

Rule Change Type	Effective Date	Draft Received	Board Action
Extraordinary	12/1/2024	2/12/2024	

Extraordinary Change Reason

Horse wellbeing is paramount to USEF and this proposal modernizes the horse abuse rule. This proposal accompanies GR702, a standard rule change currently under consideration. The effective date for this EO should align with the effective date for GR702 should the Board approve it.

Rule Change Intent

This proposal is intended to achieve the following: (1) expand the scope of USEF's jurisdiction to include horse abuse that occurs outside of competition, including at home facilities; (2) clarify examples of what constitutes abuse in our sport; (3) mandate reporting of horse abuse; and (4) clarify that competition management and officials are empowered to eliminate, disqualify, and issue warnings for horse abuse at competitions.

Proponent Details	Contact Information
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USEF Officers

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Linked Rules	Comments
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Committee Actions

Proposed Extraordinary Rule Change: GR838 Horse Abuse
Proposed by USEF Officers Effective Date: December 1, 2024

The United States Equestrian Federation’s mission is to provide access to and increase participation in equestrian sport at all levels by ensuring fairness, safety, and enjoyment. Its vision to bring equestrian sport to as many people as possible, balances the partnership of horse and equestrian with sharing a passion for equestrian sport with the public. Vital to the continued success of a partnership between equestrian athletes and their horses is the respect and wellbeing of the horses. There is no place in equestrian sport for abuse towards our equine partners.

The horse industry has recently come under public scrutiny. In an effort to improve the integrity and safety of horseracing, Congress has enacted a federal law establishing an independent entity to regulate a national uniform safety and anti-doping and medication control program. Modern Pentathlon has also come under criticism. Due to the abuse of a horse at the Tokyo Olympic Games, equestrian will no longer be part of modern pentathlon after the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. It remains to be seen whether the sport will be invited to participate in the LA 2028 Olympic Games.

With increased reliance on social media, distasteful videos and images from horse sport have gone viral causing people to question how our horses are cared for in our sport. In an effort to protect our sport, and our horses, we need to act now. We cannot be complacent. A well-known example of an industry that acted too late, and whose social license to operate was revoked is the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, after 140 years of operation. The public would not tolerate the mistreatment of animals, and the circus as we know it shut down in 2017.

USEF takes its social license to operate very seriously and learning from the mistakes of others, recognizes that time is of the essence. The social license under which equestrian sport operates requires that horses be treated as athletic partners and receive appropriate training as required by all athletes. In competing and preparing for competition, horse welfare must be paramount at all times.

This Extraordinary rule change addresses confusion and improves verbiage in the existing abuse rule contained in GR838 and it includes the following **noteworthy changes**:

1. **Jurisdiction**: Expands the scope of USEF’s jurisdiction to take disciplinary action for horse abuse that occurs away from a competition. In other words, a person who abuses a horse any time after the effective date of the rule change can be accountable under USEF’s rules, regardless of where the abuse occurred. (Note: USEF does not have subpoena power or the ability to secure search warrants. The enforcement of this rule will be based on reports of abuse received from USEF members who witness abuse.)
2. **Definitions**: Defines horse abuse as ***any action or omission that causes or is likely to cause pain or unnecessary discomfort to a Horse***. It lists 21 examples of what constitutes abuse. Most examples currently exist in the rules, but some new ones have been added.
3. **Mandatory Reports**: This proposal requires abuse to be reported to Licensed Officials if it occurs at a competition, and to USEF if it occurs away from competition.
4. **Protective Action at Competition**: This proposal clarifies that a Licensed Official or Competition Management can take swift action when abuse occurs on the grounds of a competition. They can issue a written Warning, or they can eliminate or disqualify entries for horse abuse.

