



This interim report and presentation was prepared for delivery at the FEI Sports Forum 2023, marking the end of Phase 2 of the EEWB Commission’s work. The report and presentation follows on from the work presented in November 2022 at the FEI General Assembly in South Africa and refers to documents that have been previously published on the Commission’s website.

Equine Ethics and Wellbeing Commission - Interim Report



The presentation will be provided in three sections. Some of the early content will be familiar to those who attended the General Assembly, or have been to a presentation provided by one of the Commission members over the past few months.

However we recognise that for some, this will be the first engagement with the Commission and for that reason, we have provided some background in the first section, Information about the results we have made use of (and previously presented) with some further detail and finally information about the draft recommendations we have developed.



In Part one we provide information about who and what the Commission is and how we work.



Why did the FEI establish an Equine Ethics and Wellbeing Commission

To ensure the future involvement of horses in sport.

'Equestrian sport and the FEI's activities are more than ever under public scrutiny and through the Commission we want to embrace that scrutiny to drive change and shine the spotlight on our number one stakeholder – the horse'



(Ingmar De Vos President FEI).

4

The why - To recognise and address rising social license concerns, the FEI established the new Commission in June 2022.

Who are we ? - 'Critical Friends'

External



Nat Waran (Chair)



Kathalijne Visser



Camie Heleski



Jessica Stark



Madeleine Campbell

Internal



Cayetano Martínez de Irujo



Ken Lalo



Theo Ploegmakers



Cesar Hirsch



Sabrina Ibáñez

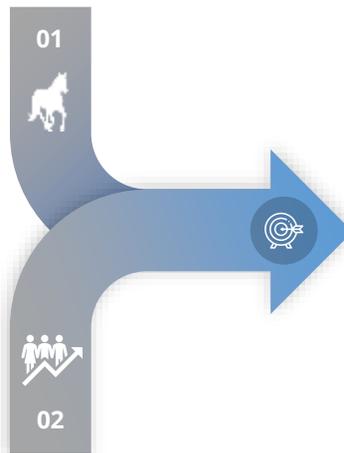
The Commission was established by the FEI and operates under a terms of reference that can be found on the Commission website. There are 10 members; 5 external to the FEI appointed due to their different areas of expertise, and 5 members appointed as 'internal' experts within the FEI. The invited Chairperson is Professor Natalie Waran – an internationally respected equine behaviour and welfare scientist. Whilst the commission operates independently of the FEI, it reports to the FEI Board providing an objective view regarding the involvement of horses in sport. The commission considers itself a 'critical friend', providing objective independent advice to help guide the FEI and the equestrian community about equine welfare and Social Licence matters.

Positive welfare

To ensure that horses involved in sport can experience positive welfare throughout their lives

Guide FEI

To guide FEI regulations, policies and practices and inform wider-reaching advocacy and information



Social Licence to Operate

To ensure continued social acceptance of the involvement of horses in sport

The Commission was set up to address issues of SLO in relation to equine involvement in sport. The approach has been to consider public and equestrian opinion regarding equine welfare, and to make use of the most up to date relevant research to provide recommendations to the FEI to address areas of concern/risk to both equine welfare and SLO and to ensure that the FEI's policy and practice reflect the statement that equine welfare is paramount.

The Commission's role in relation to the FEI

To provide independent objective advice regarding equine ethics and wellbeing to the FEI Board.

Develop a strategic approach to help guide decision-making within the FEI in relation to Equine Ethics and Wellbeing.

Provide recommendations to address issues of SLO to the FEI Board for their consideration.

The FEI receives recommendations and advice from the Commission, and decides on the course of action (if any) to address the recommendations.

7

It's important to differentiate between what the Commission does and what the FEI Board (who the Commission reports to), is responsible for.

The role of the commission is to provide independent objective advice to the FEI Board regarding matters related to equine ethics and wellbeing specifically in relation to the involvement of horses in sport but also more generally in relation to all horses. In so doing, the Commission has been working to develop a proposed vision and strategic approach to enable the FEI to develop its leadership in matters related to equine welfare and help guide FEI decision making through the provision of recommendations to help address issues regarding equine ethics and wellbeing. Whilst the Commission provides independent expertise, it is the FEI Board who receives the advice and decides whether and how they wish to proceed through internal governance structures. The FEI's response and planned course of action in relation to advice and recommendations provided by the commission will be a matter for the FEI to communicate with its stakeholders.

What are we addressing? *'Social Licence to Operate'*



In June 2022 the FEI established a commission to consider issues related to Social License to Operate (SLO). For some countries this will be a familiar term affecting a number of different industries and various sport bodies or organizations, but for others this may be something new and/or a concept that is less well known. SLO refers to the unwritten agreement that society provides to an industry or organization or sport that enables it to operate as it does, regulating itself, because it is trusted and accepted.

Although many sports are under similar pressure (albeit for different reasons) to enhance their social license to operate, it's important to recognize that equestrian sport is unique, in that it involves the use of an animal who is viewed as particularly vulnerable especially where there may be competing priorities.

Why is SLO important ?

Social
Licence

Social
Control

Public
Acceptance

Approval

Self – Regulation

Freedom to
Operate



*Social Licence plays a significant role in
which industries thrive, and which ones fail*

Berger 2011

Rejection

Legislation

Banned



Unfortunately, it is easy for public acceptance and approval that allows for freedom to operate to change when something happens or continues to happen that effects credibility and public confidence. When the tipping point moves towards social control this can lead to more regulation, external as well as internal, and potentially rejection or banning. This can result in loss of SLO.

Loss of SLO



'Left unattended or only partially addressed, social licence issues quickly become very expensive to rectify'
Dr W Parker as CEO Scion (Forestry)



"Public patience has finally run right out and the corporate dairy industry is now trying to catch up and rescue its credibility."
M. Taylor as CE Fish and Game



"This is a very clear signal, I believe the clearest signal that's been given to this industry... it is either things improve, or they risk their social licence to exist."

G Robertson, exRacing Minister on Greyhound racing in NZ 2021.

There are many examples of Risk to SLO being managed within a variety of industries and organisations. Forestry/Dairy/Animal use in Research and Entertainment – all of these industries have at one time or another had to take into consideration the perception of people outside of their industries- and as societal views vary depending upon a myriad of factors – its essential to be able to monitor, understand and address concerns before its too late and SLO is withdrawn.

Horse Racing – Response to Risk to SLO

“the principal question emerging from evolving social norms and values... [is] whether thoroughbred racing is ethically justifiable, and if so, how it can be conducted so that it is socially acceptable”

Bergman 2015

Racing's social license to operate: The evolution of public attitudes



Shocking BBC documentary exposes horseracing's slaughterhouse horrors



https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339493592_Thoroughbred_Racehorse_Welfare_through_the_Lens_of_'Social_License_to_Operate-With_an_Emphasis_on_a_US_Perspective [accessed Apr 14 2023].

11

The equine industry has different sub-industries – and whilst those with the sports know the difference between them, the public may not.

The Racing TB Organisations have to a greater or lesser extent depending on where in the world they are, had to address increasing public concerns. Although it has taken time for the racing industry to appreciate the significance of SLO and the risks of not reacting rather than being proactive – There has more recently been a change – and welfare (and Sustainability) strategies have been developed addressing matters of concern to the public as well as those with an interest in horses.

Is there a problem with Social Licence for Equestrian Sports?

Society's views on using horses in sport must be acknowledged, says charity boss



Journal of Veterinary Behavior
Volume 9, March-April 2014, Page 12-17

An investigation into equestrian spur use in the United Kingdom

Charlotte Vainman PhD, Lucinda Barber

'Outrageous' decision to allow pre-competition equine sedative

REUTERS

PETA calls on IOC president to remove equestrian events from Games



Photo: Horse and Hound magazine

i News

Opinion

Equestrian sports have an animal cruelty problem - dressage should be banned from the Olympics

In my experience, the most distressed horses are always those who come from the horse racing industry



inside THE GAMES

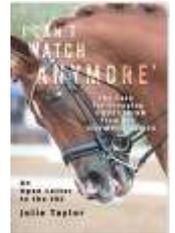
PETA steps up call for equestrian events to be banned from Olympics as FEI probes German video footage

Equestrian: NZ Olympic great Sir Mark Todd apologises after social media video emerges of horse being whipped with stick



New rules on horse nosebands needed to prevent distress, say researchers

Study found horses' heart rates increased and they struggled to chew when nosebands were over-tightened, leading to calls for strict new regulations on use



We wouldn't have been commissioned to carry out this work if there was no threat. There is no doubt there are rising concerns about the involvement of horses in sports, and even questions in some countries about whether horses should even be used for leisure activities. It is the case that media such as the stories in the slide have considerable impact particularly on those who already have concerns. One negative image or bad news story can over-ride all of the positive ones that may have gone before. These articles have a significant influence on social licence to operate.

Why now?

Increase in research publications related to equine welfare

The collage displays six abstracts from research papers:

- Champing at the Bit for Improvements: A Review of Equine Welfare in Equestrian Sports in the United Kingdom** (2022)
- Thoroughbred Racehorse Welfare through the Lens of Social License to Operate—With an Emphasis on a U.S. Perspective** (2022)
- Social Licence to Operate: What Can Equestrian Sports Learn from Other Industries?** (2022)
- How Happy Are Equine Athletes? Stakeholder Perceptions of Equine Welfare Issues Associated with Equestrian Sport** (2022)
- An ethical Framework for the Use of Horses in Competitive Sport: Theory and Function** (2022)
- Symbiosis or Sporting Toof? Competition and the Horse-Rider Relationship in Elite Equestrian Sports** (2022)

Alongside this rise in concern, there are also an increasing number of research papers being published relating to equine welfare, and more specifically the issues of concern in relation to the involvement of horses in equestrian sport. Research in this field of study is mainly funded by welfare organisations and/or government agencies – Its interesting that up until this point there has been little investment in research by industry to consider the welfare risks and develop mitigation strategies.

Why now? Documented rise in public concerns



Figure 3
51% of the respondents against the use of tack, such as whips and spurs. Only 9% support their use

FIGURE 1 - Do you think there is support in Dutch society for equestrian sport in the Netherlands?



A lot of support
Some Support
Not sure/don't know
No support
Absolutely no support

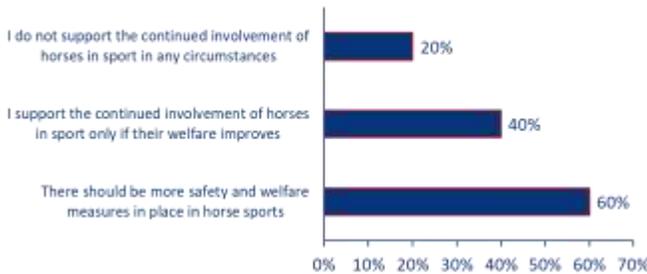
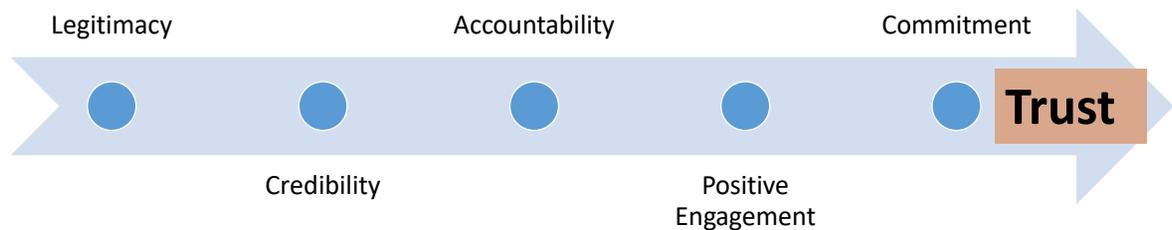


Figure 2 (World Horse Welfare Survey (YouGov research conducted in UK 20-22 May, 2022))



A number of independent surveys addressing equine welfare and public concerns have been carried out in different countries. For example in the Netherlands where the public were asked about their support for equestrian sport. As can be seen from Figure 1 - the public response shows that whilst there is some support, there is also a large proportion of people who are unsure and therefore could be easily influenced either way. In the UK (see Figure 2) a recent survey demonstrated that the public were particularly concerned with 20% saying they did not support horse involvement in sport. Those that were still supportive, wanted to see more horse welfare and safety measures in place. Finally (see Figure 3), some surveys have gone further and asked respondents about specific things such as the use of whips and spurs. Responses from surveys such as these show that there is a high level of discomfort and a lack of acceptance regarding the use of certain items of tack and equipment on horses involved in sport.

