



FEI™ SPORTS FORUM

31 March – 1 April 2025, IMD Lausanne

FEI Equine Welfare
Strategy Action Plan



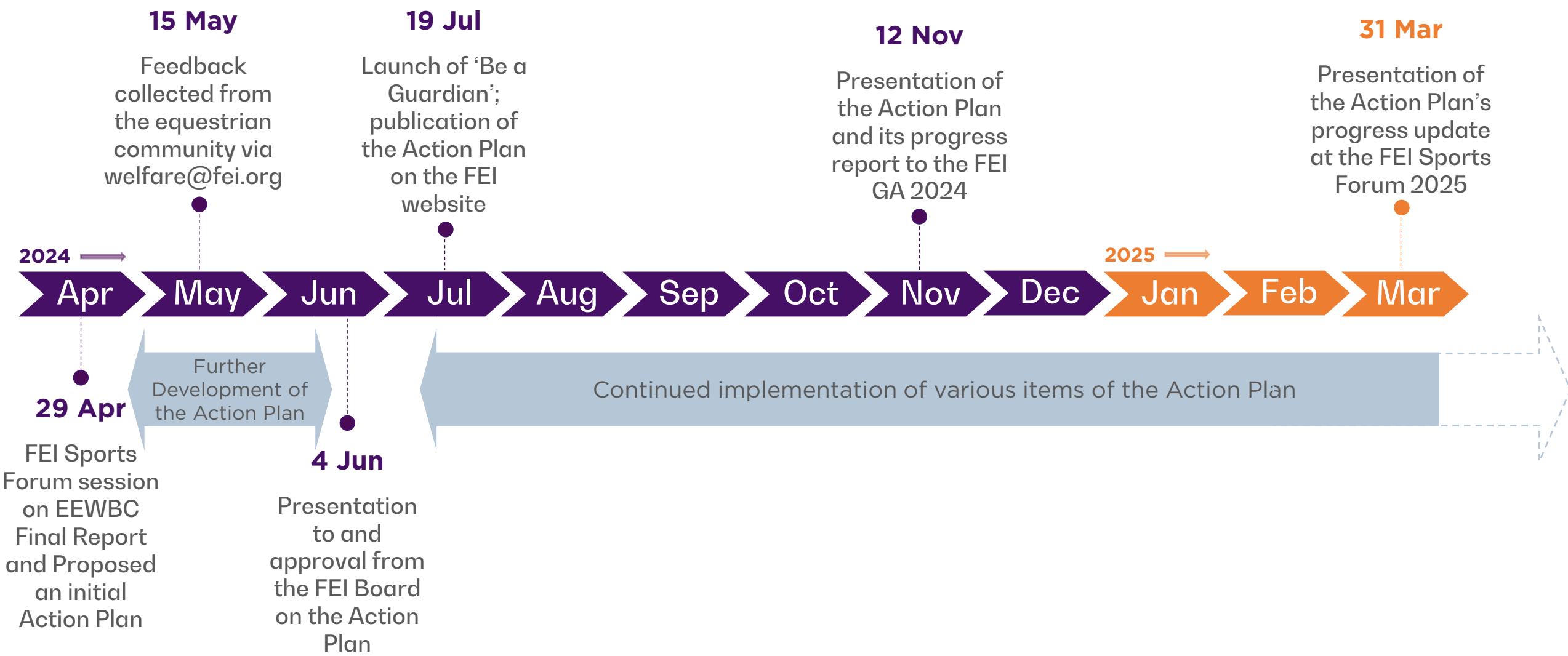
Thank You!



Questions?

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FEI Equine Welfare Strategy Action Plan





FEI Equine Welfare Strategy Action Plan

1. Training, Riding, Tack & Equipment

2. Recognising physical and emotional stress

3. Accountability, enforcement and knowledge

4. The other 23 hours

5. Competitive drive/the horse as a number/object

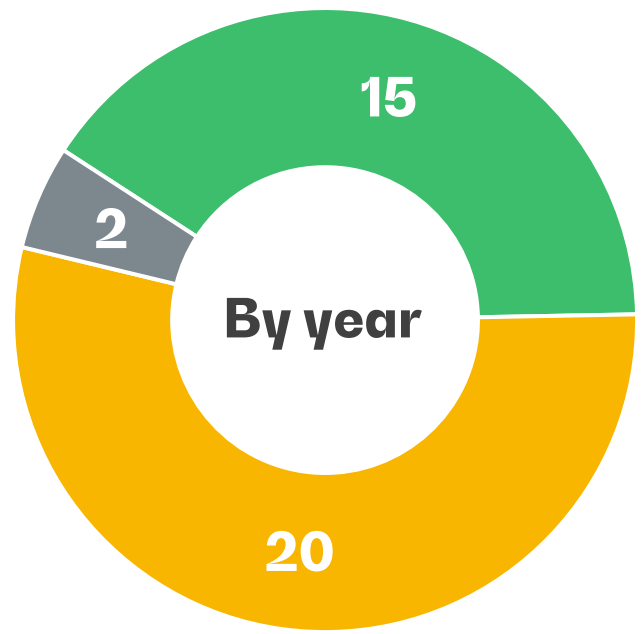
6. Not fit to compete/masking health problems