**Proposed Extraordinary Rule Change – Clean Version (existing rule at bottom, pp. 3-4)
Effective Date December 1, 2024**

GR838 Horse Abuse

1. Horse Abuse is prohibited, regardless of where it occurs. For purposes of this rule, "Abuse" means any action or omission that causes or is likely to cause pain or unnecessary discomfort to a Horse, including, but not limited to the following:

- a. Excessively using a whip, except in emergency circumstances;
- b. Any striking of the horse's head (on the poll and forward of the poll) with a whip or other object;
- b. Rapping a Horse, including rapping the legs of a Horse with the butt end of a riding crop or other implement;
- c. Manual poling with any object;
- d. Using a wire or chain in conjunction with any jump;
- e. Using any device or equipment that causes excessive pain to the Horse;
- f. Abnormal sensitizing or desensitizing any part of a Horse;
- g. Soring of any Horse, including but not limited to the application of caustic chemicals to a Horse's legs or hooves, in order to cause pain and/or affect a horse's performance, and/or for use as a training technique;
- h. Subjecting the Horse to any kind of electric shock device that does not have a recognized therapeutic use;
- i. Using shackles, hock hobbles, or similar devices (not to be construed as elastic exercising devices);
- j. Jabbing the Horse in the mouth with a bit or any other device;
- k. Using any object that prevents the horse's ability to close its mouth, except for use of an oral speculum by a veterinarian or equine dentist to provide legitimate dental/oral medical care;
- l. Showing or training a Horse with a bleeding mouth, raw or bleeding sores around the coronets, pasterns, or legs;
- m. Showing or training a Horse with raw, bleeding, or irritated skin, or welts consistent with excessive, persistent, or inappropriate use of equipment, including spurs;
- n. Showing or training a Horse with any evidence of the use of improper training techniques;
- o. Showing or training an exhausted, lame, or injured Horse;
- p. Excessively lunging of a Horse;
- q. Excessively competing a Horse;
- r. Using any explosive (e.g., fire crackers, torpedoes, fire extinguishers except in case of fire) or laser beam devices;
- s. Withholding feed or water for prolonged periods;
- t. Letting blood from a Horse for other than diagnostic purposes;
- u. Soring or using an action device on any limb of a Tennessee Walking Horse, Racking Horse, or Spotted Saddle Horse (each a breed not recognized by the Federation). An action device is defined by the USDA as any boot, collar, chain, roller, or other device that encircles or is placed upon the lower extremity of the leg of a horse in such a manner that it can rotate around the leg or slide up and down the leg so as to cause friction or strike the hoof, coronet band, fetlock joint or pastern of the horse. (Protective bell boots or heel boots are specifically excluded from this definition). The use of a weighted shoe, pad, wedge, in conjunction with a hoof band or other device or material (commonly referred to as a performance package) placed on, inserted in, or attached to any limb of a Tennessee Walking Horse, a Racking Horse, or Spotted Saddle Horse constructed to artificially alter the gait of such a horse, and which are not protective or therapeutic in nature.

For the purposes of this rule, the term "soring" is defined by the Horse Protection Act, 15 U.S.C. §1821.

2. Any person witnessing an Abuse regardless of where it occurs must report it without delay. If an Abuse is witnessed during or in direct connection with a Federation Licensed or Endorsed Competition, it should be reported to a Federation Licensed Official at the competition without delay. If the Abuse is witnessed outside of a Federation Licensed Competition, it must be reported to the Federation.

3. A veterinarian may be appointed by the Federation, Competition Management, or a Licensed Official to inspect any animal on competition grounds or entered to compete. Refusal to submit an animal for examination by an authorized veterinarian after due notification shall constitute a violation of these rules and the owner and trainer may be subject to penalty by the Federation.

4. Any action or inaction against a Horse by any person deemed Abuse, as defined above, by a Federation Licensed Official, Competition Management, or competition veterinarian at a Federation Licensed Competition, may be punished by said Federation Licensed Official, Competition Management, or competition veterinarian with an official written warning, elimination, or disqualification, with such action reported to the Federation. The person may be subject to further penalty by the Federation.

