THE WELFARE OF THE HORSE IN DRESSAGE
Updated 16/02/04

General Aim

The aim of this paper is to set out the British Dressage Strategy for the Welfare of the horse in the sport of dressage and the Action Plan to support that Strategy.

The key to the success of the strategy is to educate all those in the sport about welfare and welfare related issues in accordance with the Welfare Action Plan. This will be achieved by a systematic process, covering every aspect of the sport from training to competing; Welfare is an issue for everyone in the sport.

Those in the sport of Dressage are very caring of their animals and welfare related incidents are usually due to a lack of knowledge and understanding. Therefore by adopting a more proactive approach to welfare and its implementation, we can help prevent these situations occurring.

Welfare Action Plan

The Welfare Action Plan has the following key strands. It is hoped and assumed that these will develop over time:

Welfare Standing Committee
Welfare Guidelines
Technical Delegates
Policy formulation and Implementation
Education

1. Welfare Standing Committee.

Aim for Welfare Standing Committee to meet annually and to operate within the agreed Terms of Reference at Annex G to this paper.

Composition: Jane Goldsmith - Chair
Tim Downes - Organisers Representative
Jane Kidd – Judges Representative
Chris Porterfield – Technical Delegates representative
Meriel Sommers - Legal representative
David Hunt - International Trainer representative
Adam Kemp – Rider Representative

In attendance: Chief Executive
Sport & Technical Officer
2. General Welfare Guidelines and Guidelines to Organisers, Trainers and Judges

The Welfare Guidelines attached at Annex A and B provide guidance on the implementation of the Welfare Strategy at Dressage Competitions for Organisers, Judges, Trainers and Competitors.

3. Terms of Reference for Technical Delegates (Welfare)

Technical Delegates will at the outset only be deployed at Regional Championships, Winter Semi – Finals, Winter and National Championships and Premier League Competitions. Their Terms of Reference are set out at Annex C and should be read in conjunction with the FEI Stewards Manual.

4. Policy formulation and implementation

In accordance with the Terms of Reference it will be for the Technical Committees ie Judges, Training etc to make policy recommendations on welfare issues relating to their areas of responsibility and to implement this policy. These policies will be reviewed annually by the Welfare Committee. It is formally requested that the Technical Committees should have a member whose specific responsibility is Welfare policy in that particular area and this person is to provide a report to the Welfare Committee annually.

Education

As stated above in the aims of this paper it is vital that the Technical Committees take action relating to the development of welfare and welfare related issues in educating all participants in the sport. Furthermore this should be publicised and communicated to all members of BD as well as the particular target group. Examples will be the training that Judges receive relating to welfare issues connected with judging and on the Training Committee side such issues as the Welfare element in the Theory sessions at the Dressage Competition Workshops.

Annexes

Attached to this paper are the following Annexes:

A. General Welfare Guidelines
B. Welfare Guidelines for Organisers, Judges and Trainers.
C. Terms of Reference for British Dressage Technical Delegates (Welfare)
D. British Dressage Welfare Complaint Form
E. The Welfare of the Horse Notice for Organisers
F. The Welfare of the Horse – British Dressage Code of Conduct
G. Terms of Reference for the Welfare Standing Committee
H. Guidelines for Organisers about requirements for Technical Delegates
ANNEX A

GENERAL WELFARE GUIDELINES

Any distress caused to dressage horses is almost always due to ignorance or over determined riding. Riders are usually very concerned when they are told that their actions amount to abuse and are anxious to co-operate. The person on the ground must keep this in mind when assessing the situation and act accordingly.

• If during a competition you witness abuse to a horse, you should report it immediately to the Welfare Technical Delegate or if not available to the Organiser. If the Organiser is not available this should be reported to a Judge or Trainer.

Examples of abuse:

**Bit** - The bit must never be used as a punishment.

**Spurs** – To use spurs excessively or persistently so as to injure the horse. If a judge/steward sees a spur causing injury they can ask the competitor to remove them and they should then be able to compete.

**Over-Working** – To ride/compete an obviously exhausted, lame or injured horse.

**Whip** - Excessive and inappropriate use of the whip is not acceptable.

**Blood** - Blood is always a cause of concern.

**Lameness** - Riding an unsound horse.

**Tack** - Tack should be correctly fitted to avoid pain.
ANNEX B

WELFARE GUIDELINES FOR ORGANISERS, JUDGES AND TRAINERS

Any distress caused to dressage horses is almost always due to ignorance or over determined riding. Riders are usually very concerned when they are told that their actions amount to abuse and are anxious to co-operate. The person on the ground must keep this in mind when assessing the situation and act accordingly.