Establishing and maintaining trust is a key element of social licence to operate (SLO)



'Social licence can never be self-awarded, it requires that an activity enjoys sufficient trust and legitimacy, and has the consent of (the public) and those affected..'

J Morrison 2014

The risk to SLO is real – and its important to accept that – and consider how to reduce that risk through maintaining a level of Trust in the Industry. This requires consideration of how the public and others who have a view on the involvemen tof horses feel. How accountable, engaged and credible equestrian sports are perceived to be. Its important to remember that we as a community/industry do not award our own social licence!



What is the current situation with SLO?

Two Surveys to understand the viewpoints of public and equestrians **inside and outside** the FEI

- Survey among Equestrian community (almost 28,000 respondents)
- Survey among Public (over 14,000 respondents)



17

In order to gain the baseline information required by the commission regarding the current social license situation, the commission has carried out two large scale surveys. One involving the equestrian community both 'FEI' and 'non FEI' stakeholders and the other involved the public from a variety of countries (14). We believe that these combined surveys represent the most extensive survey of equestrian and public opinion carried out to date. The surveys provided good insights into the viewpoints of the public and equestrians and specifically if equestrian stakeholders were concerned about risks to social license. The Commission was particularly interested in learning about equestrian views, since these are the people closest to horses and with an interest in the continued use of horses for leisure and sporting purposes. By looking at views within the equestrian stakeholders we hoped to gauge the level of concern (if any), the types of concerns, and who was most concerned. In other words whether there was awareness within the equestrian community of risk to social licence – and that the iceberg could be melting'.

There are different lenses



18

There a number of different lenses – within the equestrian community, within the FEI community, and within the Public

Equestrian and Public Survey - Who are the respondents?

Three 'Stakeholder Groups' within which there are a variety of views



Equestrian (Internal)

- FEI Board
- National Federations
- Riders
- Trainers
- Officials
- Employees



Equestrian (External)

- Non FEI Equestrians
- Event and Rider Sponsors
- Event Organisers
- Equine Welfare Organisations
- Veterinarians
- Farriers



Non- Equestrian (Public)

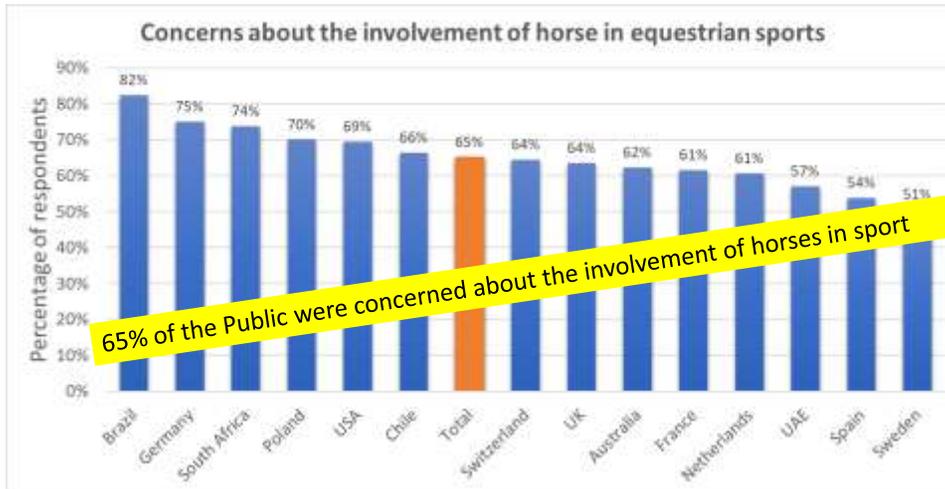
- Members of the Public with no investment or history with horses



Equestrian Community

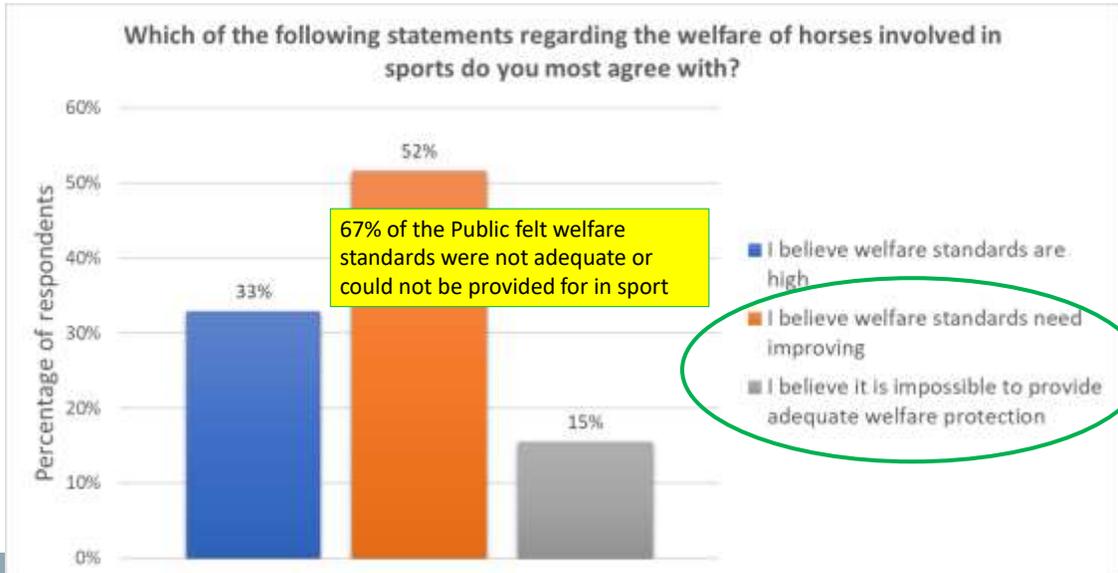
It became clear through the analysis that rather than there being two sets of respondents, equestrians and public, there were two broad groupings within the equestrian group, those respondents related to the FEI and those equestrians that were not affiliated to the FEI. This was felt to be significant in that rather than there being 'the public' and equestrians – it seems that there are two groups within the equestrian community – representing 'three lenses' to consider when it comes to consideration of social licence to operate.

The Public are concerned



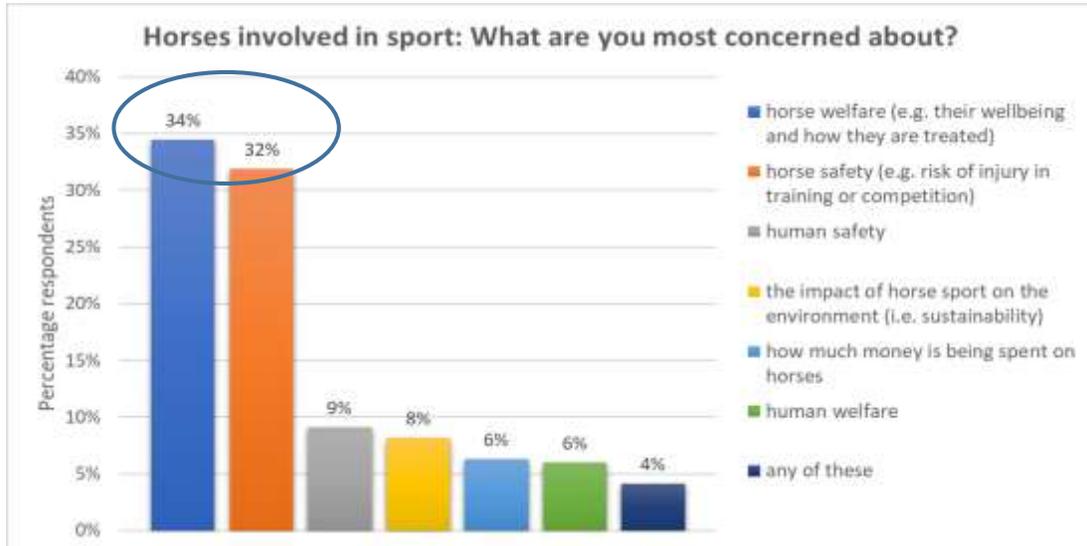
The Public survey showed that 65% of the public respondents (see orange bar) said that they were concerned about the involvement of horses in equestrian sport. There were some interesting differences between countries, which should be used to guide national federations with their own welfare strategy and communication plans.

This is the public perception



Not only were people concerned about whether horses enjoyed being involved in sport - It was also clear from the results that the public wanted to see improvements in welfare standards with some feeling that it is impossible to provide for the welfare needs of horses in sport.

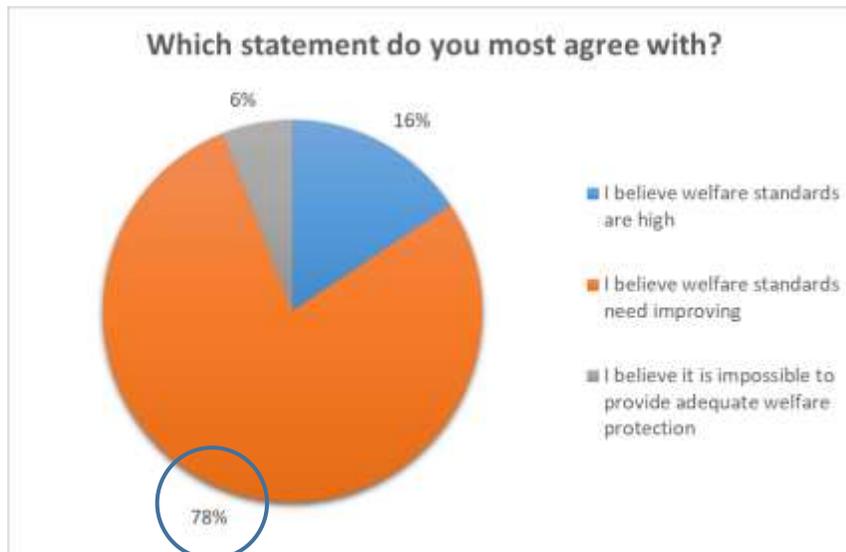
These are the main concerns of the public



22

Despite the variations in level of concern between countries the majority of responses were most concerned about horse welfare and safety. From the responses, it was clear that the concern the Public has is **for the horse and its welfare, which appears to be of more importance** to the public at this time than other issues of social license, such as human welfare and safety and sustainability.

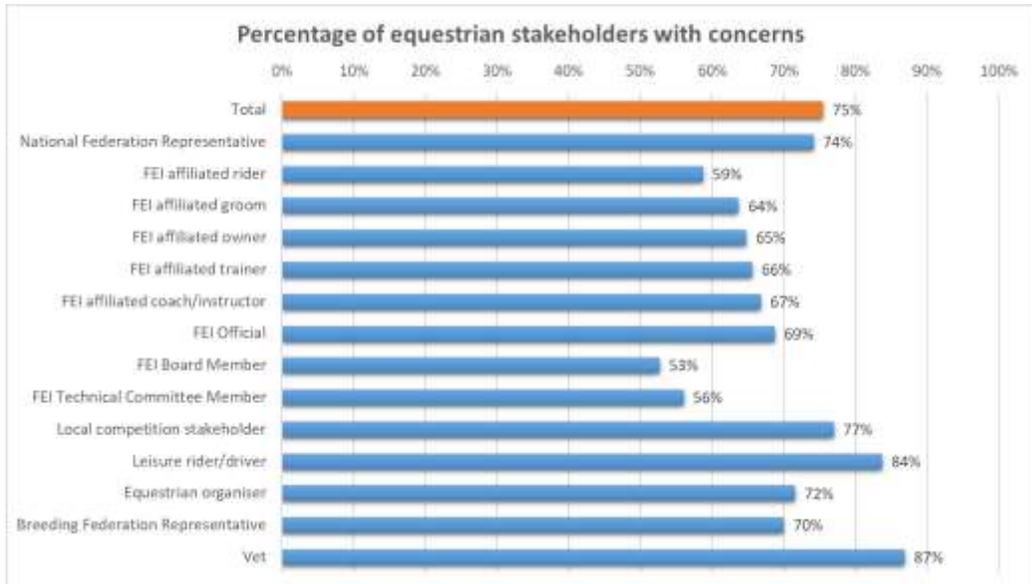
Equestrian stakeholders also feel welfare standards need improving.



