



Steward's Hub Newsletter TM

Newsletter Date September 2016

Special points of interest:

- Meet the Steward

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Therapy Reference
Book for Barn
Checks**

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It's all about Nosebands

By Anne Welch, FEI I Dressage Steward, Equestrian Canada Senior Dressage Steward and FEI I Jumping Steward

Leading up to this year's Olympics the noseband, in particular the crank noseband often seen in the dressage ring became a topic of discussions when a study from the University of Sydney's Faculty of Veterinary Science claimed that "nosebands and double bridles could cause unnecessary pain and suffering to horses during equestrian events at the Rio Olympics" (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-10/olympic-equestrian-equipment-causing-stress-in-horses-study/7386074>). The study, or its mass market publishing through social media no matter how flawed is detrimental to our sport and we must pay attention. Astrid Appels wrote an excellent editorial, A Slip of the Tongue in Eurodressage in 2011 in which she explores contact issues and notes "the quick fix for tongue issues in competition is to tighten the noseband more firmly and/or dropping it lower than normal".

The issue of tight nosebands has been with us for a long time and various suggestions and solutions have been proposed from removing entirely to suggestions on how to measure what is 'too tight'. If we agree with Kim Miller who wrote in Practical Horseman on the first reason for a noseband is in helping to keep your horse's mouth softly closed and quiet, encouraging contact with the bit then the noseband is here to stay and we must find a way for it to not harm the horse.

As stewards we are expected to look out for the welfare of the horse and that includes making sure the noseband is not 'too tight'. But exactly what is too tight? A conversation between the steward and the rider or trainer that goes along like this: "This noseband is a little too tight and I would ask that you loosen it a little" is the kind of thing I dread. The argument of "I will know it when I see it" is not enough. Until now there has not been an agreed upon protocol for checking that all can agree is fair and treated in the same way from one day to the next.

Earlier this summer the FEI sent a memo to its FEI Dressage Stewards – here is a copy -

"Dear FEI Dressage Stewards,
Please see the below important information regarding the tightness of nose bands in Dressage:
It is the Chief Steward's responsibility to ensure that the tightness of horses' nosebands is checked at each FEI Dressage event.

Therefore the Chief Steward will brief all his assistant stewards on the correct conduct of the noseband check and will highlight the importance of horsemanship when performing the task.

The noseband check is part of the tack control when the horse is leaving the competition arena after having finished the test. One and the same steward must conduct the noseband check for all horses entered in the same competition. The tightness check must be done with the steward's index finger between the horse's cheek and the noseband. The steward must wear gloves during this check.

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Meet the Steward—Anne Welch Ontario, Canada



- ◆ Equestrian Canada National Senior and Senior Dressage Steward
- ◆ FEI I Jumping Steward
- ◆ FEI I Dressage Steward

Career Highlights

- ◇ Thunderbird, BC
- ◇ Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, ON
- ◇ Cornerstone Dressage, ON
- ◇ Kawartha Summer Classic and Youth Championships, ON
- ◇ Bromont International, QC
- ◇ Spruce Meadows, AB
- ◇ Equivents Dressage, ON
- ◇ Caledon Dressage, ON

I have been a licensed steward with Equestrian Canada since 2009. I have had the opportunity to steward in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec and definitely a highlight was being a member of the stewarding team for the 2015 Pan Ams in Dressage.

I think stewarding is the very best role for me within the Equestrian Federation as I can help further their sport by helping athletes, human and horse, at all stages of their development compete on an equal and fair, safe and humane playing field.

The Dilemma for the Dressage Steward

By Anne Welch, FEI and Equestrian Canada Dressage Steward

To steward well we need to be able to visit all sections of the venue, the stables, ship in areas, oversee any lunging, measure an occasional pony and be available to sort out issues as they present themselves throughout the event and YET – we are required to tack check every horse and rider as they exit the ring approximately every 6 or so minutes or more often in cases of two rings underway.

The Dilemma – how can we do our job and meet these expectations when we work alone, or even with a partner who is also responsible for one or two rings?

The rules are clear that all riders must report to tack check (E4.16). They also allow in Article 15.16.2 for the steward to appoint an individual to do the tack check in their stead. This does happen in other countries – Britain and the US, but rarely, if not at all in Canada other than when a learner steward is shadowing and working with a Medium or higher steward. Many organizers will not provide volunteers for this task as rightly they recognize a potential risk.

