

International Equestrian Federation Takes a Stand on Rollkur

Warm-up areas at international dressage competitions will be monitored to enforce the ban of this controversial practice.

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The dressage world has been plagued by controversy surrounding the use of rollkur, the practice of forcefully overflexing a horse's neck to achieve roundness. Some riders argue that hyperflexion can be a beneficial and humane workout for a horse when done conservatively by a skilled rider. However, the practice is widely unpopular and has been the subject of several articles, books and videos demonstrating the harm it can do to the horse.

Following constructive debate at the FEI round-table conference at the IOC Headquarters in Lausanne on February 9, 2010, the consensus of the group was that any head and neck position achieved through aggressive force is not acceptable. The group redefined hyperflexion/Rollkur as flexion of the horse's neck achieved through aggressive force, which is therefore unacceptable. The technique known as Low, Deep and Round (LDR), which achieves flexion without undue force, is acceptable.

The group unanimously agreed that any form of aggressive riding must be sanctioned. The FEI will establish a working group, headed by Dressage Committee Chair Frank Kemperman, to expand the current guidelines for stewards to facilitate the implementation of this policy. The group agreed that no changes are required to the current FEI Rules.

The FEI Management is currently studying a range of additional measures, including the use of closed circuit television for warm-up arenas at selected shows.

Watch FEI Dressage and Para-Dressage Director Trond Asmyr explain the results of the FEI conference.