23

78% of the equestrian stakeholders believed that improvement in welfare standards were needed. The commission felt that this represented a positive response from the point of view of social licence – since it demonstrated that the equestrian community were not out of step with public opinion, in that they recognized there is an ongoing need for improvements to equine welfare standards and therefore would be willing to accept that some positive changes were necessary.

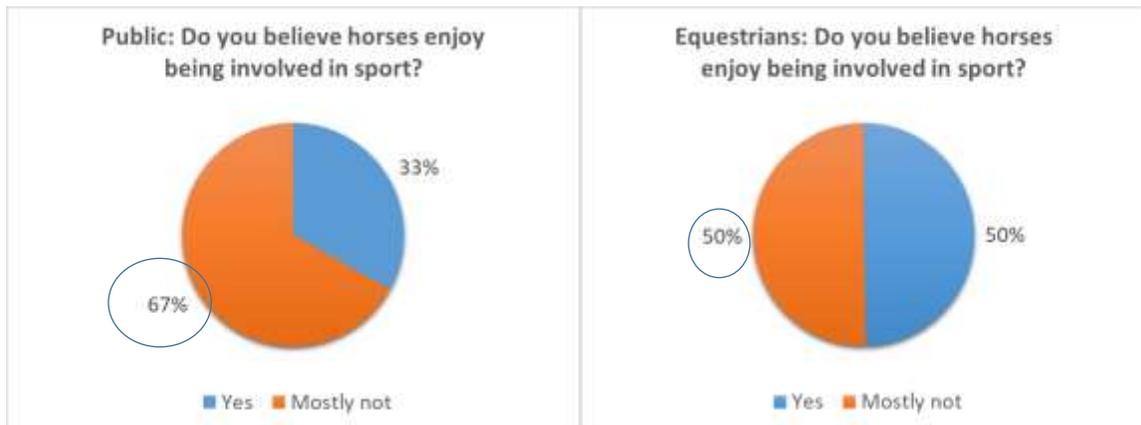
Variation between equestrian stakeholders in their concern



24

Moving on to the survey of almost 28,000 equestrian stakeholders. The Commission was surprised to find that it showed that the majority of equestrians have concerns regarding equine wellbeing (75% of respondents). As with the public survey there were differences, but this time it was between different equestrian stakeholders. Levels of concern varied depending upon who the respondent identified as. Those who appeared to have most concern described themselves as leisure/local or None FEI competition riders and veterinarians - whilst who appeared to have lower concern regarding equine welfare were FEI affiliated riders, Technical and Board members.

Different lenses but similar conclusion



25

Despite the different lenses -Its important to recognise that both the Public and Equestrians have concerns about the wellbeing of the horse. The commission asked both public and equestrians about whether horses enjoy being involved in sport. As can be seen here 67% of the public don't believe horses enjoy sport most of the time, and this is also the viewpoint of 50% of the equestrian respondents. This is of concern for the equestrian sports since if the public and equestrians believe that horses do not enjoy being involved in sport and we are not able to demonstrate otherwise, this could lead to a loss of social license to operate. However, it does provide an opportunity to consider how research and education initiatives can be used to discover how the equine experience can be measured, improved where possible, and then those results used to inform education and communication initiatives to reach the public but most importantly the equestrian stakeholders.

Results

There are 6 priority focus areas for SLO



In order to inform the work of the Commission statistical analysis in the form of principal component analysis was carried out to consider how these 33 common themes were related to each other – and this resulted in what are described as 6 **priority focus areas**. The order of ‘priority’ for survey respondents was also clear from the analysis with the top priority focus area that emerged being ‘**training and riding, tack and equipment**’ followed by ‘physical and emotional stress’ and so on following the numbers around this figure.

Within the equestrian community – Different levels of concern (*different lenses*)

	FEI affiliated respondents	Non FEI affiliated respondents
Tack and equipment, Riding and Training Practices		
Recognizing physical and emotional stress		
Accountability, enforcement, knowledge		
The other 23 hours		
Competitive drive, horse as a number		
Not fit to compete, masking health problems		

27

And within this equestrian community, these two groups, there is a statistically significant difference in level of concern regarding the earlier mentioned 6 priority areas of focus.

Equestrians described as non FEI affiliated including national and local competitors as well as leisure riders/drivers were significantly more concerned about 5 of the 6 priority areas of concern (red concerned faces) than those that were FEI affiliated respondents (orange concerned faces). The priority focus area where the FEI stakeholders were more concerned was related to a concern regarding whether horses were 'fit to compete' or where health problems were being 'masked'. The different lenses of equestrians are important for social license, because it appears that its equestrian's themselves rather than the general public who have the strongest/loudest opinions regarding horse use – The non FEI stakeholders and FEI stakeholders differ significantly in their concerns about the horse, and it is the Non –FEI equestrian group who have significant concerns that will have the greatest influence in relation to SLO.

Is there a problem with Social Licence? Tipping Point?

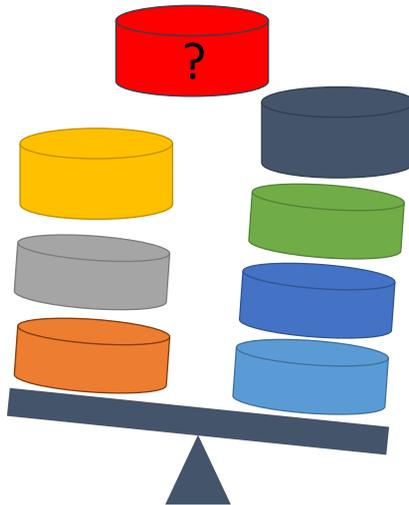
Horses are 'fit to compete'



Rules are visibly enforced



Welfare Prioritised



Items of Tack and Equipment



Lack of accountability

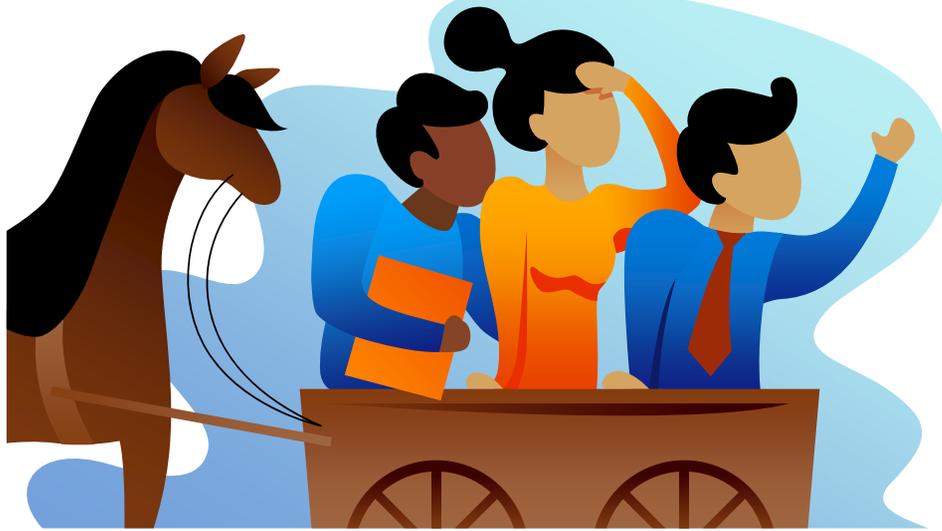


Commercial agenda before equine welfare



Harsh training and riding practices

Social Licence to Operate is an ongoing concern. The Priority areas of focus provide information about the key areas of concern for equestrian Stakeholders – including tack and equipment, accountability and the perception of horses being treated as objects. On the plus side there are initiatives that provide opportunity for increasing trust and confidence such as the work towards ensuring welfare is prioritised. However there is always the risk of another unknown incident/situation tipping the balance of SLO – and so its essential to ensure the work has been done to develop a level of Trust amongst stakeholders to be able to 'weather a storm' if need be.



So now we move to the draft Recommendations

Basis for Commission Recommendations

- ✓ **Public and Equestrian Survey Results**
- ✓ **External related information** – External reports, information from animal welfare organisations, independent survey results
- ✓ **Research evidence** - Reviewing research publications related to equine wellbeing and ethics. Identifying gaps in knowledge, making recommendations for where research is needed.
- ✓ **Consultation with Equine welfare experts** – consultation regarding specific concerns and potential solutions with different groups involved with equine welfare and use of horse in sport
- ✓ **EEWB Advisory/Working Groups** –Scientific Advisory Grp, Education Working Grp, Legal Working Grp, Communication Working Grp.

These have been based upon survey information gained from public and equestrian surveys, from other information gained through 'in country' independent surveys provided to us, through reviewing current research, consultation with experts in their field and with equestrian stakeholders.

6 Early Recommendations to the FEI



Tack and Equipment – 3 recommendations

- **Double bridles** should not be mandatory in any equestrian discipline
- **Spurs** should not be mandatory in any equestrian discipline
- **Nosebands** should not be tight in any equestrian discipline – A uniform method of measurement including an agreed definition of ‘too tight’, should be used based on the available science.

Regulation – 1 recommendation

- Include in the FEI General Regulations a rule to apply consistently to all Disciplines to allow elimination during the field of play on horse welfare grounds

Others – 2 recommendations

- Establish an Education Focus Group to review existing modules in FEI Campus and propose new ones
- Establish a Research Fund to address gaps in current knowledge regarding Equine Welfare

31

The 24 Recommendations presented at the Sports Forum are in addition to the 6 early recommendations that were made, which included 3 tack and equipment ones addressing common concerns raised by respondents to the equestrian survey and three others; a regulation to protect equine welfare whilst in the field of play, and two regarding education and research respectively. These 6 recommendations have already been submitted to the FEI Board for their consideration.

24 Further Recommendations (*draft*)

Grouped into Five Key Areas

The FEI will:

01

Be a Leader

02

Be Trusted

03

Be Transparent

04

Be ProActive

05

Be Accountable

There are 5 key areas for consideration in relation to maintaining and strengthening SLO – with each containing a number of recommendations
We propose that through these the FEI will demonstrate Leadership in equine welfare and Strengthen Trust through being Transparent, ProActive and Accountable.

1. The FEI will be a Leader



Objective: To ensure that the FEI plays a critical role in advancing equine welfare globally by setting an example that others aspire towards.

5 Recommendations:

1. Develop a future focussed 'Good Life for Horses' Vision and Strategy
2. Commit to ensuring a Good Life for Horses in Sport
3. Develop an equine centric approach to management of FEI events
4. Promote ethical, evidence based equestrianism
5. Place horse interests before those of a human or the sport

33

The first of these groupings of Recommendations – of which there are 5 underpins the FEI's commitment to being a Leader in relation to equine welfare.

The first two of these relate to defining and adopting the Vision of a Good Life for Horses.

1. Promote the concept of a ‘Good Life for Horses’

- Ensure a Good Life for all horses is the fundamental tenet of the FEI Equine Welfare Strategy
- and
- Horses engaged in recreational and sporting activities should be provided with care, management, training and performance conditions to ensure positive physical, mental, behavioural and social outcomes.

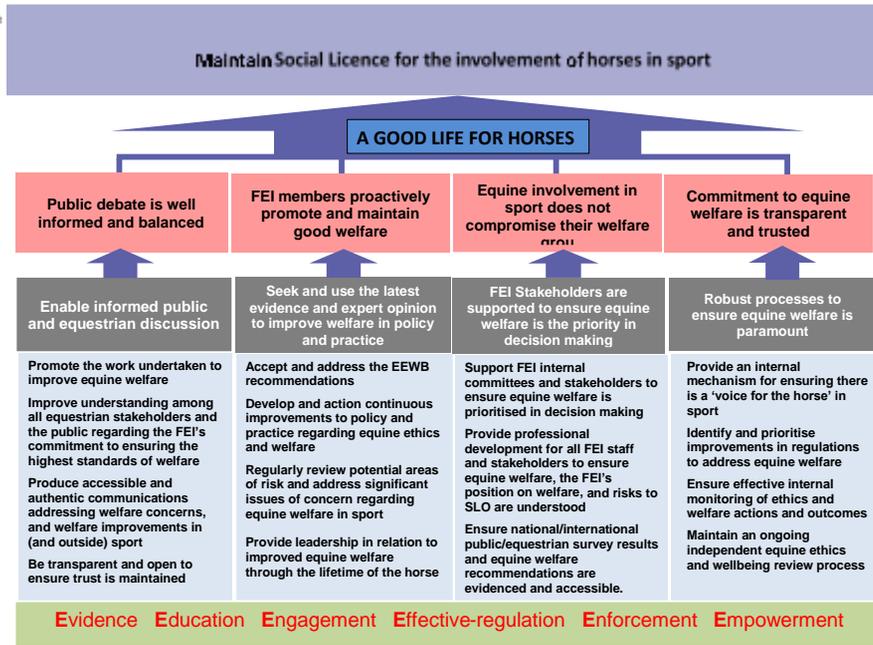
For the first recommendation, the Commission proposes that all horses involved in sport should live a Good Life – and that this concept should be the main principle underpinning the FEI’s Equine Welfare Strategy. Equine quality of life relates to the animal’s physical, mental, behavioural and social experiences across its lifetime – both in and outside of competition from birth to death.