- If during a competition you witness abuse to a horse, then as an organiser, a judge or a trainer, a second person should be sought to discuss the incident before a decision is taken, unless the situation is very urgent in which case you should attempt to stop this abuse immediately.
- It is always preferable to deal with Welfare issues on the day on which they have occurred and as soon as possible after they have occurred.
- If the issue can be dealt with appropriately on the day then it is not always required to report this. If however the issue can be dealt with on the day but the TD/Organiser/Judge/Trainer still feels that it is a serious welfare issue then it needs to be reported to the Disciplinary Sub Committee for further action/consideration.
- If in the opinion of the TD/Organiser/Judge/Trainer this issue cannot be dealt with on the day then it should be reported to BD along the following lines:
- Make a note of the time and place, name of person, and the name and contact details of at least one witness who is ideally independent of yourself.
- Report the abuse to British Dressage on the BD Welfare Complaint form, copies of which are held by the organiser.
- If at all possible you should inform the competitor involved on the day that you are sending a complaint to British Dressage about their conduct.
- If you are judging a class and see abuse of the horse, or you see blood, and in your opinion this amounts to abuse of the horse as laid out below, then you must immediately eliminate the competitor. You must inform the competitor why you have eliminated them and if you feel appropriate you should also fill out a British Dressage Welfare Complaint form (Annex D) which are held by the organiser.

Examples of abuse:

**Bit** – The bit must never be used as a punishment.

**Spurs** – To use spurs excessively or persistently so as to injure the horse. If a judge/steward sees a spur causing injury they can ask the competitor to remove them.

**Over-Working** – To ride/compete an obviously exhausted, lame or injured horse.

**Whip** - Excessive and inappropriate use of the whip is not acceptable.

**Blood** - Blood is always a cause of concern.

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**Tack** - Tack should be correctly fitted to avoid pain.
ANNEX C

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR BRITISH DRESSAGE TECHNICAL DELEGATES (WELFARE)

The aim of Technical Delegates is to protect the welfare of the horse, thereby ensuring fair sport for all.

This implies that:

- Equestrian sport is equally fair for all competitors, thereby ensuring that the principles of good horsemanship are respected.
- The best possible conditions for running an event must be provided by organisers, so that infringements of BD rules by competitors, grooms and other individuals are avoided.
- The law abiding competitor must be protected.
- Horses must be protected against abuse and cruelty.
- Correct stabling and feeding must be provided.

Who are Technical Delegates? British Dressage Technical Delegates are drawn from the pool of FEI Stewards.

Role of the Technical Delegate. The role of the TD is to protect the welfare of the horse as stated above. They carry out this role by observing the following areas at a competition:

- warm up arena
- lorry park
- stabling area – from the point of view of direct abuse to the horse and the suitability of stabling
- all areas where horses have access - for health and safety reasons

Reporting. The TD reports directly to the Chief Executive of British Dressage.

Method of operating. It is the responsibility of the organiser to arrange for a TD to be present at their show if the show falls into the following category: Regional Championships, Winter Semi – Finals, Winter and National Championships and Premier League Competitions. British Dressage will send out an up to date list of TDs with contact details to organisers for this purpose.

On the day of the competition that the TD is to be present they will report to the organiser on their arrival. There will need to be method of communicating established whether this be by mobile phone or radio.

The organiser is to furnish the TD on arrival with a copy of their Risk Assessment for the show.

Before leaving the competition the TD will inform the organiser.

Protocol for TDs. It is absolutely essential that TDs are not thought of as ‘police’ or ‘informers’ but that everybody involved sees their role as a co-operative one. Most examples of abuse are committed through ignorance and therefore a timely reminder, tactfully given, before an issue escalates, is much better received than having to deal
with a participant once a serious issue has occurred. Education should be achieved, where possible, by prevention rather than punishment.

Where a TD has concerns about the treatment of a horse which is causing immediate suffering/distress they must intervene immediately in a manner appropriate to the situation.

If a TD is approached by anyone who is concerned about the treatment of a horse they should immediately find at least one other knowledgeable responsible person and briefly discuss it with them before acting. This other person should preferably be a senior judge or trainer.

Unless it is either a very urgent situation, in which case you should attempt to stop the abuse immediately a second person should be sought to discuss the incident before a decision is taken.

The small group should first discuss whether the action they have witnessed/are witnessing has welfare implications and if so how to deal with it. If action is required then it must be done unobtrusively and tactfully.

As stated above there has to be differentiation between incidents which are marginal, when time and great care must be taken, and incidents which require more immediate action as the degree of 'abuse' is more obvious. Although in every case serious consideration must be taken and action must be appropriate and discreet.

If the TD, or anyone else, clearly sees raw/bleeding marks where the spurs have grazed the horse then they must take action in accordance with Annexes A and B and, if possible, get another knowledgeable person to approve it. But still the action must be discreet and if the horse is grazed or bleeding then it would have to be asked to withdraw.