Other Actions

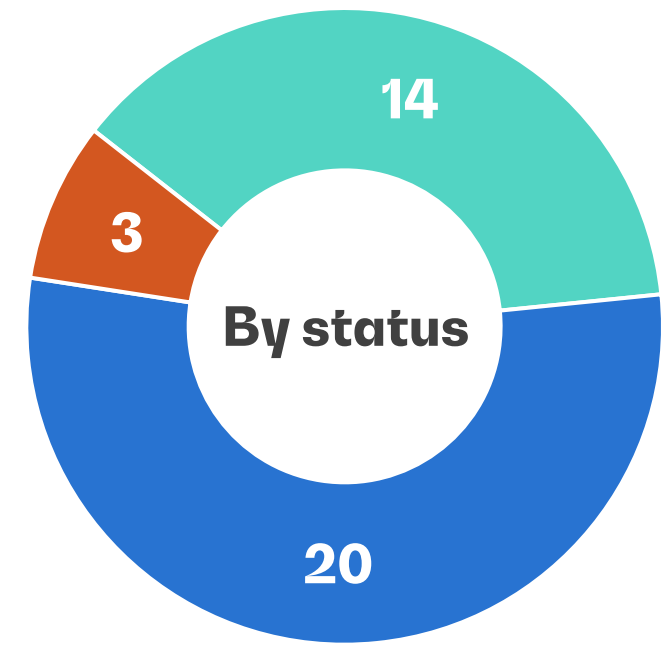
37 Actions



Actions – By aimed timeline and by current status



■ 2023-2024 ■ 2025 ■ 2026-2027



■ Completed ■ Ongoing ■ To be initiated



Actions – Summary including progress status

FOCUS AREAS	ACTIONS										
1. Training, Riding, Tack & Equipment	Ethical Training Methods	Hyperflexion/ Rollkur	Tack & Equipment (Bits)	Tack & Equipment (Double Bridle)	Tack & Equipment (Nosebands)	Tack & Equipment (Spurs)					
2. Recognising Physical & Emotional Stress	Safety	Post-Mortem	Equestrian Charter	Article 142 GRs	Code of Conduct	Physical & Emotional Stress					
3. Accountability, Enforcement & Knowledge	Field of Play Regulations	Accountability & Enforcement	Video Simulation Training	Lack of Vet or Steward Checks	Tradition Vs Scientific Knowledge						
4. The Other 23 Hours	Out of Competition Testing Programme	Self-Control Programmes									
5. Competitive Drive/Horse as a Number/Object	Career Profiling of Jumping Horses	WBFSH Study									
6. Not Fit to Compete/Masking Health Problems	Veterinary Delegate Seminar	Oral Cavity Project	Make Use of Good Examples	EPSL	Article 14.1 EADCMRs						
7. Other Actions	5 domains	Veterinary Department	IAC	KERs	Horse App and Database	Transport Legislation	Welfare Hub	Comms Strategy	EWG	Project Funding	Reporting Mechanism

WBFSH: World Breeding Federation for Sport Horses

EPSL: Equine Prohibited Substances List

IAC (updated to: FEWAG): FEI Equine Welfare Advisory Group

KERs: Key Event Requirements

EWG: Education Working Group

Completed
Ongoing
To be initiated

Details on each Action are available here: <https://inside.fei.org/fei/equine-welfare/action-plan>



FEI Equine Welfare Strategy Action Plan: **Deep Dives for today**

Action 1.1:
Ethical Training Methods

Actions 3.4, 6.1, and 6.3:
Fitness to Compete

Actions 1.4, 4.2, 6.2, and 7.1: All related to
Research & Education



Action 7.3: FEI Equine welfare Advisory Group (FEWAG)

The FEWAG provides **external perspective** and **independent advice** on the FEI Equine Welfare Strategy to ensure it remains fit for purpose in an evolving social license to operate landscape. The group offers guidance as needed on the implementation of the Equine Welfare Action Plan, supporting its alignment with best practices and any emerging developments.



Chair and Members: FEI Equine Welfare Advisory Group



Dr. Jenny Hall
(Chair)



Dr. Andrew McLean



Prof. Madeleine Campbell



Prof. Inga Wolframm



Dr. Malin Axel-Nilsson



Dr. Roly Owers



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FEI Equine Welfare Strategy Action Plan

Action 1.1: Ethical Training Methods



1.1 Ethical Training Methods

 What?	 Why?	 When?
<p>Registration of Trainers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Check what NFs currently do2. Definition of Trainers to be set3. Pilot phase to set framework and purpose	<p>EEWBC Recommendation</p> <p>#4 Promote only ethical and evidence-based equestrianism</p> <p>#11 Ensure 'zero-tolerance' towards any practice that compromises equine welfare and safety during and outside of competition</p>	<p>Aug 2024–Dec 2025</p> <p>Aim: FEI General Assembly 2025 Rule Amendment</p>



Objective

**A globally applicable framework for Ethical Training Methods
for sport horses across all FEI disciplines**

- Define ethical training and its principles
- Identify acceptable practices supported by science and expert consensus
- Develop a guiding framework for FEI stakeholders



Members of the Expert Consultative Group



Ms. Monica Theodorescu
(Dressage)



Mr. Philippe Guerdat
(Jumping)



Mr. Christopher Bartle
(Eventing)



Mr. Michel Assouline
(Para Dressage)



Mr. Abdul Aziz Al Redha
(Endurance)