2. Maintain and Strengthen Social Licence to Operate

- Explicit in the FEI Equine Welfare strategy is an appreciation of the need to maintain and enhance the reputation of the FEI and the equine sports industry
- and
- To demonstrate commitment to addressing equine ethics and wellbeing concerns to ensure an ongoing social licence for the involvement of horses in sport

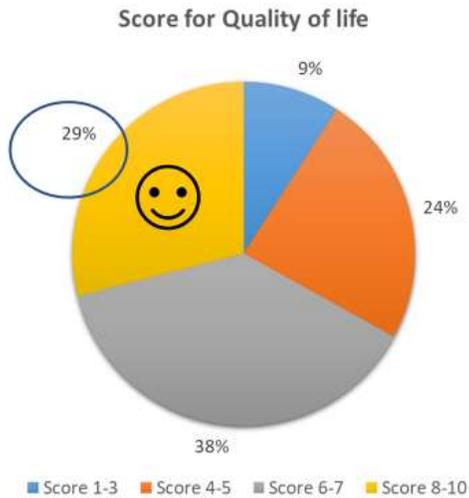
A Good Life also addresses the need to strengthen Social Licence to Operate through setting out a clear commitment to ensuring the highest standards for equine wellbeing.

Strategic Approach to address Core Objectives



The two core objectives of the proposed strategic approach as outlined in the diagram here, will be supported through policy, practice and engagement addressing key areas of importance for ensuring ongoing Public confidence and trust.

Be a Leader



Recommendation 2

Publicly commit to defining, promoting and ensuring a **Good Life** for horses as the fundamental tenet of the FEI Equine Wellbeing Strategy.

*This is the score for quality of life from the **equestrian community**. 29% scored as it should be for a Good life. 38% of the respondents thought the quality of life was sufficient to good. The other 33% thought it was insufficient.*

Opinion varied regarding QoL for horses



Recommendation 2

Publicly commit to defining, promoting and ensuring a **Good Life** for horses as the fundamental tenet of the FEI Equine Wellbeing Strategy.

There was large variation between different stakeholders. Leisure equestrians, breeders and vets giving the lower scores. The FEI riders and FEI officials gave horse QoL a higher score (resp. 87 – 90%) gave 6 or higher.

Define and Promote 'A Good Life for Horses'

Positive Experiences – Positive Welfare

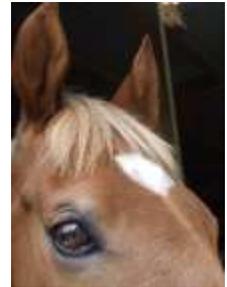
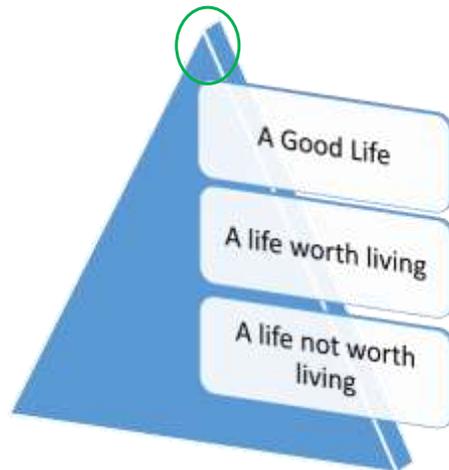
'It is generally accepted that if an animal is experiencing pleasure or happiness, or is in a positive emotional state, then its needs are being met, and its welfare is good'

(Boissy *et al.*, 2007).



● = Amygdalae - Motivation,
Emotions, Memory

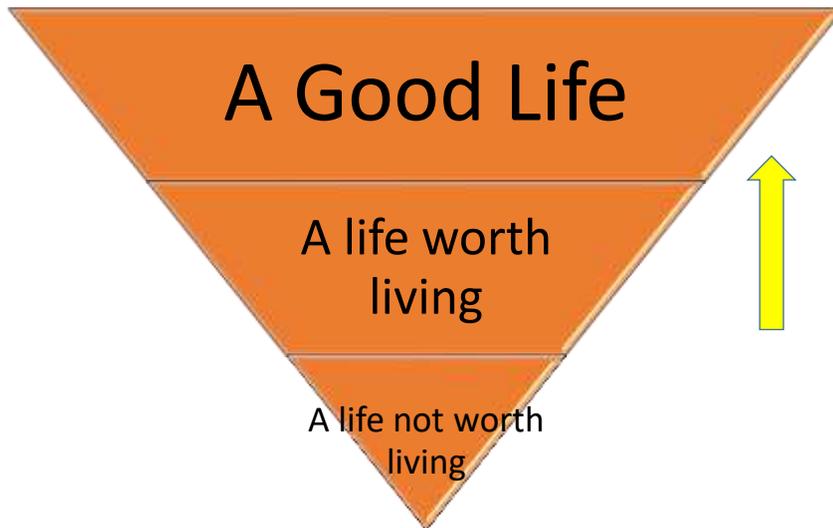
Equine Quality of Life



An animal might have good or bad welfare at any given point, but **Quality of Life (QOL) is considered over a longer interval**. Equine Quality of Life can range from poor and not worth living to Good. The concept of a Good Life challenges equestrians to consider the horses's experiences from birth to death – to ensure that these are positive from the horse's point of view. This may mean that what is accepted practice and seen as the norm within the equestrian community, may require some rethinking in the light of new research that may suggest that this normalised practice is not always be in the best welfare interests of the horse.

Be a Leader - Raising the Bar

Defining and Promoting A Good Life for Horses

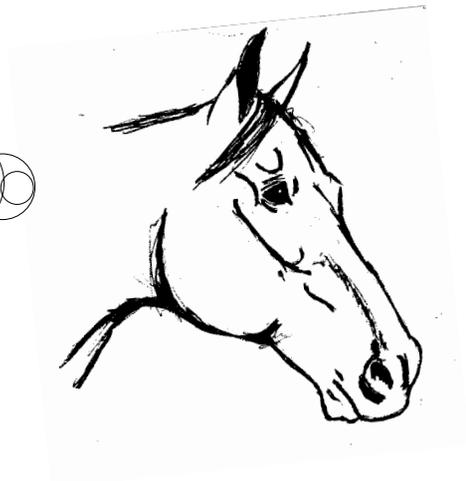


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The Commission proposes that the FEI is prepared to challenge the status quo where its necessary to ensure that all horses involved in sport can experience a Good Life, and that this is defined in the context of horses involved in sport.

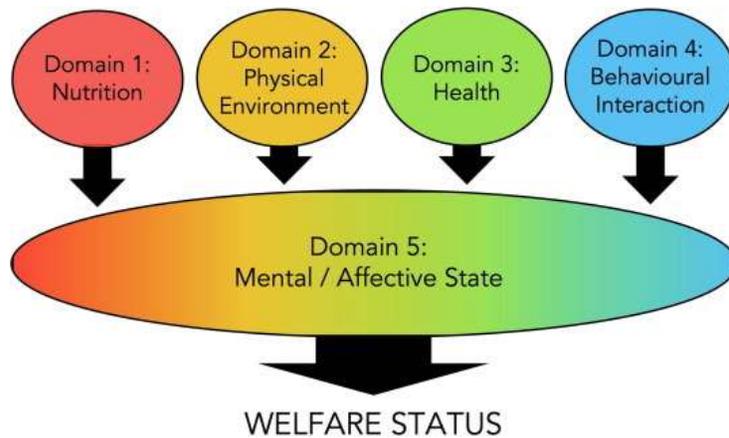


A Good Life Horse Centric - *From the Horse's Point of View*



There are many factors involved in providing a Good Life for Horses – but a positive mental state relies upon the horse having positive experiences throughout its life in relation to its management and training. Positive welfare is a subjective state related to the horse's experiences in relation to its environment. Previous experiences will directly impact on the way in which a horse perceives the world around it – and no two horse's will be the same. Providing a Good Life for horses involved in sport will require consideration of what horses need for positive welfare, the individual horse and how a good quality of life can be provided within the various contexts experienced by the sport horse.

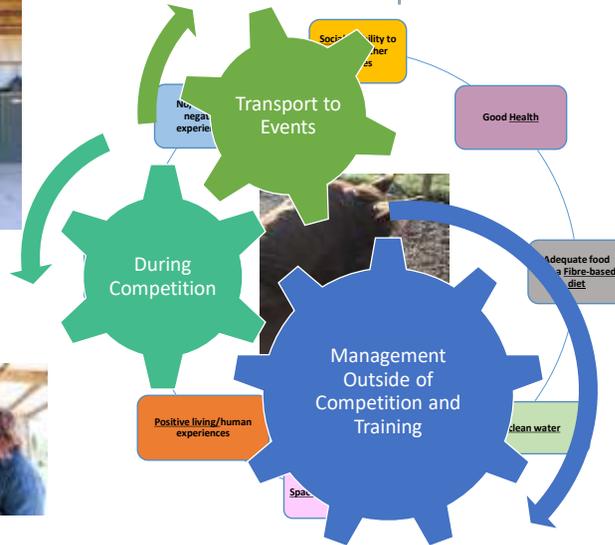
Assessing Equine Quality of Life using a *5 Domains approach* after Mellor et al



43

A framework for assessing Quality of Life and whether Life is Good is through using the 5 Domains approach to assess the welfare status of a horse at any one time. The 5 Domains provide for the physical needs as well as the social, behavioural and mental health of the animal. When Domains 1 – 4 are provided for – Domain 5 – the horse’s subjective experience should be positive. Various industries have adopted and adapted this model for describing how to assess an animal’s quality of life.

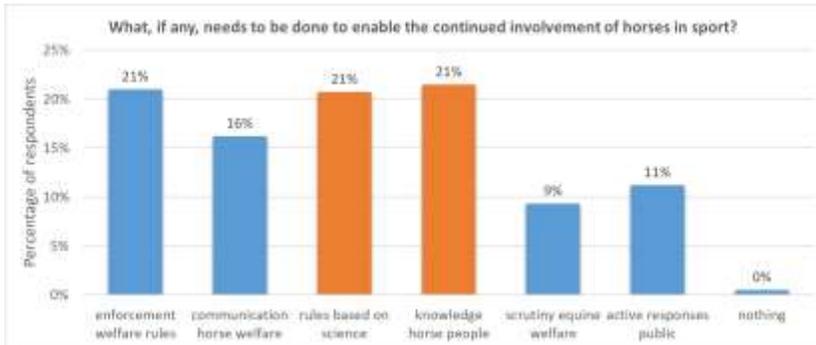
Defining a Good Life for Horses involved in Sport



Providing for the welfare needs of the horse during its lifetime means consideration of the specific living and working environment and expectations of the horse involved in sport. Whilst there is research available to identify what horses need and want, behavioural indicators of negative welfare – and how their welfare is impacted by different training practices, living and travelling environments – its important to consider what a Good Life is within the Sport horse context. Whilst the FEI will only have direct influence over the horse’s experience at an event, its important to include the areas of the horse’s life experience during training outside the competition and whilst travelling to the event.

Recommendation 4

Promote only ethical and evidence-based equestrianism. Ensure ongoing development of an understanding of the importance of utilising ethical, evidence-based practices in horse training, management and performance.