**Examples of abuse:**

**Bit** - The bit must never be used as a punishment.

**Spurs** – To use spurs excessively or persistently so as to injure the horse. If a judge/steward sees a spur causing injury they can ask the competitor to remove them and they should then be able to compete.

**Over-Working** – To ride/compete an obviously exhausted, lame or injured horse.

**Whip** - Excessive and inappropriate use of the whip is not acceptable.

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ANNEX D

BRITISH DRESSAGE WELFARE COMPLAINT FORM

Rider …………………………………….. Membs. No (BD office)………………
Horse …………………………………….. Reg. No (BD office)…………………..
Show …………………………………….. Date …………………………………

I AM / WE ARE REPORTING AN OFFENCE (RULE 99) AS DETAILED BELOW:

Complainant Name: 
Complainant signature ……………….. Membs. No ………………………
(if applicable)
Address:
Contact telephone number(s):

Witness Name:
Witness signature ……………………… Membs. No ………………………
(if applicable)
Address:
Contact telephone number(s):
ANNEX E

THE WELFARE OF THE HORSE

It is vitally important for the future of the sport of dressage that the welfare of the horse is the primary consideration at all times. This message is encompassed in British Dressage's Mission Statement 'To improve the standard of riding, training of horses and horsemanship in Great Britain by promoting, fostering and regulating dressage.'

The principles of this policy are set out in the British Dressage rulebook on Page 1, 'The FEI Code of Conduct 2002' and in Rule 99 Conduct of Members. Guidelines for Organisers, Judges and Competitors/Spectators about the implementation of the policy, as well as a copy of the British Dressage Rule Book, are held in the show secretary's office.
ANNEX F

THE WELFARE OF THE HORSE

Code of Conduct Issued by the F.E.I.

a) In all Equestrian sports the horse must be considered paramount.

b) The well being of the horse shall be above the demands of breeders, trainers, riders, owners, dealers, organisers, sponsors or officials.

c) All handling and veterinary treatment must ensure the health and welfare of the horse.

d) The highest standards of nutrition, health, sanitation and safety shall be encouraged and maintained at all times.

e) Adequate provision must be made for ventilation, feeding, watering and maintaining a healthy environment during transportation.

f) Emphasis should be placed on increasing education in training and equestrian practices and promoting scientific studies in equine health.

g) In the interests of the horse, the fitness and competence of the rider shall be regarded as essential.

h) All riding and training methods must take account of the horse as a living entity and must not include any technique considered by the F.E.I. to be abusive.

i) National Federations should establish adequate controls in order that all persons and bodies under their jurisdiction respect the welfare of the horse.

j) The National and International Rules and Regulations in equestrian sport regarding the health and welfare of the horse must be adhered to not only during National and International events but also in training. Competition Rules and Regulations shall be continually reviewed to ensure such welfare.
ANNEX G

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR WELFARE STANDING COMMITTEE

Objectives

1. The Welfare Standing Committee is a sub-committee of the Board of British Dressage and is appointed by the Board to supervise welfare policy and to design and oversee the British Dressage Welfare Strategy.

Composition

2. The Committee consists of:

   Jane Goldsmith - Chair
   Tim Downes – Organisers Representative
   Jane Kidd – Judges Representative
   Adam Kemp – Riders Representative
   Chris Porterfield – Stewards Representative
   Meriel Sommers – Legal Representative
   David Hunt – International Trainers Representative

In attendance

The Chief Executive
The Sport and Technical Officer

Meetings

3. The Committee will meet at least once a year, at a place and time determined by the Chairman. The Chief Executive shall call a meeting at any time with not less than 7 days notice at the request of the Chairman.

Responsibilities

4. In addition to the general objectives set out in clause 1, the Welfare Standing Committee is to review the policy formulated by the relevant Technical Committees for the following areas:

   Rules and Fixtures
   Judge Training
   Trainer Training
   Rider Training
   Disciplinary Matters
ANNEX H

ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES FOR ORGANISERS

The aim of these guidelines is to provide all organisers with some directions about the requirements of the Technical Delegates if they are present at your show: Organisers should firstly refer to TOR for TDs at Annex C:

a. Ensure you have an up to date copy of your Risk Assessment proforma fully completed for the TD. They will need to see this and be able to refer to it whilst fulfilling their role as TD.

b. Ensure that you have adequate means for communication with the TD whilst they are at your competition. If hand held radios are available this is the ideal otherwise ensure that you have the TDs mobile phone number available in the secretaries at all times.

c. Please ensure that the TDs are able to have access to all areas involving horses.

d. Please do advertise the fact that during the course of your show ………(name) will be present in their role as Technical Delegate with responsibility for Welfare issues. It is suggested to do this alongside or incorporated with Annex E.