Mr. Lars Kristensen
(Vaulting)



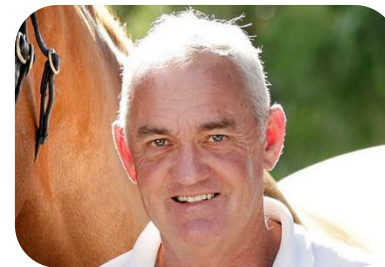
Mr. Andrew Counsell
(Driving & Para)



Mr. Jens Fredricson
(Athlete, Jumping)



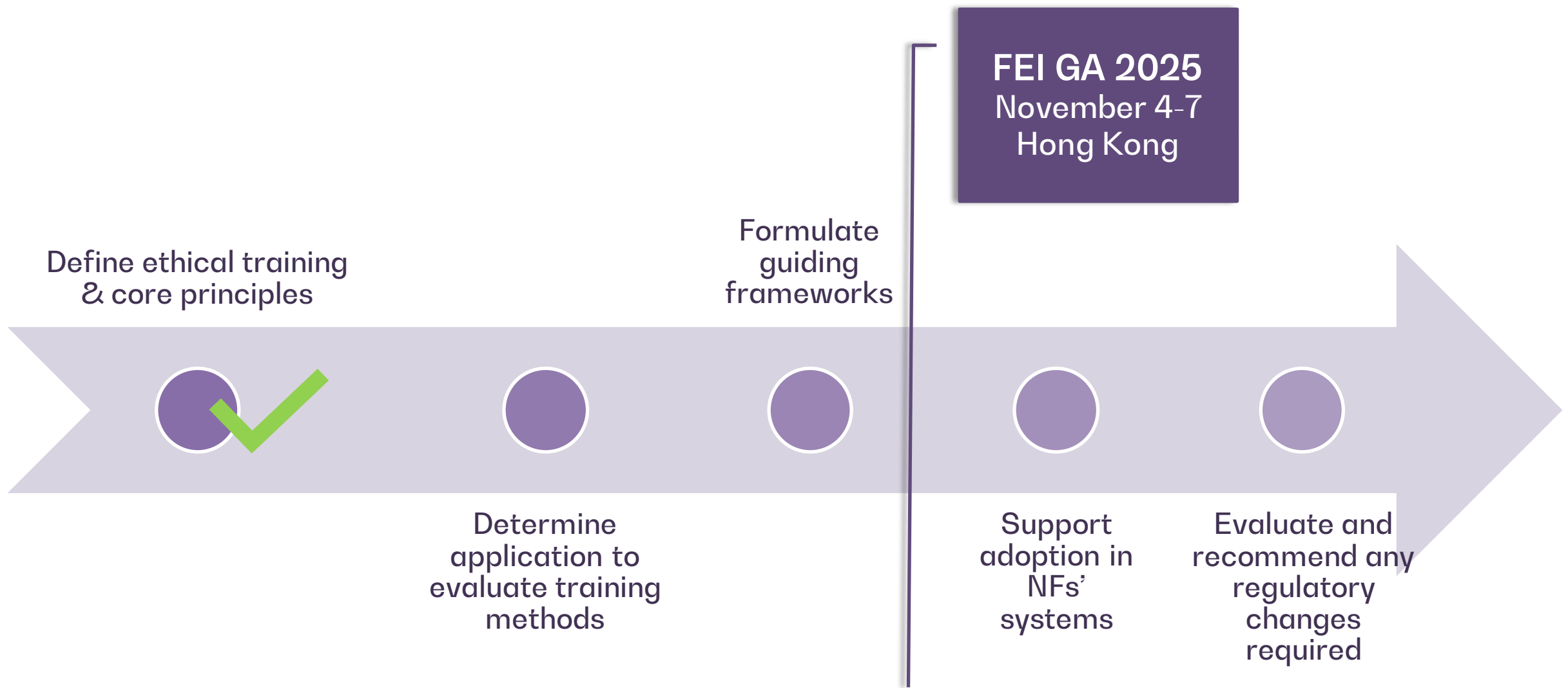
Prof. Madeleine Campbell



Dr. Andrew McLean



Dr. Malin Axel-Nilsson





The training of horses for sport is ethical, when done ‘properly’



Article

An Ethical Framework for the Use of Horses in Competitive Sport: Theory and Function