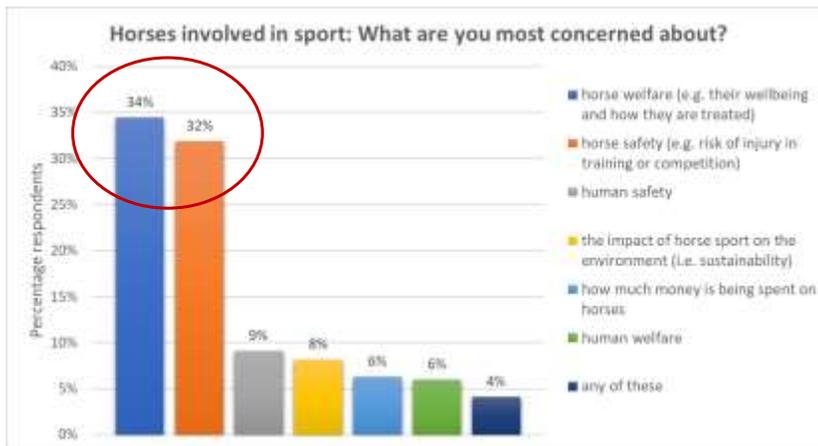
The use of evidence based knowledge is required by the equestrian community:

- Rules based on science (21%)
- Knowledge of horse people (21%)

Being a Leader in relation to Recommendation 4 addresses some of the feedback supplied through the equestrian survey carried out by the Commission. Using Evidence based information to underpin the way horses are trained and managed as well as the regulations used to keep horses safe in competition ensures that there is an ongoing commitment to doing all that we can to prioritise equine welfare in sport.

Recommendation 5

Ensure that the horse's interests are always placed before the interests of the human or sport, and celebrate equestrians who clearly place their horse's interests before their own.



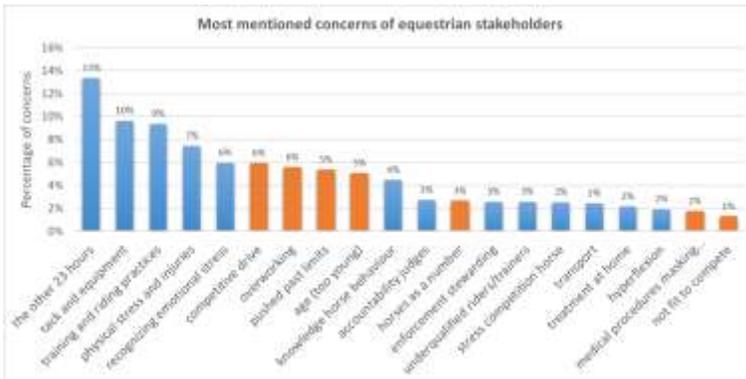
*The **public** was very clear: they are concerned about the horse, not about human.*

46

The public were clear in their survey responses – their concern is primarily for the horses' welfare and safety.

Recommendation 5

Ensure that the horse's interests are always placed before the interests of the human or sport, and celebrate equestrians who clearly place their horse's interests before their own.



Equestrian stakeholders were concerned about the horse's interests being compromised in sport:

- **competitive drive** (commercial above horse welfare)
- horses being **overworked** or overtrained
- Horses **pushed past their limits**
- Horses started **too young** or going to higher level when still too young
- Horses used **as a number** not a living creature

Recommendation 5 addresses both Public and Equestrian Stakeholder requirement for a horse's interests to be placed before the human or sport.

2. The FEI will be Trusted



Objective: The FEI will embed equine welfare within its structure and ways of working to demonstrate its commitment to prioritising equine welfare in both policy and practice.

6 Recommendations:

1. Create an internal body/office as a *'voice for the horse'*
2. Be sure equine welfare is prioritised in decision making and practice
3. Adopt a transparent and evidence-based approach for assessing welfare impacts of new and existing Tack and Equipment
4. Establish a process for checks *'outside the competition'*
5. Ensure effective complaints process and whistle-blowing and empower equestrians as *'active bystanders'*
6. Ensure there is an effective zero tolerance policy

The second grouping of Recommendations relates to strengthening Trust.

Recommendation 6

Create an internal office solely concerned with ‘equine wellbeing’ to ensure that the horse’s interests are prioritised in decision making and practice.

Provides clear ‘agency’ for the horse

Ensures the horse’s interests can always be considered before any others

Demonstrates the FEI’s ongoing commitment to advancing equine welfare in sport

Ensures ongoing development in relation to new evidence

Provides global leadership through direct and indirect influence

Recommendation 6 proposes that there is an FEI Office or equivalent established with the main purpose of ensuring that equine welfare is clearly prioritised across policy and practice. Its proposed that establishing an role with authority within the FEI to advocate for the horse – will demonstrate the FEI’s commitment to equine welfare and leadership across the sector.

Recommendation 8

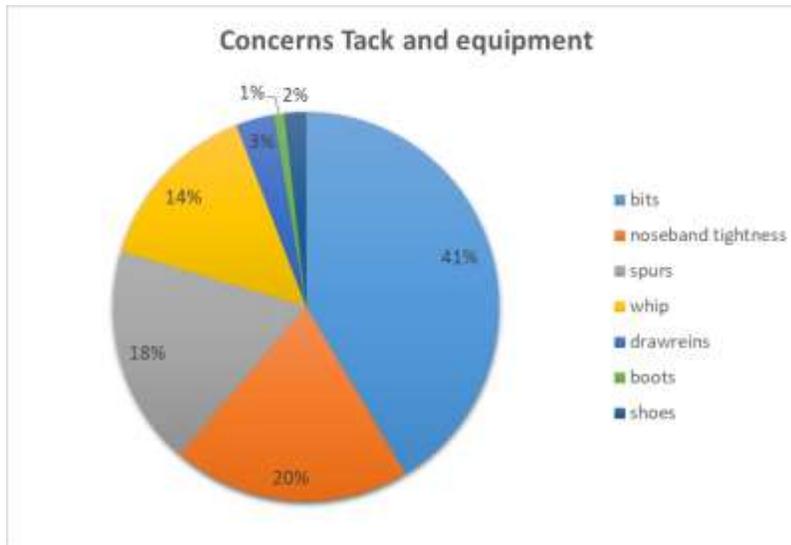
Adopt a transparent and evidence-based approach for assessing welfare impacts of new and existing Tack and Equipment



Training and riding practices & tack and equipment was the most important priority area of focus according to the equestrian community.

Recommendation 8 addresses the main priority area of focus as identified through the public and equestrian surveys. Its proposed that an evidence based and transparent process be developed to ensure that the impact of new and existing tack and equipment on individual equine welfare be assessed to inform regulation of new and existing tack and equipment. This includes being prepared to de-regulate tack currently allowed because of **risks** to equine welfare. This also means that where there may not yet be sufficient research evidence to fully assess welfare impact but where there is likely to be a risk to the horse, the principle of ‘do no harm’ should be applied in decision making, with a requirement for more research evidence to help with decision making.

More specific concerns about Tack and Equipment



Recommendation 8 –

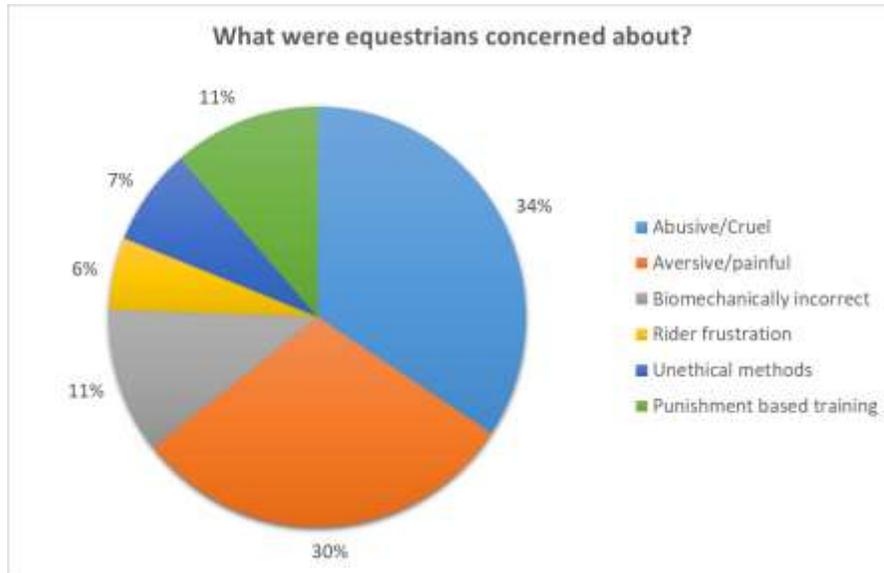
Adopt an evidence-based approach for regulating new and existing items of tack and equipment used in training and competition

The area of most concern within Tack & Equipment was bits, followed by noseband, spurs and whip

51

The equestrian survey has provided us with the opportunity to understand some specific areas of concern regarding risk to equine welfare. In relation to the tack and equipment priority area of focus areas, these concerns regarding risk to equine welfare relate to some key areas including; bits and bit-use, noseband tightness, the use of spurs and the use of the whip.

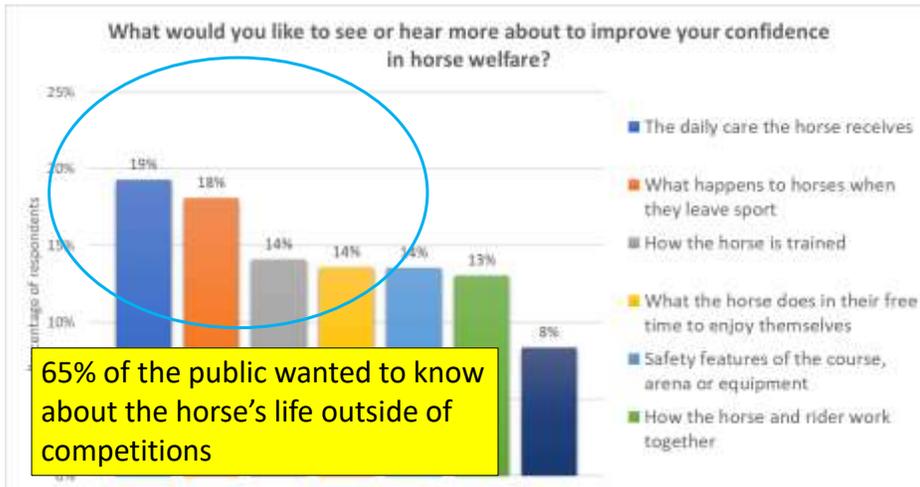
More specific concerns about Training and Riding practices



52

It has been possible with all of the key concerns to dig deeper through the 'free text' responses to understand some of the specifics of the concerns. In relation to the training and riding practices the specifics relate to risk associated with training practices being potentially abusive/cruel/aversive painful and methods being unethical.

Recommendation 9: Establish and implement a process for ensuring high standards of welfare and investigating risky practices for horses when ‘outside of competition’



53

Through the surveys the Commission gained information to help guide the work required to improve the public's confidence in relation to horse welfare. As can be seen these included more education and information about key areas relating to how horses are managed and cared for, what happens to them during training and after they have left the sport and others such as horse safety.

Recommendation 9: Establish and implement a process for ensuring high standards of welfare and investigating risky practices for horses when ‘**outside of competition**’

‘...welfare at competition is only one very small component of sport horses’ lives. This is problematic because yards are perceived to be a high risk, unregulated area, outside of the rules of formal competition’

‘Competitions are a showcase—they’re what you see in the window, what the public sees, but what is happening before that at home and in training, that is more important.’

Extracted from Furtado T, Preshaw L, Hockenull J, Wathan J, Douglas J, Horseman S, Smith R, Pollard D, Pinchbeck G, Rogers J, Hall C. **How Happy Are Equine Athletes?** Stakeholder Perceptions of Equine Welfare Issues Associated with Equestrian Sport. *Animals*. 2021; 11(11):3228. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani11113228>

From other work (eg Furtado et al 2021) it seems that there is a level of unease amongst different equestrian stakeholders regarding what happens to horses in training and management outside of the competition environment. Recommendation 9 seeks to address this in requiring the establishment of a process for ensuring high standards of welfare and investigating risky practices for horses when ‘outside of competition’ through establishing something similar to human athlete checks under the WADA code.

