

## LEGAL TIPS

# THE UNITED STATES EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION (USEF) RULES IN 2018

by Nicol Dominiuk and Piotr Wawrzyniak

© Cymon Taylor



THE LEGAL TEAM OF THE EUROPEAN US ASIAN EQUINE LAWYERS WOULD LIKE TO WELCOME OUR READERS OF HORSE TIMES IN 2018.

WITH THE NEW YEAR, MANY NEW RULES COME INTO EFFECT. IN THIS EDITION WE WOULD LIKE TO ZOOM IN ON THE USEF RULES. OUR READERS WHO COMPETE IN THE US THIS YEAR SHOULD HAVE A LOOK BELOW TO FIND SOME OF THE MOST RELEVANT CHANGES AND NEW RULES IN 2018.

**When it comes to the General Rules we would like to refer our readers to the following points:**

### Amateur Status:

Amateur status is easily lost under the USEF General rules. Article GR1306 paragraph 4 lists many activities, which riders wishing to keep their amateur status, are not to engage in. For example, sub a of paragraph 4 states that (unless expressly permitted in the article) a person is a professional if after his 18th birthday he does any of the following: a) Accepts remuneration and rides, exercises, drives, shows, trains, assists in training, schools or conducts clinics or seminars. In 2018 USEF adds an activity under paragraph 3, which states which activities an amateur is permitted to engage in. Paragraph 3 sub i now states that an amateur is permitted to accept remuneration for providing service in one's capacity as a clinic manager or organizer as long as they are not performing the activities of instructor or trainer.

### Mandatory Necropsy

In 2018 a post mortem examination must be performed where fatality to a horse occurs in relation to a competition. For purposes of this rule, a "fatality" is defined as a death by any means including euthanasia at any time from when entries arrive at the venue until departure from the venue or a death by any means including euthanasia at any time occurring as a result of any fatal injury or illness sustained during a licensed competition or after a licensed competition where such fatal injury or illness is related to the horse's participation in the competition. The steward/technical delegate has to be notified as soon as possible but no later than one hour after such occurrence of any fatality of a horse or pony

A gross post mortem examination must be carried out in all incidents of euthanasia or fatality, except where the nearest Veterinary Pathology laboratory is further than 200 miles from where the equine fatality or euthanasia occurred. If a horse is not insured or a post mortem is not required by the owner's insurance, the Federation will cover the cost of the gross post mortem and transport costs to the appropriate veterinary

facility, up to a maximum in total of \$1,000.00. If a post mortem is required by the owner's insurance, at no cost to the Federation, the horse's owner shall provide the Federation a copy of the post mortem report within 24 hours of receipt of such report. The thought behind this rule is to improve safety and horse welfare. By requiring a necropsy and having access to the results of necropsies, the Federation will be able to gather critical information regarding the horse fatalities that occur at licensed competitions. This information would be used primarily to conduct research on the health and safety of horses. This requirement will also lead to the implementation of safety mechanisms that protect the horse and rider at all licensed competitions.

### Jumping:

#### Ear buds:

An entirely new rule added to the USEF rules in 2018 is rule HU154/JP103.9 which prohibits the use of ear buds in the schooling ring for mounted hunter/jumper riders. The rule was proposed as an attempt to cut back on distracted riding in the schooling ring. Although the rule only focuses on ear buds and not phones as such, USEF believes this is a step in the right direction against unsafe riding. To increase safety for horse and rider in the schooling area, rider's attention needs to be focused on their horse and the surroundings. Riding in ear buds will now be forbidden and stewards will strive for the enforcement of this rule at shows.

#### Microchipping:

A long awaited rule to microchip horses is finally in force in 2018. All horses competing in Federation licensed and/or United States Hunter Jumper Association (USHJA) sanctioned competitions with Hunter, Hunter Breeding, Jumper and Hunter/Jumping Seat Equitation classes not restricted by breed must be properly identified in accordance with GR1101 and must also be registered with USHJA. In addition to that, on or after December 1, 2017, all horses competing in classes that require USHJA horse registration must provide a microchip number that verifies their animal's identity in order to compete for

points, money won or be eligible for Federation and/or USHJA programs and awards where horses are required to be recorded or registered. This rule will have a transition period from December 1, 2017 to November 30, 2018. During this period, animals that are not in compliance with this rule will not receive points or be eligible for Federation and/or USHJA programs and awards. After the transition period, thus after December 1 2018, all horses that are competing in classes which require USHJA registration which are not microchipped will be ineligible to compete in Federation licensed competitions.

