



United States Eventing Association

Home of the Horse Triathlon

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USEF/USEA Safety Summit



Lexington, KY – The USEF/USEA Safety Summit took place on June 7-8, 2008 in downtown Lexington, KY. More than 250 people from all corners of the country and all levels of the sport of Eventing showed up to listen, voice their concerns and work with fellow members of the Eventing community to find solutions to the safety issues facing the sport.



Attendees included spectators, coaches, riders from every level, officials, trainers, veterinarians, horse welfare advocates, media, medical professionals, safety product manufacturers and course designers. The goal was to develop some tangible next steps in a number of different aspects of the sport to make Eventing as safe as possible. The determination made at the beginning of the meeting proved true: there is just not one answer.

USEF President David O'Connor made the focus of solutions very simple, "The goal is to reduce the number of horse falls in the sport." Although very rare, horse falls dramatically increase the chance of injury to horses and riders, thus being the most important thing to decrease. Horse welfare and safety are the top priority in making any decisions going forward as the sport changes. USEA President Kevin Baumgardner agreed, urging all Eventers to put aside their differences, find common ground and work together to ensure the sport is as safe as possible for horses and riders alike.

Although it cannot be mandated, rider responsibility was a major theme at the Summit and was defined as putting the safety and welfare of the horse before anything else. A huge part of this is rider awareness. A shift in culture recognizing that Eventing is no longer a sport based on experience, but instead will become a sport based on education, is also a critical aspect of rider responsibility.

The summit was broken down into four break-out sessions: veterinary/medical, cross country course design, qualifications and education. Significant discussion surrounded each topic and that discussion produced some significant action items. In every aspect of this discussion it was reiterated that we need more data to help guide the sport in the future.

Below are the key action items to which the USEF and USEA are committed:

Cross Country Course Design:

- The USEF determined that it will subsidize the cost of frangible pins to anyone who is approved to install them by the USEA education department and requests them from this point forward. The specifics are as follows:
 - Any frangible pin installed before Monday, June 9, 2008 will be billed by the installer to the organizer in the traditional manner.
 - Any frangible pin installed on or after Monday, June 9, 2008 that is from the current inventory of a pin installer will be billed to the Federation by the person who purchased the pin. The event organizer for which these pins are installed must be cc'ed on the invoice to the Federation.
 - Any frangible pin purchased after Monday, June 9, 2008 will be supplied by Mick Costello and he will be reimbursed by the Federation for that pin.
- There is also a commitment to continue research and development of deformable technology. Captain Mark Phillips, a member of the U.S. Course Advisor Program and the Technical Advisor for the sport of Eventing in the U.S. stressed that deformable jump construction must be based on engineering.
- The USEA is currently setting up a series of seminars to certify more course builders in the installation of frangible pins beginning at events in July. Mick Costello, Dan Starck, Eric Bull and Tremaine Cooper are offering their services free of charge to the USEA and the USEF to teach these seminars. The goal is to have more available pin installers for organizers. Please see www.useventing.com for more information.
- The USEF Fall Form has been updated to track more detailed information on the kind of jumps that cause falls.
- The USEA Course Advisor Program is going to be extended to the Training level and the organizations are going to look into the specifications and philosophy for training level set forth in 2002. The definitions for courses are going to be developed so they can be rated more accurately and consistently in the Omnibus.

Veterinary/Medical

- Dr. Catherine Kohn feels that mandating necropsies on any horse that suffer a fatality at a USEA recognized competition is vital in gathering data and understanding accidents and trends. The USEA will assume the full cost of these necropsies. This is an example of both organizations commitment to developing consistent, usable data.
- We need more information about the cardiopulmonary function of horses; Dr. Catherine Kohn recommended that this be the focus of our veterinary research going forward and is working to develop a mechanism to do so.

- Medical records need to be more available (without violating privacy laws) to ensure that riders are fit to compete.
- Standards need to be developed to objectively evaluate the performance and fitness level of both horses and riders.
- The USEF/USEA was presented with interesting research surrounding the issue of speed on the cross course. Providing funding to continue that research was met with approval on all levels.

Qualifications and Education

- The USEA has made a commitment to certify 500 ICP Instructors by 2010. Currently 135 people are certified.
- A Watch List is being instituted which will allow people who meet certain qualifications (currently being determined) to put riders on notice that they are riding dangerously. These riders will be contacted by a designated spokesperson and will be made aware of the situation. The specifics on removal from the list are still be finalized.
- The USEF is drafting an outline to have Technical Delegates work directly for the USEF rather than the Event Organizer.

The USEF and the USEA are deeply committed to safety in the sport of Eventing and industry-wide. Although some of these action items are very specific to Eventing the consensus throughout the weekend that from a philosophical standard, much of this can be the starting point of discussion in other breeds and disciplines: the safety and welfare of the horse and rider must guide every decision we make about all of our sports.