Stakeholder group comments – Equestrian respondents

Recommendation 9: Establish and implement a process for ensuring high standards of welfare and investigating risky practices for horses when **'outside of competition'**



*"Concerned how competition horses are schooled **behind closed doors**"*



*"**Treatment at home** is the biggest problem as there is no-one watching"*



"Training methods at home, to compete better. For example hitting the horses' legs with sticks to make them jump higher"



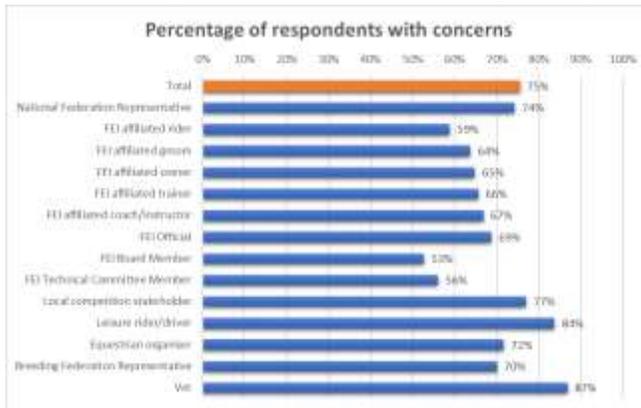
*"**What goes on behind the scenes** (especially after a bad day/ride)"*

55

Responses such as those in this slide were frequently provided within the equestrian survey. These are the exact wordings of the respondents and demonstrate the type of concerns about what goes on outside of competition.

Recommendation 10

Ensure the existing Equestrian Community Integrity Unit (ECIU) is trusted and supportive, and there is an effective ‘whistle-blowing’ process for dealing with all FEI related concerns/complaints concerning equine welfare in and out of competition. Empower FEI equestrians to be ‘Active Bystanders’ and to challenge bad practice when they see it.



75% of the almost 28,000 equestrians had concerns about issues related to horse welfare

Finally Recommendation 10 seeks to promote the existing ECIU as the independent body to ensure that concerns about equine welfare, in and out of competition can be addressed through a trusted process that deals professionally and promptly with complaints as well as ensuring that equestrians take personal responsibility for ‘calling out’ bad practice when it is observed.

3. The FEI will be Transparent



Objective: The FEI will validate its commitment to equine welfare by being proactive in how it communicates, engaging in dialogue and providing credible information.

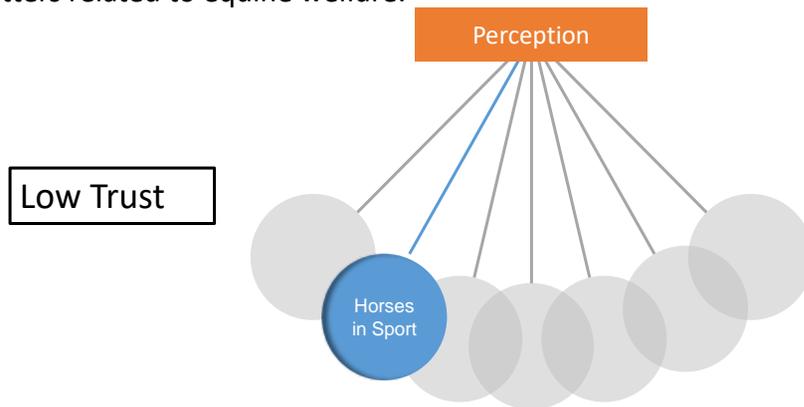
5 Recommendations:

1. Proactively engage with the Public (including all equestrian stakeholders)
2. Use welfare–centric approach/language for describing equine-human interaction in sport
3. Develop Ethics and Wellbeing Position Statements for consistency and shared understanding of standards
4. Monitor SLO, measure progress and pro-actively address any concerns
5. Require collection and publication of lifecycle data for all competition horses

Key to maintaining social licence is the need to be transparent. The recommendations provided under this section ask the FEI to commit to ensuring that engagement with the public and all equestrian stakeholders is proactive, prompt and credible.

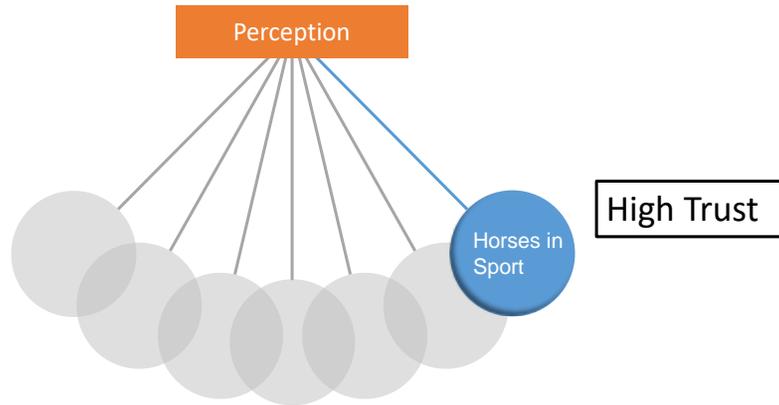
Recommendation 12.

Proactively and positively engage with the public (including equestrian stakeholders) in matters related to equine welfare.



Public perception is what drives Social Licence to Operate. If the public/society/equestrian stakeholders are starting from a low trust position due to lack of transparency, lack of credibility and poor engagement and something negative occurs in the sport – the perception of the situation will be worse with a greater negative impact on SLO than if the Trust is maintained at a high level.

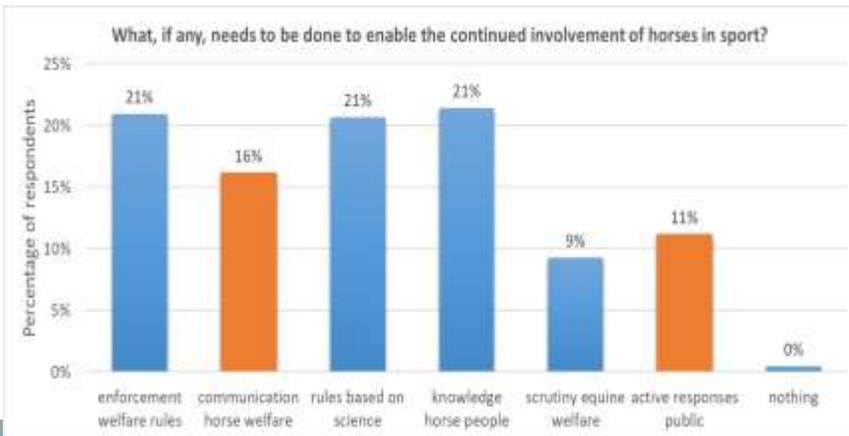
Positive influencers – Positive Engagement



Operating in a high trust environment requires that the FEI continues to be a positive influencer through being credible, honest and transparent.

Recommendation 12.

Proactively and positively engage with the public (including equestrian stakeholders) in matters related to equine welfare.



This figure illustrates the importance of communication about horse welfare and active responses to the public to enable the continued involvement of horses in sport

Being transparent in proactively and positively engaging with the public addresses many of the concerns expressed by equestrian stakeholders in relation to welfare rules enforcement, knowledge and scrutiny.

What do the Public want to know about?

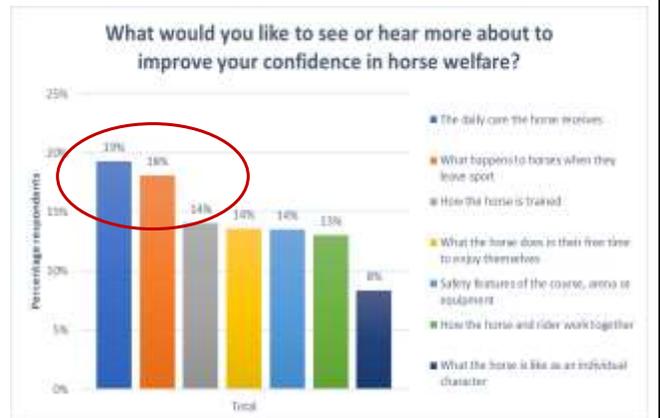
- How horses are cared for/trained on a daily basis
- What happens to horses when they leave the sport

Recommendation 12

Proactively and positively engage with the public.

Recommendation 16

Require mandatory collection and publication of comprehensive lifecycle information (birth to death health/travel/event attendance/ownership/performance records) and injury statistics for horses involved in sport, alongside a trusted identification registration and traceability system.



Positive and authentic engagement also addresses public questions about what happens to horses in sport across their lifetime. Recommendation 16 addresses the need to consider how lifelong data about the horse’s experiences (travel frequency, health, event records, ownership etc) along with performance records and injury can be tracked to allow individual decisions about the horse and its welfare to be made based on evidence, collect data to allow the FEI to consider broader questions such as the relationships between factors influencing welfare and to provide credible answers to public questions regarding the lifecycle of the sport horse.



62

Recommendation 13

Develop an agreed FEI 'welfare centric' terminology for use when describing the way in which humans and horses interact in sport.

The public want to know:

- *About the relationship between equestrians and their horses*

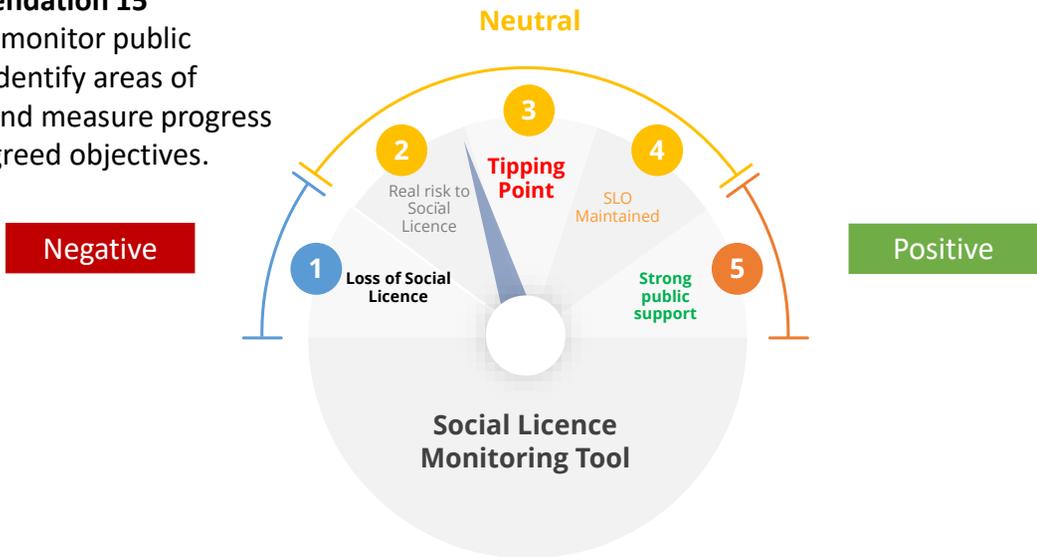
And

- *About the horse's individual character*

People want to know about the horse-human relationship – they want to know about the horse, its life and its character. Developing an authentic way to describe the horse-human relationship taking into consideration the understanding and views of the public and wider equestrian stakeholders, is important in developing a consistent educational approach to communications. This includes consideration of horse centric terminology and the type of imagery used in all FEI communications.

Recommendation 15

Regularly monitor public opinion, identify areas of concern and measure progress against agreed objectives.



Through regularly monitoring public attitudes/opinions and concerns it is possible to ensure that the FEI can quickly identify and proactively respond to concerns regarding equine welfare or other matters related to equine ethics and wellbeing. AND provide regular SLO feedback to stakeholders.

4. The FEI will be ProActive

Objective: The FEI must be prepared to challenge the status quo and demonstrate a dynamic path of action towards achieving the highest standards of equine welfare, taking their stakeholders with them.



6 Recommendations:

- 1. Ensure all FEI Equestrians commit to the Equestrian Charter*
- 2. Update the FEI Code of Conduct to reflect the 'Good Life for Horses' Strategy*
- 3. Develop a plan for addressing the 6 priority areas of focus*
- 4. Establish core equine ethics and wellbeing education programme*
- 5. Empower Officials for effective enforcement and make them more accountable*
- 6. Consider transport and recommend acceptable journey frequency and lengths*

64

There are 6 Recommendations within this grouping with the combined objective to be ensure that the FEI is proactive in being prepared to challenge practice and policy to achieve the highest standards of equine welfare whilst at the same time ensuring that equestrian stakeholders are engaged and supportive.

