behaviours indicative of underlying training and riding problems reducing the welfare of the horse and endangering human safety cannot be expressed by horses wearing such nosebands, and cannot therefore be noticed and acted upon by those riding or observing them. This results in a potentially dangerous situation for people which also seriously reduces the welfare of horses.

For these reasons, WSPA believes that such nosebands should not be used. WSPA supports the ISES recommendation that stewards in all equestrian sports should objectively assess the tightness of nosebands using the ISES taper gauge or similar at the nasal midline in order to ensure they cannot clamp the mouth shut and prevent expression of normal oral behaviour.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Mark Kennedy
Head of Science
World Society for the Protection of Animals.