

Eventing Gets Rule Changes and Possible New Formats

Officials take bold steps to improve horse and rider safety.

May 24, 2008

Rule Changes Effect U.S. Riders:

In a move that's viewed as a positive step toward increasing horse and rider safety in three-day eventing competitions, the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) has approved several rule changes, some of which take effect immediately. The changes were submitted by the USEF Eventing Technical Committee with the support of the United States Eventing Association Eventing Standards Task Force.

Below is a summary of the changes:

- * Effective immediately, if a rider falls during the cross-country phase of an event, he or she is automatically eliminated from that phase of competition. Previously, riders were penalized 65 points for a first fall and only eliminated if they fell a second time.
- * Effective immediately, when riders are injured they must be examined by designated medical personnel to determine if they "may take part in another test, ride another horse" or if they are capable of leaving the grounds. If a rider refuses medical examination, he or she will be fined \$100 at the discretion of the Ground Jury.
- * "Obstacles constructed after Dec. 1, 2008, for which approved frangible technology is appropriate, shall be constructed using this technology. Obstacles constructed prior to Dec. 1, 2008 and for which the use of approved frangible technology is appropriate shall be retrofit using this technology prior to Dec. 1, 2009. All open oxers at the Training level and above must be constructed using Approved Frangible technology. Frangible Technology may be installed only by or under the supervision of Course Designers/course builders who have attended a USEA Seminar on Frangible fence construction."
- * The USEF and USEA are currently in the process of developing the rules for a "red card system" to penalize dangerous riding.

These rule changes reflect action items in a letter from USEF President David O'Connor and USEA President Kevin Baumgardner written on April 29, 2008. A copy of that letter can be viewed [Here >>](#). In the letter, the USEF and USEA also announced a joint Safety Summit to be held June 7-8 in Lexington, Ky. Click [Here >>](#) for more information on the Summit and details on how to register for the event.

To view the rules changes in their entirety, visit www.useventing.com and www.usef.org.

Proposal Could Change Eventing Formats:

The Internationale Equestre Federation (FEI) has a proposal on the table that would change the rating system of three-day eventing on an international level.

Currently, in the sport of eventing, the FEI has established that four-star events are the most difficult competitions. In the United States, the Kentucky Rolex is the only four-star competition for three-day eventers; Britain has two four-star events: Badminton and Burghley.

Now the FEI has proposed a new five-star category for eventing competitions. If the proposal is accepted, all four-star events would automatically become five-star competitions, but the change is in name only: courses, heights and distances would not change. Similarly, the other international advanced events, currently called three-star, would become four-star, and so on down the levels.

According to the FEI, the rating shift would allow for the creation of a new one-star category for lower-level competition, which would help set up qualification programs for international events and in turn better prepare horses and riders for the rigors of upper level competition. A final proposal will be submitted for approval by the FEI in November. If accepted, it is hoped the new categories will take effect Jan. 1 2009.