



AMERICAN ENDURANCE RIDE CONFERENCE
"To Finish Is To Win"

September 28, 2018

Mr. William Moroney
Mr. Murray Kessler
United States Equestrian Federation
4047 Iron Works Parkway
Lexington, KY 40511

Dear Sirs,

This letter has been composed with great forethought and grave concern regarding not only the recent events of WEG, but also the years long evolution of the sport of endurance in general. We believe that by working together AERC and USEF can build a safer, more respected, and healthier future for endurance in the USA and internationally. By safeguarding the traditional and admired sport of endurance, USEF and AERC can lead by example in preserving the discipline for equine enthusiasts to partake and be proud the world over.

In the last decade a clear divide has occurred within Endurance that many outside of our discipline are not aware of. This split is between the traditional endurance on one hand, and on the other hand, extreme flat track racing for extended distances (also referred to as extreme endurance racing). AERC does not encourage or support the philosophy or resultant behavior of flat track racing at extended distances. We also feel that the nature and publicity involved with the extreme flat track racing is not in line with the mission statement and goals of USEF. Simply put, there is a dangerous disconnect between the extreme flat track racing for extended distances version of endurance and AERC/USEF's guiding principles. And it is because of this we believe that USEF and AERC need to be a beacon of light and join together for not just horse welfare, but for the preservation of the true nature of endurance competitions.

While we do not know the exact steps forward to take or precise solutions we can effect at the FEI level, we do know there are some steps we can take within the confines of US competitions and in US representation on the world stage that can drive positive behaviors in our sport. For example, we can allocate funding towards US based events, building our youth program, and selectively incentivizing the behaviors that grow our collective respect in the sport. Another example would be to further support the petition attached which thoughtfully and without prejudice encourages the welfare of the horse and good sportsmanship that has traditionally been associated with endurance.

Unfortunately, the chaotic and disturbing events of WEG have brought clearly into focus the dangers of flat track racing for extended distances being attempted in the framework of traditional endurance – which is emblematic in much of the endurance world. While we agree that the start mix up and the incomplete facilities were a major issue in this particular WEG, as noted above, the decade plus erosion of traditional endurance behaviors and equine welfare criteria are the greatest threats to the discipline.

Regretfully, equestrians within endurance and the greater equestrian community in general became witness to the schism within endurance during WEG. What people do not realize is athletes that participate in flat racing for extended distances know nothing about riding their horses within their

capabilities according to the weather and terrain of the day. Their objective is often “winning at all costs”. This is incomprehensible to traditional endurance competitors where our sport's motto is “To finish is to Win”.

An example of how AERC's motto is implemented can be seen throughout our rules and regulations. An example of how AERC's principles have been compromised on the world scene can be seen by turning to a horse welfare and safety example that occurred at WEG. When the veterinarians at Tryon wanted to slow the race down with a 60 bpm pulse rate, the FEI organizers reversed their decision. It is well documented that on this type of terrain horses need shorter loops to ensure more frequent veterinary monitoring of metabolic function but FEI officials decided that they wanted 5 loops instead of the 6 that had been originally planned by the organizers. Clearly horse welfare was not the priority when these decisions were made and suggestions made by those qualified to recommend stronger measures to slow the horses down were not considered. This event would have been greatly improved if FEI had listened to the people that have a great deal of experience in endurance riding in technical terrain and adverse weather. Unfortunately, it often appears the welfare of the horse is only given consideration after something goes wrong in some FEI events. We believe that by purposefully using the voice of AERC and USEF small changes can have a huge impact on rebuilding the reputation of endurance and highlighting the incredible attributes of endurance.

Another simple, yet impactful first step involves the petition located in appendix III. As background, there has been a petition to FEI on horse welfare reform that has circulated around the world. It had over 5,500 signatures in just the couple of weeks before this event. The petition was sent to USEF a week before Tryon. The items on the petition will improve the welfare of the horse. AERC is convinced that by requiring athletes to have a higher completion rates in order to qualify for open speed endurance events would truly reverse the “win at all costs” mentality that has crept into our sport. Also the elimination of the Elite Status so each athlete will qualify on the horse that they will compete in a Championship event. The current COC requirements on the events must also be revised to allow for diversity in weather and terrain. Drug use should not be tolerated and severe penalties should fall on the owner, trainer and athlete.