Existing Rule

GR838 Cruelty to and Abuse of a Horse

1. Cruelty to or the abuse of a horse present on the grounds of any Licensed Competition is forbidden, constitutes a violation under Chapter 7, and renders the offender subject to penalty. The Show Committee, or Competition Management in the absence of a Show Committee must bar violators from further participation for the remainder of the competition. It is the duty of the competition officials to report to the Federation any person who indulges in this practice for such further action as may be deemed appropriate.
2. Any person or trainer, as defined by Federation rules, who presents for competition a horse that exhibits signs of recent cruelty or abuse will be subject to penalty under this rule.
3. The Federation or the Judge, Steward, or TD may appoint a veterinarian to inspect any animal on competition grounds or entered to compete. Refusal to submit an animal for examination by an authorized veterinarian after due notification shall constitute a violation.
4. The following are included under the words Cruelty and Abuse but are not limited thereto:
 - a. Excessive use of a whip on any horse in a stall, runway, schooling area, competition ring or elsewhere on the competition grounds, before or during a competition, by any person. Except in emergency situations, any striking of the horse's head (on the poll and forward of the poll) with the whip shall be deemed excessive.
 - b. Any evidence of cruel or abusive training techniques.
 - c. Rapping the legs of a horse with the butt end of a riding crop or other implement.
 - d. Use of any substance or method to induce temporary heat.
 - e. Manual poling with any object.
 - f. Use of a wire or chain in conjunction with any schooling jump.
 - g. Use of electric device in schooling or showing.
 - h. Use of shackles, hock hobbles and similar devices (not to be construed as rubber or elastic exercising devices).
 - i. Showing a horse with raw or bleeding sores around the coronets, pasterns, or legs.
 - j. Use of any explosive (e.g., fire crackers, torpedoes, fire extinguishers except in case of fire, etc.) or laser beam devices anywhere on the competition grounds, except in an exhibition or if required in class specifications.
 - k. Withholding of feed and water for prolonged periods.
 - l. Letting blood from a horse for other than diagnostic purposes.
 - m. Inhumane treatment of a horse in a stall, runway, schooling area, competition ring or elsewhere on the competition grounds, by any person.
 - n. Use of any object that prevents the horse's ability to close its mouth. (Exception: use of an oral speculum by a veterinarian or equine dentist to provide legitimate dental/oral medical care.)
 - o. Soring and/or the use of an action device on any limb of a Tennessee Walking Horse, Racking Horse, or Spotted Saddle Horse (each a breed not recognized by the Federation) in any class at a Federation Licensed Competition is prohibited. An action device is defined by the USDA as any boot, collar, chain, roller, or other device that encircles or is placed upon the lower extremity of the leg of a horse in such a manner that it can rotate around the leg or slide up and down the leg so as to cause friction or strike the hoof, coronet band, fetlock joint or pastern of the horse. (Protective bell boots or heel boots are specifically excluded from this definition). The use of a weighted shoe, pad, wedge, in conjunction with a hoof band or other device or material (commonly referred to as a performance package) placed on, inserted in, or attached to any limb of a Tennessee Walking Horse, a Racking Horse, or Spotted Saddle Horse (each a breed not recognized by the Federation) constructed to artificially alter the gait of such a horse, and which are not protective or therapeutic in nature, at a Federation Licensed

Competition is prohibited.

- p. Soring of any horse, including but not limited to the application of caustic chemicals to a horse's legs or hooves, in order to cause pain and/or affect a horse's performance, and/or used as a training technique.
5. Any action(s) against a horse by any person, which are deemed excessive by a Federation judge, Federation steward, technical delegate or competition veterinarian, in the competition ring or anywhere on the competition grounds or evidence of action(s) described above on a horse on competition grounds may be punished by official warning or elimination. Such action(s) could include, but are not limited to excessive or inappropriate use of equipment, including but not limited to the whip or spurs. Evidence may include raw, bleeding, or irritated skin, or welts consistent with excessive use or inappropriate use of equipment.

For the purposes of this rule, the term "soring" is defined by the Horse Protection Act, 15 U.S.C. §1821.