How to resolve this? Tack check is important to our discipline and with the ever expanding availability of new tack and equipment it has become more complex and requires both training and updated knowledge and oversight. However I do believe that reducing the number of tack checks is something that will likely be as effective as the 100% threshold of today. There are many ways to accomplish this – for example *tack check 100% certain classes in each division, require all championship classes to be tack checked, random tack checks in other classes.*

Until then we must use common sense and do the very best we can. For instance an accident in the warm up requires our immediate attention and it is unreasonable to ask a rider to wait 10-15 minutes for a tack check. The odds are that unless this is a championship we will see that combination back in the ring in a few hours again. Quick trips to stables or lunging areas must be done at early morning arrival and the lunch break - clearly eliminating them for not being tack checked is unreasonable. The odds are that unless this is a championship we will see that combination back in the ring in a few hours again. As for barn checks – they must be done and if it means an early morning trip, quick random check in any break or lunch and certainly at end of day at least there is a presence – take with Emergency Contact Sheets so that every stall has one – this will at the very least give a quick visual that the Stewards are about in the barns!

**“The Steward has a Question”
Grand Prize Contest Winner Pam Elder
with EC/FEI Steward Daryl Freed**



**The Grand Prize was a custom made ear bonnet graciously
sponsored by Cavalletti Custom Bonnets**

**Contest was held at the Fall Harvest Hunter Jumper Show,
Bird’s Hill Park, Manitoba Canada**

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The Stewards Hub

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Ideally the finger size of stewards appointed for the noseband check at different competitions throughout the event shall be of similar size.

In case of an apparent overtightened noseband during the horse's warm-up, the appointed tack control steward is entitled to conduct the check also during the warm-up and, in case of the noseband being overtightened, ask the athlete to loosen the noseband. The noseband of the horse will be checked again by the same steward after the horse has finished the test. If the noseband is still too tight after the second check, the Chief Steward will give a Yellow Warning Card to the athlete.

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In August while stewarding two large EC (NOT FEI) dressage competitions in Ontario I took this memo along and essentially tested the responses to this measurement and approach. As part of the tack check I made a point of testing the noseband as per the instructions above and discussing this new directive with the trainers and their riders. Some certainly wanted to see the memo which I shared and I suspect that there may always be some who will argue and continue to overtighten their nosebands until told to loosen this group will become very small quickly. Otherwise this directive was very well received and the comments were encouraging – “Must remember to tell the grooms about this”, “Seems clear,” “Helpful to have something clear on this”. I applaud the FEI for this statement – it seems like a simple thing – we have all been able to identify nosebands that are far too tight (*know it when we see it!*) and while we may have made a change for that horse on the day without an agreed international standard there has likely been no improvement for the horse's overall welfare. A little clarity on what is too tight has the ability to improve horse's welfare in sport and with it the approval of our sport by spectators and the public, and in my opinion make things easier for stewards, trainers, riders and their horses. A Win Win.

References:

Practical Horseman, Become a Horse Noseband Know-it-All by Kim Miller <http://practicalhorsemanmag.com/article/horse-nosebands-11817>

Eurodressage, A Slip of the Tongue by Astrid Appels <http://www.eurodressage.com/equestrian/2011/06/29/slip-tongue>

Olympic equestrian events under fire as research links riding equipment to stress response in horses - [Lateline](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-10/olympic-equestrian-equipment-causing-stress-in-horses-study/7386074) By the National Reporting Team's [James Thomas](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-05-10/olympic-equestrian-equipment-causing-stress-in-horses-study/7386074)

Eurodressage, ISES Suggest to Empower FEI Stewards to Control Tightness of Noseband <http://www.eurodressage.com/equestrian/2012/02/06/ises-suggest-empower-fei-stewards-control-tightness-noseband>

Eurodressage, Noseband Special, The History of the Noseband <http://www.eurodressage.com/equestrian/2012/02/07/noseband-special-part-i-history-noseband>

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**We're on the web:
stewardshub.com**

*****Photo of the Month*****

Photos supplied by Stewards—taken at various horse shows.

What is wrong with this picture???



Photo taken outside temporary stabling stalls.

**If you have a photo you would like published please forward them
in .jpg format to info@stewardshub.com**