While the steps mentioned above may take time to refine and implement, **the AERC Executive Committee is requesting that, starting immediately, USEF withdraw all funding to FEI endurance events outside of the US for a period of two years or until significant changes are made within FEI. (we envision this should include everything from the Chef d'Equipe pay/expenses, selection committee, support crews, ride fees, stabling, etc.) AERC requests that USEF concentrate their efforts and all funding on US national events for US riders, like Young Riders, Z-Tec, Team Events, North American Championship, etc.**

It is our desire that eyes will be open to a significant change in understanding the direction for endurance in the future. We look forward to your response and hope we can work together to make international competition into a sport where endurance riding is an event that follows the principles of the AERC. These principles are consistent with the conduct of endurance riding throughout most countries of the world.

Respectfully submitted,

AERC Executive Committee

Paul Latiolais- AERC President
Monica Chapman- AERC Vice President
Mollie Krumlaw-Smith- AERC Treasurer
Connie Burns- Caudill- AERC Secretary
Michael Campbell- AERC Past President

Appendix I – Letter from AERC-International Committee concerning the WEG



September 16, 2018

After the 2018 world endurance championship in Tryon, NC, we were concerned about several decisions made by the FEI and TIEC that ultimately negatively impacted success for riders and horse welfare at the event. Clearly the miscommunication and lack of organization at the start set up the day for the remainder of the problems that arose. Also, the venue was simply not ready to host the event. However, the first significant issue was the lack of a test event the year preceding the championship, when environmental conditions would have been most similar. Nearly as significant was the decision to make the first loop 40 km, a decision that was not supported by the endurance organizers of the event. We know from at least one study that long first phases often significantly deplete horse resources and negatively impact completion rates, particularly in events where continuous cooling is not possible. In fact, more, shorter loops are safer for the horse on technical trails. Our ultimate priority must be horse welfare rather than spectators! Finally, when the environmental conditions are challenging, the minimal speed for completion should be lowered or eliminated altogether. Some riders will override regardless, but it is important to give them as many tools as possible to navigate the various challenges of the day as safely as possible (e.g. shorter phases so metabolic stress can be identified by the veterinary control earlier, the ability to slow the pace if the environmental conditions require it, etc). The goal of endurance racing is to traverse a given course as quickly and as safely as possible, but the actual speeds possible depend on the trail conditions (footing, elevation change, daily temperature, humidity, etc.). In some venues this may mean cantering the majority of the course, but in others the specific challenges may require a much slower speed to achieve the primary goal of completing with a healthy horse.

We believe the above suggestions must be considered for all future endurance events and that FEI decisions that overruled the endurance organizers of this event were the primary cause the event failed. We also believe the unsportsmanlike behavior exhibited by some competitors must be addressed. We all sign a code of conduct and no level of frustration mitigates the atrocious behavior of some. Additionally, because of the open investigation at this time, we would like to take the opportunity to repeat our support of the following suggestions that were previously put forth by the AERC board of directors and have already gained worldwide support. We believe the following changes will address many of the recurrent issues facing the sport of endurance at the international level:

1. Increase penalties for positive drug tested horses- Higher fines as well as stiffer suspensions on the horses. At least a year suspension (not the current 2 months).
2. Strong penalties on Trainers/Athletes/Owners who have 3 positive drug violations within a 5-year period. A 5-year suspension is suggested.
3. Positive drug violations for anabolic steroids, (such as testosterone) the horse will be banned for life. Possible life bans on –Athlete/Owner/Trainer
4. Mandated drug test on all 4* and 5* and Championship rides. Increase the drug testing fees in these rides to help pay for the extra testing. Take a blood draw on ALL at check in (hair follicle possibly in future drug testing programs). At the finish always drug test top 10-20 horses in these types of races,

then others at random. (4* is a 160K with prize money of \$10,000-\$50,000, 5* prize money greater than \$50,000)