Madeleine L. H. Campbell



Research Article

Ethical Justifications for the Use of Animals in Competitive Sport

Madeleine L.H. Campbell

Received 15 Aug 2022, Accepted 24 May 2023, Published online: 28 Jul 2023

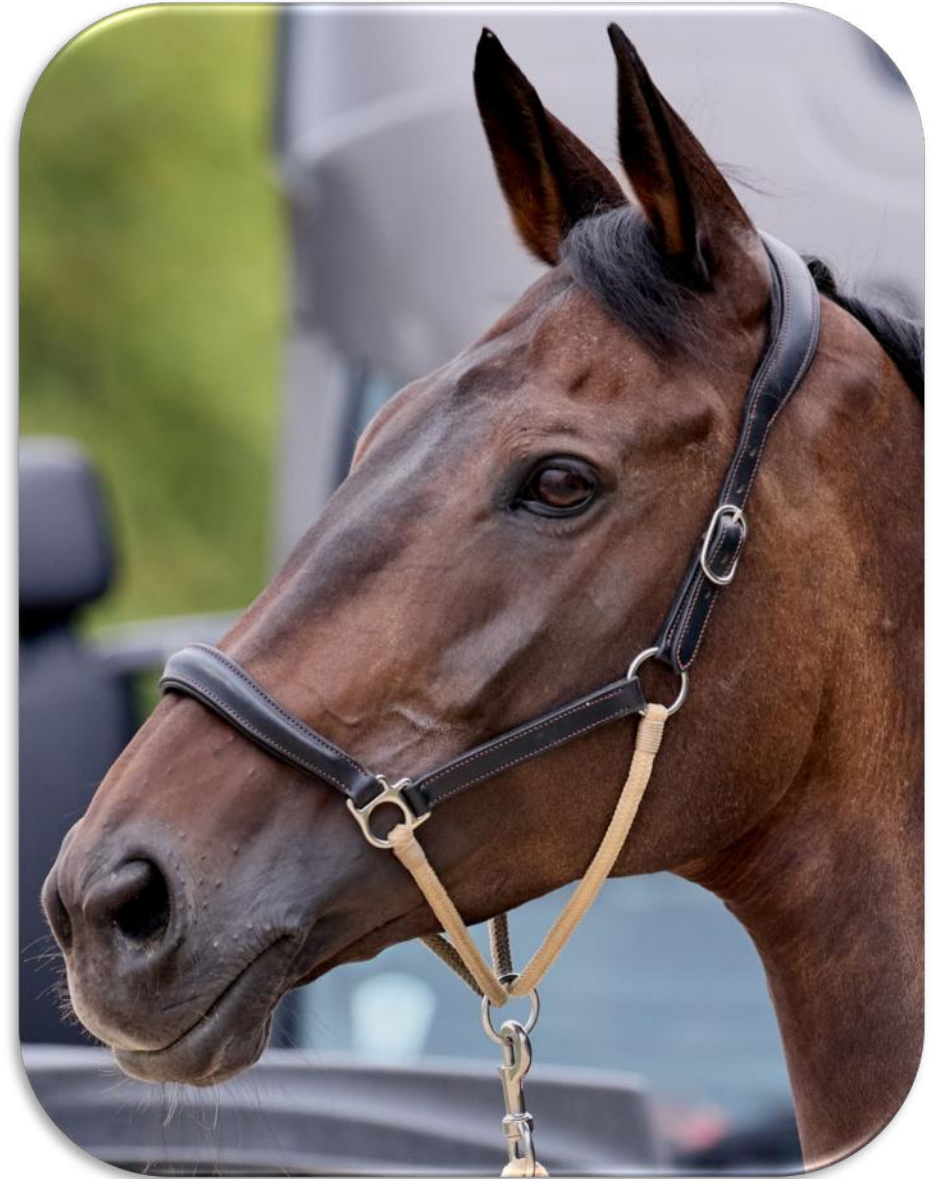
Cite this article <https://doi.org/10.1080/17511321.2023.2236798>





The use of animals in sport is ethical provided that:

- Negative welfare effects are **Minimised**
- Positive welfare effects are **Maximised**
- Avoidable and unnecessary risks to horses are **identified and mitigated against**
- Governing body regulation and the law are **complied with**





Proposed FEI Definition of Ethical Training Methods

An ethical training method is one which minimises negative welfare effects (including aversive stimuli), maximises positive welfare effects, and results in the horse demonstrating desired behaviours and maintaining them voluntarily over an extended period (self-carriage) without the use of physical force.



Proposed FEI ‘First Principles’ of Ethical Training of Sport Horses



1. Regard for human and horse safety



2. Regard for the nature of horses



3. Regard for horses’ mental and sensory abilities



4. Regard for emotional (affective) states



5. Regard for equine learning processes



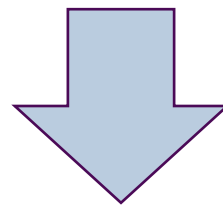
6. Correct use of aids



7. Regard for self-carriage



Proposed FEI ‘First Principles’ of Ethical Training + The Ethical Framework



Negative welfare effects are **minimised and positive welfare effects are **maximised****



Proposed FEI 'First Principles' of Ethical Training of Sport Horses

Dr. Andrew McLean
Equitation Science International
Co-founder and Honorary Fellow of The International Society for
Equitation Science (ISES)



What is Equitation Science?

- The science behind the art of horse training and horse-riding
- Includes learning processes, natural behaviour, mental abilities, biomechanics and others
- Equitation Science is not a method
- Identifies what can be defined and measured
- Does not deny other aspects yet to be defined and measured





1. Regard for human and horse safety

Human perspective:

- Acknowledge that horses' size, power and *reactivity* present a significant risk (history)
- Ensure recognition of the horse's dangerous zones
- Avoid *provoking* aggressive/defensive behaviours

Horse perspective:

- Avoid *discomfort and pain* that can arise from nosebands, bits, curb bits, spurs, whip, closed gullet angle (reduced pharyngeal space)
- Ensure *safe training environment*
- Recognise the dangers of being *ineffective, inconsistent or confusing*