Be ProActive - The Equestrian Charter

The FEI Equestrian Charter

Equine welfare involves the physical, psychological, social and environmental well-being of the horse, and all horses involved in sport and leisure activities should be able to live a good life. The FEI requires all those involved in sport involving horses adhere to the FEI Code of Conduct, and to acknowledge and accept that at all times the welfare of the horse must be paramount by pledging to the FEI Equestrian Charter:

1. I understand that it is a privilege to involve horses in sport and this comes with responsibility to the horse.
2. I commit to respecting the horse as a sentient creature capable of feeling both positive and negative emotions, and to ensuring its welfare is always my priority.
3. I undertake to continuously develop my understanding of horse behaviour and welfare needs, and to practically use this knowledge to provide a good life for horses with which I am involved.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

65

- A clear commitment to the horse, to understanding and carrying out our responsibilities and being accountable for our horses' welfare.

- **What: I Understand my responsibility**
- **Who: I Commit to the horse**
- **How: I Undertake to provide a Good Life for horses**

Similar to a 'customer service charter' – The Equestrian Charter is a transparent and public statement about the commitment equestrians are making to the horse and its welfare. Through pledging to the FEI Equestrian Charter, equestrians and equestrian stakeholders will demonstrate their commitment to taking personal responsibility for horse welfare, ensuring the highest standards of equine welfare and constantly improving their understanding of what constitutes good animal welfare for horses involved in sport.

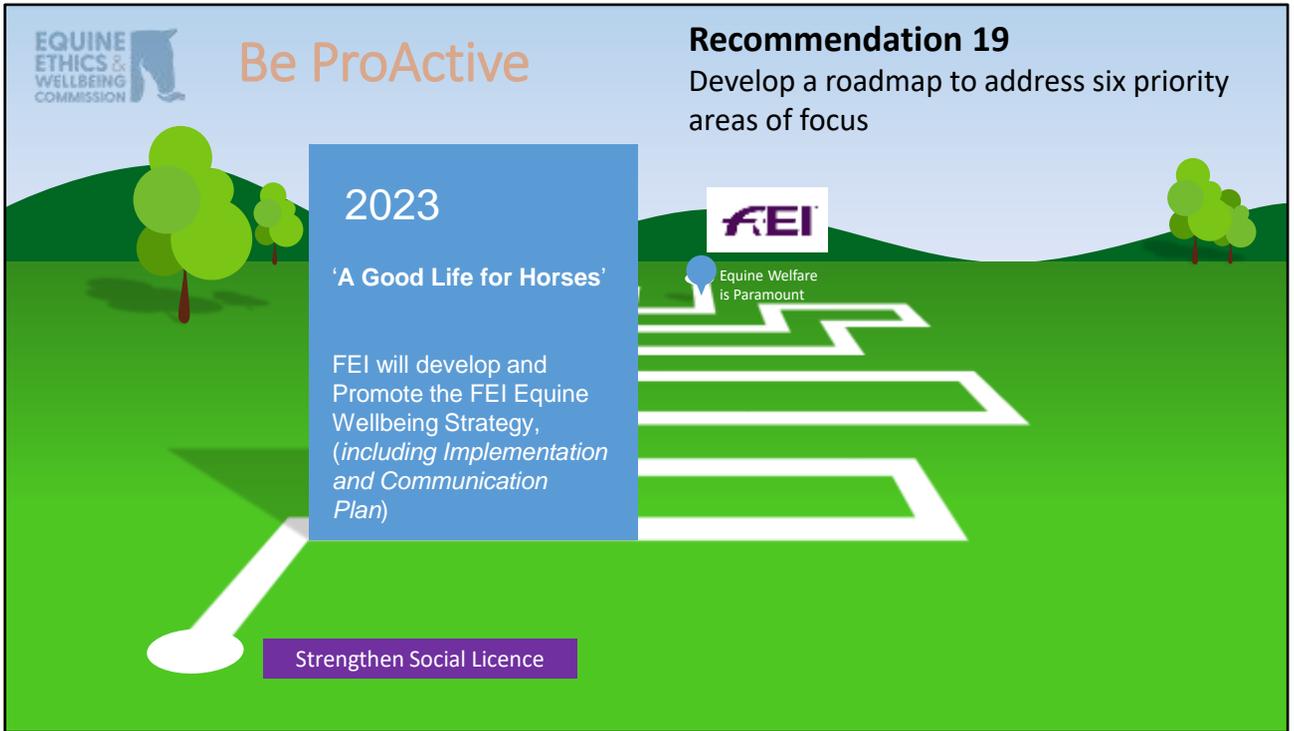
Recommendation 18

Update the FEI Code of Conduct for the Welfare of the Horse to reflect the FEI's commitment to ensuring all horses have 'A Good Life', underpin the FEI Equestrian Charter, and to define what 'A Good Life' means in relation to the management and working life of horses.



This figure shows that not all equestrians think horse quality of life is sufficient (33% think it is insufficient).

Alongside the Charter is a need to update the existing Code of Conduct to reflect the FEI's commitment to the vision of A Good Life for Horses, defining what that it is and expectations of equestrians in relation to equine welfare across the lifetime of the horse.

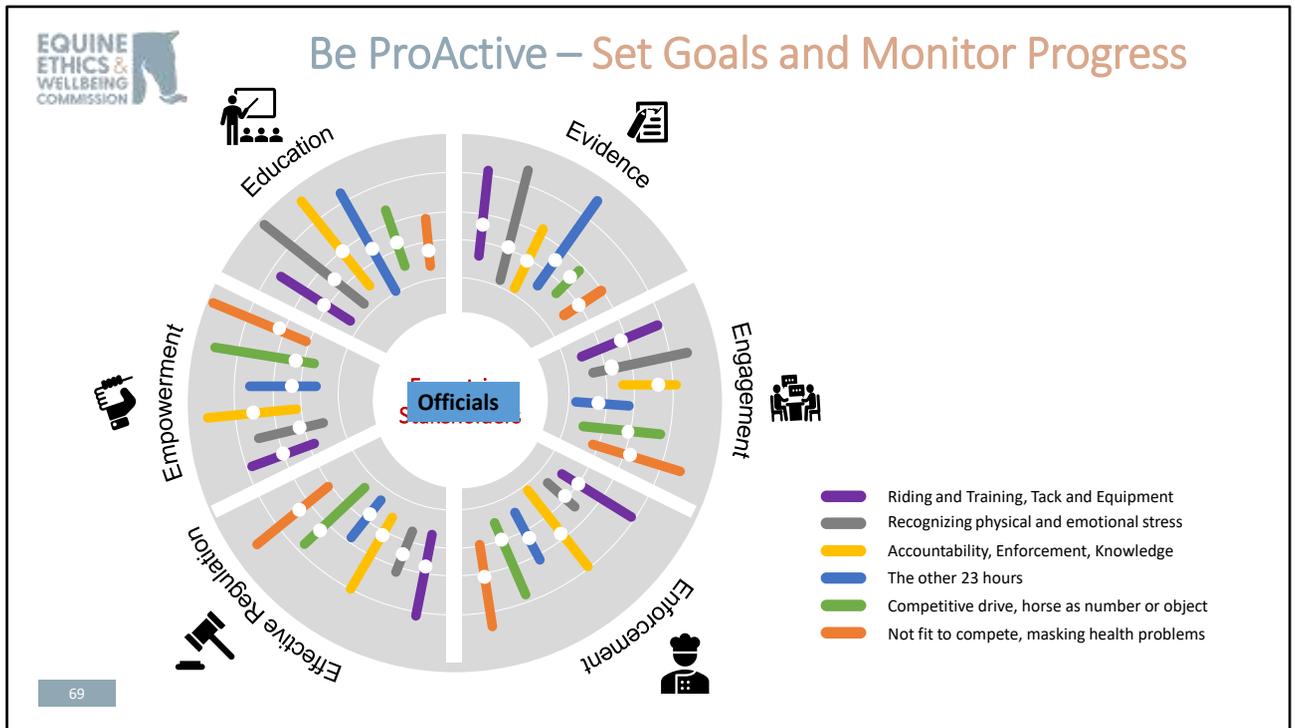


Being ProActive means that there is a need to develop and promote a clear strategy including an implementation and engagement plan.

Be ProActive – Use ‘Six Strategic Enablers’ to address the Key Priority Areas of focus



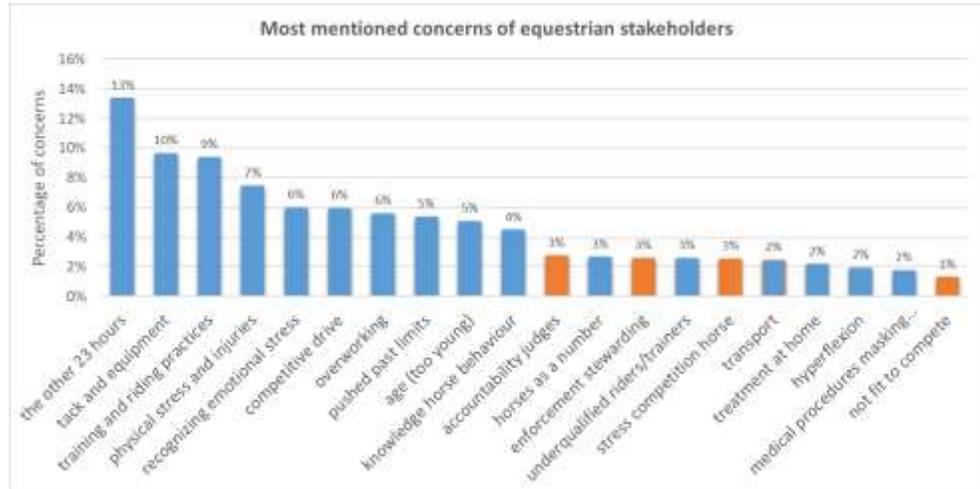
Recommendation 21 is a suggestion that all FEI stakeholders should make use of the ‘6 Enablers’ (see Commission website) to improve their own policy and practice in relation to ensuring equine welfare is prioritized across the six main Priority Areas of Focus identified through the Commission’s survey work.



What we measure, we can manage – and so it's suggested that understanding the current situation in relation to each of the 6 priority areas of focus as the baseline, and then setting goals and monitoring progress is essential to ensure that equestrian and public confidence is maintained. This can be achieved through use of tools such as the one used here to illustrate the approach using the different enablers and addressing the 6 priority areas of focus (described at the side of the change wheel). **The 'Change Wheel'** makes use of the 6 Enablers (6Es) to inform and monitor progress in relation to actions taken to address equine welfare priority areas for use by different equestrian stakeholder groups. In this case we have used as an example the "FEI Officials" stakeholder group. Within each Enabler portion of the wheel, there are 6 sliding bars, one for each of the 6 **priority focus areas**. For each stakeholder group (Officials in this case) these sliding bars can be used to indicate the current situation (the white dot), and in relation to progress being made to inform and implement change. The length of the bar/line in each section illustrates the extent (number or size) of the activity/projects taking place, and the level of progress made is illustrated by the position of the white dot on the coloured bars as it progresses towards the outer circle of the wheel.

Recommendation 21

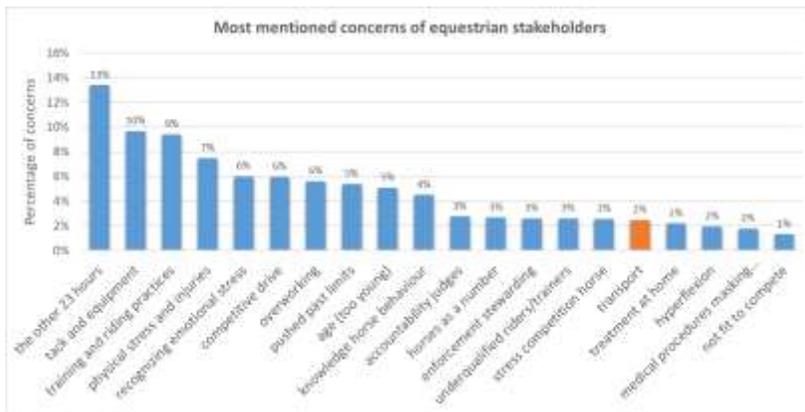
Empower officials to ensure welfare is paramount, through improved mandatory training and ongoing professional development, greater support for ensuring effective enforcement and more accountability for achieving high standards of individual horse welfare at all times at an event.