5. Check for sensitivity of the horses' lower legs at initial vetting, during the ride at the vet checks and upon completion.
6. Athletes/horses must maintain a completion rate of 66% over the preceding 5 years. If either fall below a 66% completion rate (Retired/Rider Option will not count against them) they will immediately go back to restricted or controlled speed (which currently is no greater than 16kmh or 10 mph). They will stay at set speed for 1 year or until their completion rate rises above 66%.
7. Remove elite athlete status. All athletes must qualify on the horse that is to be ridden in the championship ride, no special status for elite athletes.
8. Eliminate current certificate of capability (COC) protocol, which is linked to a set speed and promotes fast flat courses. Instead, we suggest using a combination of number of events entered, and completion rate to demonstrate capability. For example: in order to enter a 2 star event the horse and rider must have entered three 1 star events and completed at least two of them (66% completion); likewise, to enter a 3 star event, the horse and rider must have completed two 1 star and two 2 star events with a 66% completion rate. In order for a competitor to enter a championship level event, the horse and rider must have completed a 2 star event and a 3 star event as a team (e.g. same horse and rider team).
9. Increase rest periods for all horses that exceed average speeds of 18 km/h (11.3 m/h). Reduce rest period by 50% when average speed is less than 16k/h (10 m/h).

Respectfully~

Meg Sleeper VMD, DACVIM (cardiology)

Appendix II- Flat Track Endurance Racing vs Endurance Riding

We would we ask USEF to take the lead within FEI by calling for a substantial and meaningful restructuring of international endurance based on the following descriptions and criteria:

Endurance riding is a different sport from extreme endurance racing (flat track racing for extended distances). We request that these two sports be separated. The following was given to a USEF Committee member at the 2018 AERC convention. It was a list that articulates extreme endurance racing. At that time it was asked that it be shared with USEF.

Flat track endurance racing -Differs from traditional endurance rides with some of the following which allow for faster racing times;

1. Allowing for water to passed off to artificially cool horses all along the route
2. Allow vehicles to follow along or beside the course
3. Groomed course (sand removal or unnatural course)
4. Averaging speeds greater than 22 kph (13 mph)
5. No recognition for longevity of horse

Appendix III

Global Petition for FEI Horse Welfare Reform (currently over 5,500 signatures on change.org)
Supported unanimously by the AERC Board of Directors

The purpose of this petition is to clarify for FEI that the endurance riders and supporters worldwide demand a return to the traditions of our sport with emphasis on the proper care for endurance horses everywhere by allowing the horses to compete on their own natural abilities without performance

enhancing drugs. The petition also requires increased rest periods for excessive speed and stiffer penalties for those who would abuse these animals. This petition has the full support of the American Endurance Ride Conference Board members and we expect the public support of relevant committees and organizations from endurance organizations all around the world.

FEI must take a stand for endurance horse welfare reform worldwide before equestrians lose the privilege of competing in equestrian sports. We request that FEI accept and enforce the following 9 rules that will punish the cheaters and abusers of horses that believe in "winning at all cost". Enough is enough, endurance athletes and horse enthusiast globally demand change in the FEI organization.

1. Increase penalties for positive drug tested horses- Higher fines as well as stiffer suspensions on the horses. At least a year suspension (not the current 2 months). (May depend on the type of drug?)
2. Strong penalties on Trainers/Athletes/Owners who have 3 positive drug violations within a 5 year period. 5 year suspension is suggested.
3. Positive drug violations for anabolic steroids, (such as testosterone) the horse will be banned for life. Possible life ban on –Athlete/Owner/Trainer
4. Have mandated drug test on all 4* and 5* and Championship rides. Increase the drug testing fees in these rides to help pay for the extra testing. Take a blood draw on ALL at check in (hair follicle possibly in future drug testing programs). At the finish always drug test top 10-20 horses in these types of races, then others at random. (4* is a 160K with prize money of \$10,000-\$50,000, 5* prize money greater than \$50,000)
5. Check for sensitivity of the horses' lower legs at initial vetting, during the ride at the vet checks and upon completion.
6. Horses must maintain a completion rate of 66%. If horse falls below a 66% completion rate (Retired/Rider Option will not count against them) they will immediately go back to restricted or controlled speed (which currently is no greater than 16kmh or 10 mph). They will stay at this rate for at least 6 months and if their completion rate has improved above the 66% they can go back into open speed, if it has not improved they will remain in the controlled speed category another 6 months until they can improve their completion rate.
7. Remove elite athlete status. (Elite status only comes into play at championship rides). All athletes must qualify on the horse that is to be ridden in the championship ride, no special status for elite athletes.
8. Eliminate current COC timing. (This promotes fast flat courses only.)
9. Increase rest periods for all horses that exceed average speeds of 16kmh (10mph). Reduce rest period by 50% when average speed is less than 16kmh (10 mph).