2. Regard for the nature of horses

- Strive for optimal welfare needs:
 - Lengthy daily foraging
 - Social opportunities
 - Movement and natural behaviour opportunities
 - Predictability (especially human to horse)
- Recognise signs of pain
- Avoid aversive management practices (e.g. whisker trimming, ear twitching)
- Encourage calmness: Avoid movements horses may perceive as threatening





3. Regard for horses' mental and sensory abilities

- Avoid assuming that the horse thinks as humans do (e.g. reflective thinking, imagining, revenge, naughtiness)
- Avoid implying mental states when describing and interpreting horse behaviour
- Recognise that horses are brilliant at *context-specific* learning
- Recognise that horses perceive the world differently:
 - Hearing: higher frequencies than humans
 - Vision: panoramic, dark adapted
 - Tactile: similar pain reception as human





4. Regard for emotional states

- Ensure trained responses and rewards are consistent (*especially body position in riding*)
- Recognise the difference between mood (affective state) and arousal (seek, escape, lust, play, rest, etc.)
- Lower arousal in horse and rider/trainer before and during training
- Avoid triggering flight/fight/freeze reactions
- Avoid high arousal when using tactile or food motivators
- Help the horse to relax and bond with stroking and voice





5. Regard for equine learning processes

- **Operant conditioning:**
 - Increasing responses you want, decreasing undesirable responses: Don't punish for non-compliance
 - **Negative reinforcement:** The aid pressure *motivates* and the *release* trains
 - **Positive reinforcement:** Rewarding desirable behaviours and amplifying effects of negative reinforcement - food or stroking
- **Classical conditioning:** light aids before stronger pressures
 - Compound conditioning: **Aid + Consistent Posture = Reaction**
- **Habituation:** Decreasing horses' fear reactions to stimuli
- **Shaping:** Building behaviours from smallest steps to goal





6. Correct use of aids

- Ensure aids are easy for the horse to **differentiate**
- Ensure each aid has only one meaning
- Ensure aids for different responses are **applied consecutively** and not simultaneously
- Ensure seat/posture are **consistent with** rein/leg aids





7. Regard for self-carriage

- Aim for self-carriage at all levels of training as it applies to **each discipline**
- Train the horse to self-maintain:
 - Gait
 - Direction
 - Tempo
 - Head and neck carriage
 - Stride length
 - Body posture
- Avoid forcing and holding
- Avoid nagging with legs, spurs or reins





Questions?



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**Actions 3.4, 6.1, 6.3:
Fitness to Compete**



Fitness to Compete Forum

- Gather opinion
- Identify subjects for more detailed review
- Additional parameters to assess fitness to compete
 - Explore Five Domains of animal welfare for the purpose



