

Horse Transportation for 2008 Olympics

FEI committees meet to discuss the best ways to transport competition horses to Beijing.

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With the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing a year away, the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) is beginning to discuss details for transporting competition horses. On March 19, the FEI Veterinary Committee and the Welfare Sub Committee gathered to consider flight schedules, arrival times and the related competition dates.

Overall, the committees recognized that there are many complicating factors involved in competition horse shipment. Still, they felt it was important to make a number of issues clear.

First, in the interest of a safe competition and an optimal transport, the Veterinary Committee advised that the horses arrive approximately 10 days prior to Olympic competition. This will enable a thorough flight recovery and give the horses a fair chance to get used to the climatic conditions. It also leaves room for treatment in case any horse suffers from travel sickness or minor injury in flight. Currently, flight schedules are being designed to adhere as closely as possible to the 10-day period, although this will not be possible in every case.

Further discussion is required to define the optimal stable temperature in air-conditioned stables and the temperature phases leading from horse arrival to competition (e.g. start with a cool temperature and gradually increase in the days leading up to competition).

At the moment it looks like most of the horses will travel to Hong Kong International Airport in "combi" flights. These flights create more room for transport of grooms and give more flexibility in flight scheduling. However, it also causes some problems in terms of unloading the horses and the aircraft turnover time. This issue is being given urgent attention as the time from aircraft to air-conditioned lorries/stables at the venue is one of the most important transport-related factors in preventing post-flight fever and has a major effect on post-flight recovery of the horses.