#### Amateur Jumper (Not Owner):

These rule changes allow Amateurs, regardless of whether they own the horse they are riding, to compete at a nationally recognized high level, including 1.20/1.25, 1.30/1.35, 1.40/1.45. Classes are restricted to riders who are no longer eligible to compete as junior exhibitors.

Classes may be offered divided by either specific height or age of rider. This also creates a Horse Of The Year (HOTY) category for Amateur Jumpers.

#### Dressage:

##### Dress code:

Article DR120 implements a change in the 2018 rules regarding dress code for riders participating in dressage tests for 5,6 and 7-year old horses. Earlier dress code for this group of horses has been, just as for 4-year old

horse classes, a short riding coat of conservative color, with stock or tie, breeches, and protective headgear with spurs being optional.

The changed rule now states that for all tests above Fourth Level, and FEI Junior Tests and FEI Dressage Tests for 5, 6 and 7-year old horses, the dress code is: a dark tailcoat or a dark jacket with protective headgear and white or light colored breeches, stock or tie or integrated stand-up collar, gloves, and black riding boots. Spurs are mandatory for FEI tests (except as noted under DR120.1).

##### Saddlery and Equipment:

Any decoration of the dressage horse with extravagant items, such as ribbons or flowers, etc. in the mane or tail is strictly forbidden. There has now been an exception added to this rule clarifying and assuring that a red ribbon in a horse's tail is permitted to identify a horse that kicks. This is a question of safety and responsibility to inform and warn other riders.

##### Nosebands:

Following the slight amendment to the article DR121 Saddlery and Equipment, nosebands are further on compulsory. This rule is changed to match the FEI rule change.



© Jacques Toffi



© Jessica Rodrigues

##### Errors:

Article DR122 regarding Execution and Judging of Tests has added to the paragraph of errors where sub k) number 6) states that For USEF High Performance qualifying and selection trials, all of the following are considered errors (faults), and two (2) points will be deducted per error (fault), but they are not cumulative and will not result in elimination (including for Freestyle tests): If the Freestyle test is longer or shorter than stipulated on the test sheet, zero point five percentage points (0.5%) will be deducted from the total artistic score. Using voice or clicking the tongue repeatedly is also considered to be an error, as is if the athlete doesn't take reins in one hand at the salute. (Numbers 7 and 8)

The time for entering the arena in freestyle classes has changed from 20 to 30 seconds of music but within 90 seconds under this category of error.

##### Position and Aids of the Rider:

Article DR117 regarding the Position and Aids of the Rider clarifies how the rider may use his/her hand(s) during a test. The article states that riding with both hands is obligatory at all national and International Dressage Events. However, riding with one hand is permitted in the Freestyle Tests and when leaving the arena. It further adds that part from the halt and salute, where the athlete must take the reins in one hand, riding with the reins in both hands is obligatory at FEI Dressage Events. A discreet 'pat on the neck' for a well performed

exercise, or for reassurance, is perfectly acceptable (as is the situation of an athlete needing to wipe a fly from their eye, or other situations such as adjusting clothing, saddle pads etc). However, if the rider intentionally takes the reins into one hand in order to use either the reins or the other hand to produce more impulsion from the horse, or to promote applause from the spectators during the test, it will be considered a fault and will be reflected in the mark for both the movement and the collective mark for 'Rider'.

\* This is a non-exhaustive list of all rules. All new rules can be found on USEF's homepage.

Source: USEF.org

Nicol Dominiuk and Piotr Wawrzyniak are lawyers practicing with Schelstraete Equine Lawyers in the Netherlands. Schelstraete Equine Lawyers is the founding member of the European US Asian Equine Lawyers, which is the alliance of the World's leading firms specializing in equine law