WELFARE



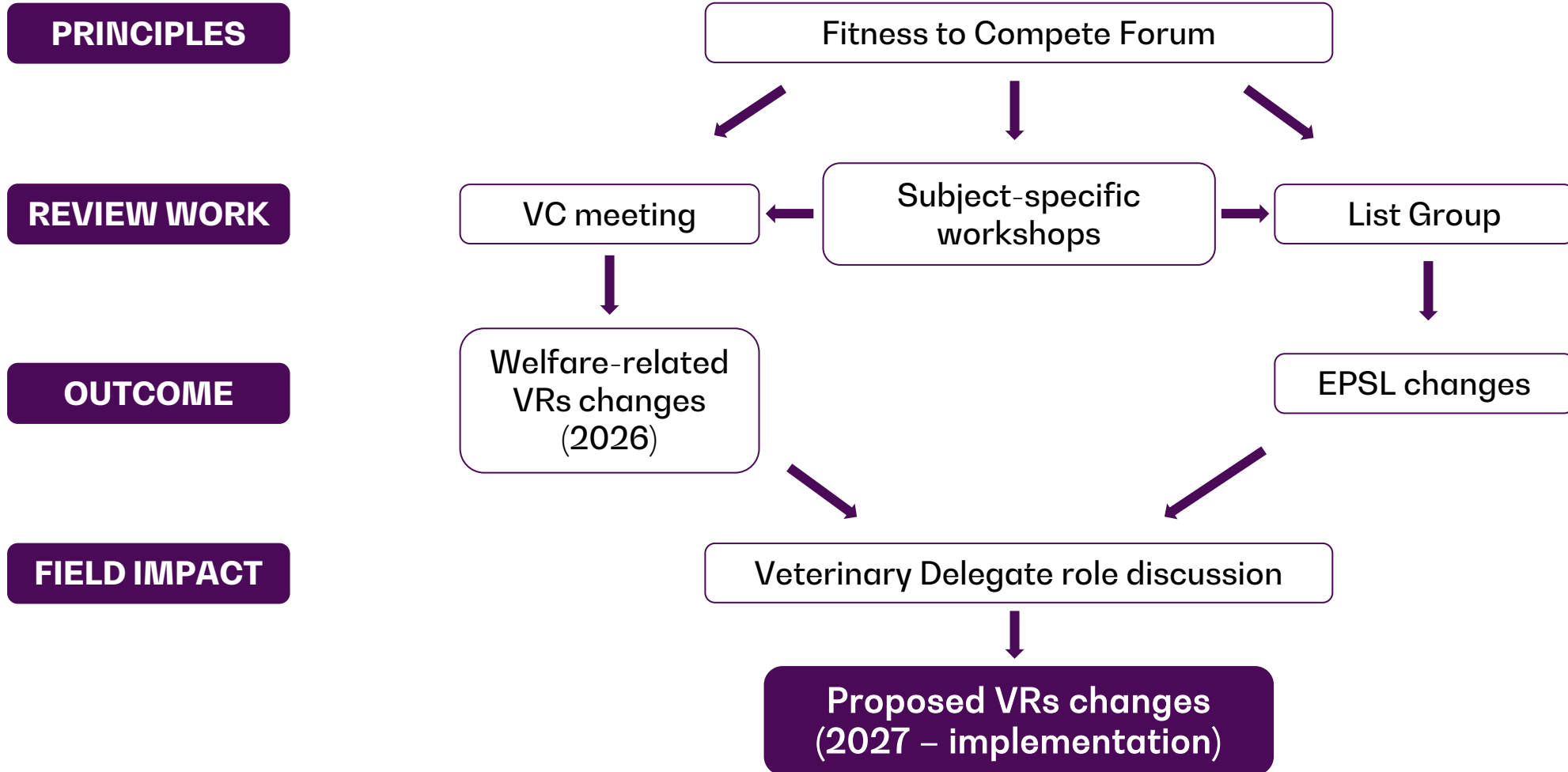
ETHICS



PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE



Fitness to Compete Forum





Expertise





What is Fitness to Compete?

Physically & medically fit

Fit before, during & after competition

Mentally fit

Proven competence for level & discipline

Good body condition

Fit to compete 'well', at the best of ability, without stress, harm & unnecessary risks

Well-rested after travel

No masking of disease by physical therapies



What is Fitness to Compete?

Mental preparation

Preventative health care

Good physical training with physical adaptations having taken place

How does fitness to compete drive the other 23h and impact on the horse's wellbeing.

Free from medication

No masking of disease by surgery

Everyone has a responsibility to Be a Guardian



Impact of Travel & Rest

- The horse's experience of travel
- Stabling and arrival at events
- Impact of travel
- Need for rest



Working group linked to on-going legislative work & review of transport-related welfare studies



Horse Inspection Principles

- Presentation of horses
- Risks related to Re-Inspections
- Purpose of HI Panel
- Inspection of horses at HI track & Holding Box
- Evaluating mental & physical status



Horse Inspection format is fit for purpose



Horse Inspection Principles

Potential improvements

- Better presentation of horses
- Standardisation of inspection surfaces
- Application of technology
- Asymmetry vs lameness
- Behavioural assessments
- Oral cavity inspections





Behaviour & Mental State

- Overall balance of mental state should be positive over long periods of time
- A horse showing a deteriorating mental state during the period of the event to be considered not fit to compete
- Need for objective assessment systems & stakeholder education on behavioural markers



Behaviour & Mental State

Is a horse mentally fit to compete?

- Recognition of and reaction to pain & conflict behaviours
- Tired horses
- Evaluation of the 'other 23 hours'

Working group to be formed



Hyposensitivity

Current rule: Horses are not permitted to compete with hyposensitive areas of their body

- The surgical procedure i.e., neurectomy is currently not prohibited
- Explore hyposensitivity testing to other disciplines
- Sustainable training methods & consider genetic predisposition for injuries



No changes to current rule



Medication Review & EPSL Listing

- Gathering opinion
 - Review principles of EPSL listing
 - Preventative medicine vs treatment
 - Review of non-prohibited substances
 - Positions on emerging fields of medicine
- Subsequent decisions by VC, List Group & FEI Board





Subject-Specific Workshops

- Equine Behaviour workshop
(Autumn/Winter 2025)
- Supportive Therapies workshop
(Autumn/Winter 2025)
- Transportation workshop
(Date linked to key activities of legislative work)





Acknowledgements

- All the participants
- and





Questions?



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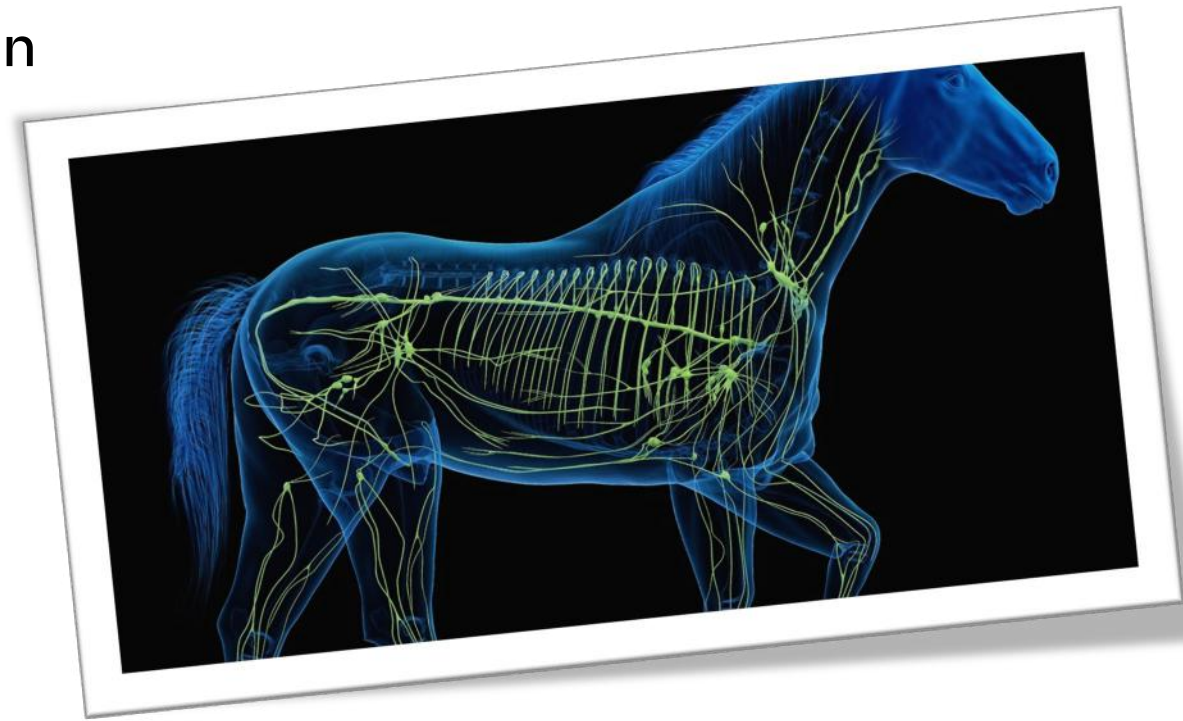
**Actions 1.4, 4.2, 6.2,
and 7.1:
Research & Education:**