Recommendation 21 addresses concerns regarding accountability and ongoing professional development to ensure effective regulatory enforcement and maintain public and equestrian confidence in the FEI’s policy and practice in relation to achieving high standards of welfare during events.

Recommendation 22

Recommend evidence based acceptable transport frequency and journey length for ensuring the welfare of competition horses and sustainability of the sport.



This figure shows that 2.4% of all concerns mentioned were about transport including frequency and length of travelling

In addition concerns regarding transportation of horses – the time between being at home and at the event, in terms of frequency and length of journeys are addressed through Recommendation 22.

5. The FEI will be Accountable



Objective: The FEI will achieve higher standards of welfare and earn trust more sustainably by inviting external scrutiny.

2 Recommendations:

1. Implement additional 'fit to compete' checks using trained professionals and FEI officials
2. Establish a permanent Independent Advisory Committee to act as a 'critical friend regarding matters of equine welfare

Finally, to ensure ongoing Public trust and confidence and to maintain and strengthen social licence to operate, the Commission proposes two further recommendations.

The FEI will be Accountable

Open to independent Evaluation



Recommendation 23

Implement additional checks by trained professionals and officials to ensure horses are always *'Fit to Compete'* by investing in more extensive and stricter health and welfare monitoring pre and post competition to prevent horses entering the competition arena if experiencing pain and/or stress.

***'Not fit to compete'* was one of the six priority areas of focus along with **Accountability**.**

Being accountable means being open to professional scrutiny and prepared to consider improved monitoring to ensure welfare is always to the fore in decision making. Recommendation 23 addresses concerns raised regarding horses being unfit to compete or having health problems 'masked'. Being open to greater involvement of independent professionals (alongside the FEI officials) who have recognised expertise in equine health and welfare to provide additional scrutiny in relation to all aspects of the horse's experience whilst at an event is proposed as a means to address these concerns.

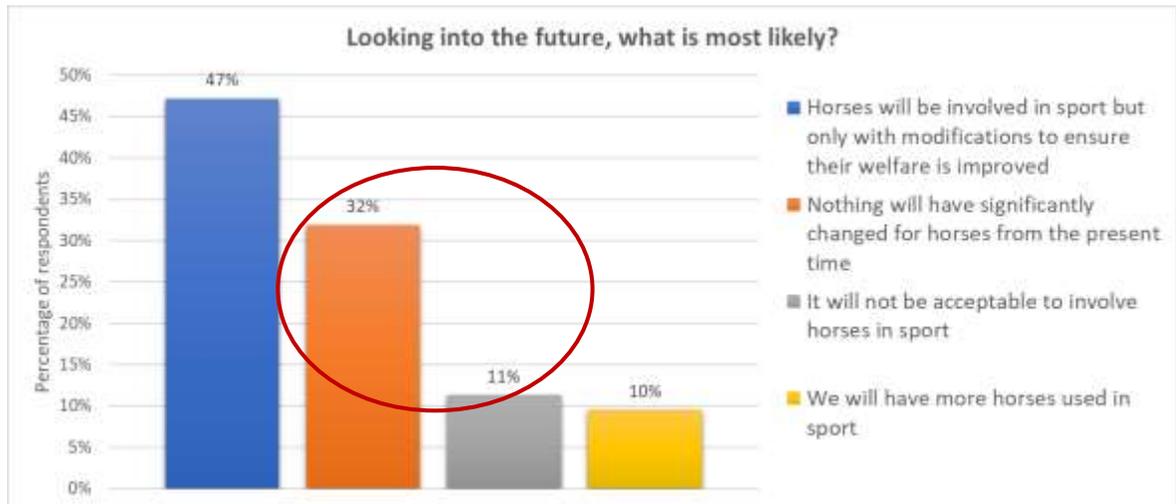
The FEI will be Accountable

Stakeholder group comments – Equestrian respondents

- "Pain indicators in horses are ignored by the judges"*
- "Promoting combinations demonstrating clear violations of kind/correct training"*
- "Unhealthy conformation and movements are prized"*
- "Judges biased and scoring favorites higher, even for poorer tests"*
- "Officials feeling pressured to allow 'horses not fit to compete' start in a competition"*

Inviting independent scrutiny can be an effective method for addressing concerns such as those articulated by equestrian stakeholders who participated and provided free text responses in the Commission's large scale survey.

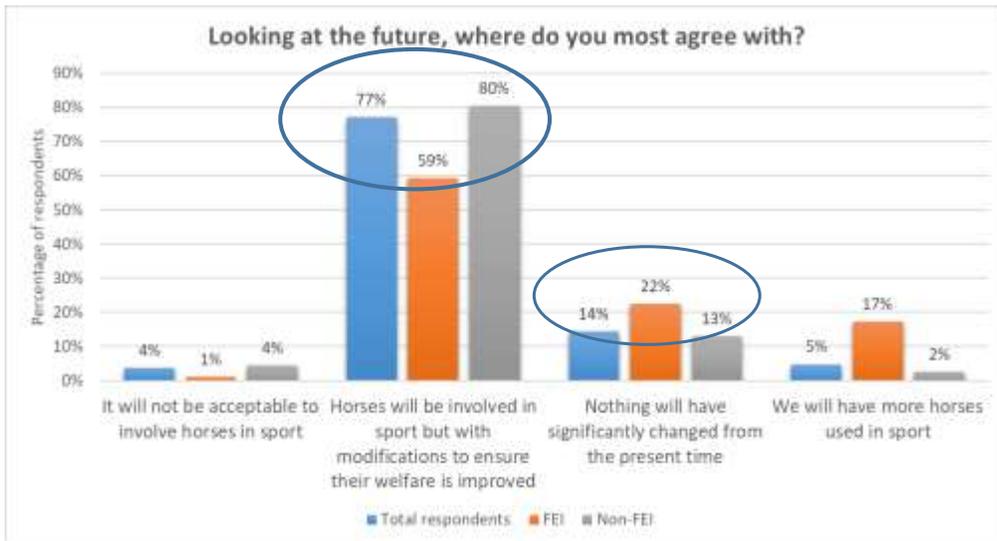
Recommendation 24: Looking to the Future - *Regular monitoring of SLO*



75

At this time, the Public have stated that horses will continue to be involved in sport – but this will only be if modifications are in place to ensure high standards of welfare. The respondents (32%) represented in the orange bar are of concern – since they could easily slip one way or another depending upon what they believe is or is not happening in relation to providing for equine welfare. They represent both a risk and an opportunity – they could be uninterested or just unsure – but the fact that they answered the question shows they are engaged – and they will be likely be influenced by being exposed to more information, which could have a reassuring or negative impact on their opinion. This group represent both an opportunity or a risk from a social licence point of view and regular monitoring will provide information to help equestrian sports to understand whether SLO is being maintained, strengthened or reduced.

Recommendation 24: Looking to the Future - *Regular monitoring of SLO*

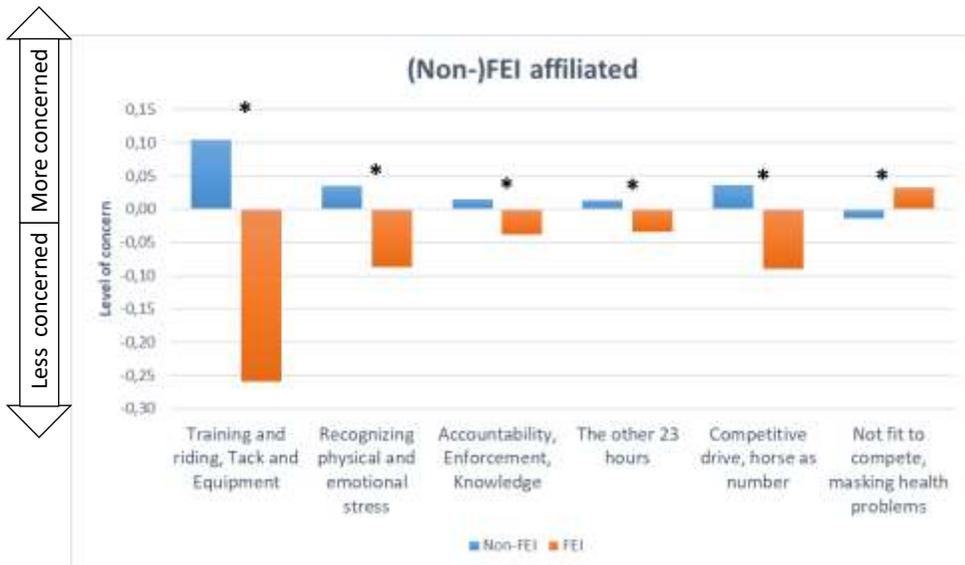


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The majority of Equestrian stakeholders (whether FEI or non-FEI affiliated) – support the need for modifications to ensure good standards of horse welfare. This offers the opportunity for the FEI and all equestrians to engage positively in discussions regarding the improvements required for the long term future of horse involvement in sport. It is clear that there is a difference between the FEI stakeholder perceptions, and those of other non- FEI equestrians. Cultural relativism refers to the phenomenon of judging a culture based on personal standards of what appears to be right or wrong, strange or normal. In order to ensure that there is good acceptance of the involvement of horses in sport, there is a need to engage in dialogue to understand and address concerns, and what is required to help the public and non FEI stakeholders understand the different perspective and practices within the cultural context of equestrian sports. Whether this is effective and accepted, will need to be regularly monitored to gauge how well or otherwise the FEI is doing with ensuring the future social licence to operate of equestrian sports

Be Open to independent evaluation

Social Licence cannot be self awarded



Finally, within the equestrian community there is a statistically significant difference in level of concern regarding the 6 priority focus areas.

Those equestrians described as non FEI affiliated including national and local competitors as well as leisure riders/drivers were significantly more concerned about 5 of the 6 priority focus areas (see blue bars going up) than those that were FEI affiliated respondents (Orange bars going down). The priority focus area where the FEI stakeholders were more concerned was related to a concern regarding whether horses ‘fit to compete’ or where health problems were being ‘masked’. The different lenses of equestrians are important for social license, because it appears that its equestrian’s themselves rather than the general public who have the strongest/loudest opinions regarding horse use – The non FEI stakeholders and FEI stakeholders differ significantly in their concerns about the horse, and it is the Non –FEI equestrian group who have significant concerns that will have the greatest influence in relation to SLO.

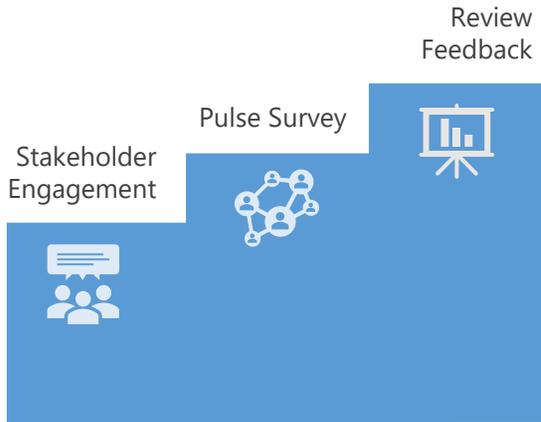
Everyone is responsible for the future of equestrian sports. All equestrians need to optimize and prioritize equine welfare and be seen to be doing so

Equine Stakeholders



Finally – Its worth remembering that an ongoing Social Licence to operate is not guaranteed and cannot be self awarded. We are all responsible through our actions and inactions for ensuring the future acceptability of the involvement of horses in sport and leisure. Its essential that we accept that confidence in our sector is vulnerable to many factors often outside of our individual control, however ensuring that equine quality of life is demonstrably prioritised in all that we do, is essential for doing what is within our control to ensure the future of equestrian sports.

Commission – Next Steps (Phase 3)



April – July 2023

Finalise
Report for
FEI Board



November 2023

As can be seen here, we will now have completed phase 2 of the work we have been Commissioned to do by the FEI. The next step is to carry out some more stakeholder engagement regarding the proposed Recommendations and Vision to provide a Report to the FEI prior to the General Assembly in Mexico 2023.

More information - Commission Website



For more information including the research reports and research report for recommendation evidence – please have a look at the Commission’s Website.



We acknowledge the support of many who are too numerous to mention here but who have contributed to different aspects of the Commission's work.