Research & Development

Updates from projects

- Correlation between footing and forces in horse's limb and their correlation to injuries
- Development of a FEI protocol and procedures for inspection of horses for oral lesions related to use of bits
- Can a sniffer dog be used to detect FEI prohibited substances in horse saliva?
- FEI evaluation of scientific results





Correlation between footing and forces in horse's limb and their correlation to injuries

By Dr Lars Roepstorff, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)

What

- Define and quantify how different surfaces affect forces in load bearing structures of the limb
- Aim - to advice on footing to prevent orthopaedic injuries

Status

- Digital model produced
- Kinematic analysis and data collection of horses jumping 150-160 cm obstacle will take place in April



Development of a FEI protocol and procedures for inspection of horses for oral lesions related to use of bits

By Dr Mette Uldahl, Dr Inga Wolframm, Dr Ylva Rubin,
FEI Veterinary Department

What

- Aims at increasing knowledge and awareness of oral cavity health in all FEI disciplines
- Design a protocol to check for oral lesions at FEI Events to ensure that horses are fit to compete
- Principles of human behaviour change, behavioural economics, stakeholder engagement are applied to have the cooperation and support of the involved stakeholders

Status Preparations for roll out in 2025-2026 with focus on engagement of Athletes, Grooms and OVs through

- Education
- Data collection
- Initially voluntary participation
- Advisory focus





Can a sniffer dog be used to detect FEI prohibited substances in horse saliva?

By FEI Veterinary Department, Canema/Hundcampus,
Dr Carl Ekstrand SLU, Dr James Scarth LGC

What

- Train a sniffer dog to detect micro-dosed substances in saliva collected in horses in the Vet Gate during Endurance Events.
- The method would be used for selection of horses for regular EADCMP sampling.

Status Proof of concept

- Micro dosed substances administered IV detected in saliva afterwards by a trained dog
- Micro dosed substances administered orally detected in blood by laboratory and in saliva by dog and laboratory
- Results in saliva and blood confirmed by LGC

Field tests to take place in July 2025





FEI evaluation of science

Aim - Evidence based or at least science informed decisions, policies and rules

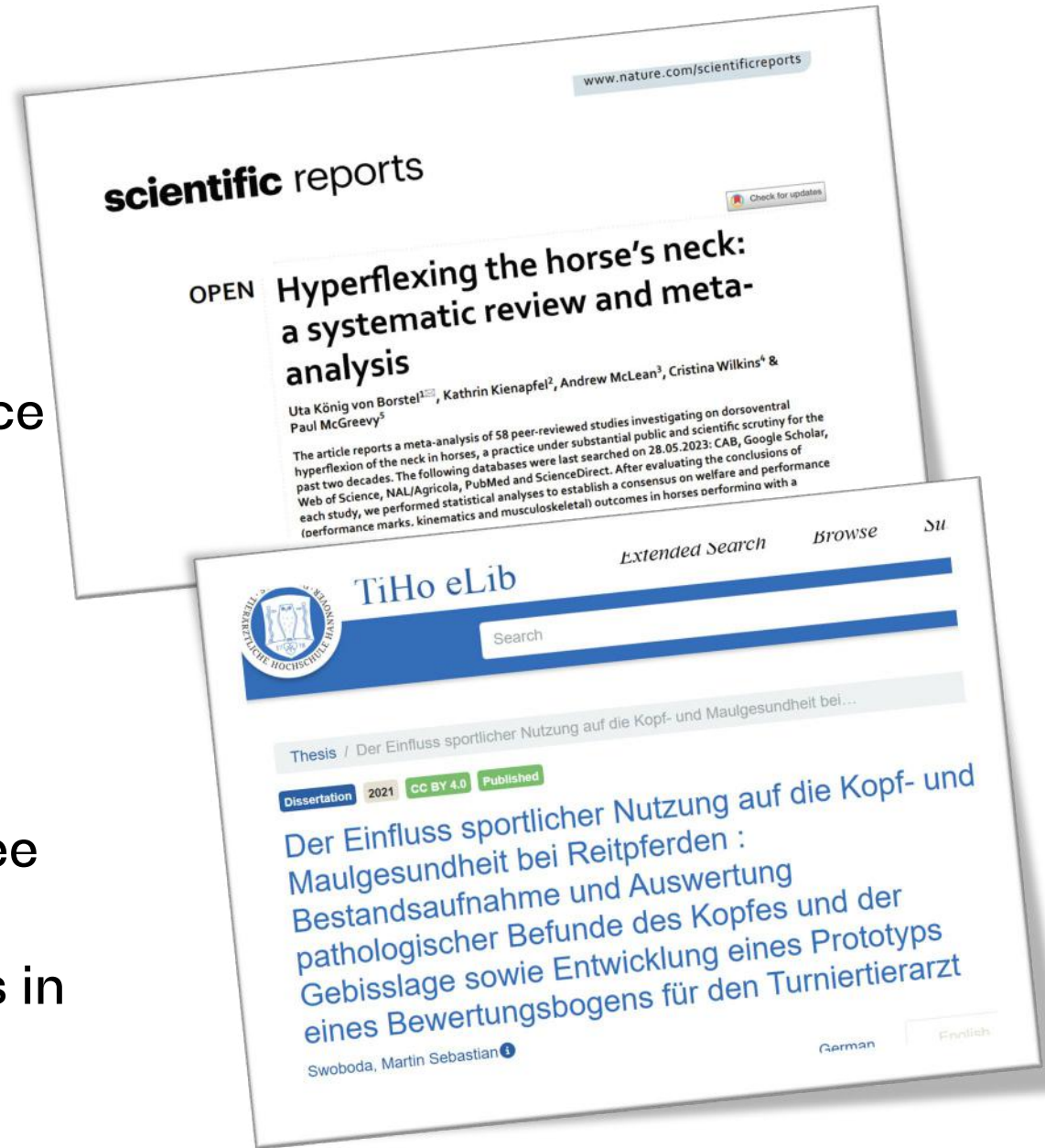
Scope - Published and un-published science

Review of articles etc.

- Veterinary Committee & Department
- External expert reviewers

Dialogue




- Scientists invited to present at Committee meetings
- Scientists invited to forums or as experts in working groups

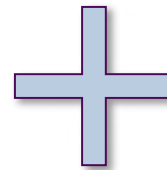







The Five Domains

7.1 THE FIVE DOMAINS

 What?	 Why?	 When?
<p>Definition of the Five Domains for horses in sport</p> <p>1) The first basic education on the Five Domains - for all FEI Staff</p> <p>2) The definition to be done for each discipline</p> <p>3) The disciplines to receive the definition of the five domains with regard to their discipline, and how to use it to measure and evaluate each discipline</p>	<p>EEWBC Recommendation</p> <p>#1 Develop a future-focused 'Good Life for Horses' vision including a strategy for safeguarding equine wellbeing and ensuring the future involvement of horses in sport</p> <p>#2 Define, promote and ensure a Good Life for horses as the fundamental tenet of the FEI Equine Wellbeing Strategy</p>	<p>Aug 2024– Dec 2025</p>



4.2. BEST PRACTICES CHECKLIST

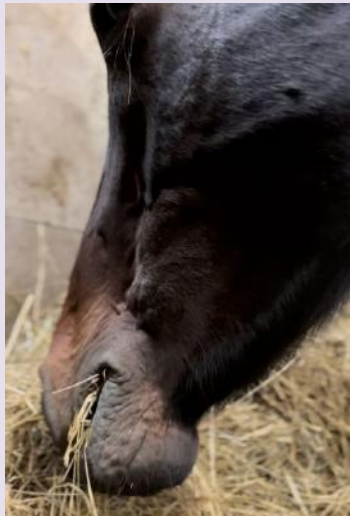
 What?	 Why?	 When?
<p>Create a checklist for self-control programme as part of a toolbox</p> <p>1) Utilise existing model from Swedish harness racing</p>	<p>EEWBC Recommendation</p> <p>#11 Ensure 'zero-tolerance' towards any practice that compromises equine welfare and safety during and outside of competition</p> <p>#23 Implement checks to ensure horses are always 'Fit to Compete'</p>	<p>Jan-Jun 2025</p>



THE FIVE DOMAINS *(Mellor et al. 2020)*

1

Nutrition



2

Physical environment



3

Health and fitness



4

...with the environment



4

INTERACTIONS

...with other horses



4

...with humans



5

Positive mental state = GOOD WELFARE



Action 7.1 – The Five Domains

- Education
 - FEI Board, HQ staff and FEI Officials
- Discipline specific
- Evaluate and recommend regulatory changes if required





Action 4.2 – Best Practices Checklist

- Ongoing work to produce a checklist based on the Five Domains
- Different checklists
 - During competition
 - The other 23-hours (incl. travel & recovery)

Domain 3 – Health & Fitness			
	Question	Reply	Info
1	Routines in place for checking health & soundness (e.g. temperature, HR, breathing freq.)	Y/N	
2	Routines in place for management of hoof care by educated farrier	Y/N	
3	Vaccination program is applied	Y/N	
4	Horses are dewormed according to national recommendations	Y/N	
5	Invasive procedures are conducted by a veterinarian	Y/N	
6	Therapeutic substances are administered in according to FEI regulations/guidelines	Y/N	



Questions?