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23rd November 2009

H.R.H. Princess Haya of Jordan
President
Fédération Equestre Internationale
c/o Mr Alex McLin
Secretary General
Avenue Rumine 37
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By email

Your Royal Highness,

**“Zero Tolerance” Medication Policy for Horses competing in FEI Endurance commencing
1st January, 2010**

The FEI General Assembly’s recent adoption of the Veterinary Regulation incorporating the “Progressive” Medication List on 19th November 2009 at Copenhagen is the cause of utmost concern for the FEI Endurance Event and Treatment Veterinarians who are cosignatories to this petition.

The introduction of medication thresholds set at clinically effective levels for the list of substances, including non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID’s), intended for use during competition will have very serious detrimental welfare consequences for the sustained athletic usefulness of horses for the following reasons:

1. The use of therapeutic levels of NSAIDs during competition is likely to increase the already alarmingly rising incidence of fractures and other career terminating or limiting orthopaedic injuries due to their pain killing effect. This will enable lame horses that should be treated and rested to compete.
2. NSAID drugs can have a toxic effect on the kidneys especially when there is a degree of dehydration. We know from clinical data that many Endurance horses undergo temporary renal compromise related to levels of dehydration. The use of these drugs in the presence of clinical and subclinical levels of dehydration during competition will increase the risk of permanent renal damage increasing the incidence of life- and career threatening metabolic disease.
3. The use of substances facilitating "management" by masking subclinical metabolic and orthopaedic conditions will predispose to catastrophic breakdown in competition. This is especially the case during extended sustained athletic efforts at moderate to high speeds (and in adverse climatic conditions) because the body’s natural protective mechanisms are circumvented. It will increase the difficulty of detecting compromised horses during the brief clinical examinations at Vet Gates and will render effective inspection of the horses before the

competition impossible. This will undoubtedly lead to an increased incidence of career limiting catastrophic injuries and a level of suffering which is entirely unacceptable.

Historically, with the exception of anti-ulcer medication and progestagen therapy (Regumate), Endurance has always enjoyed a “zero tolerance” medication policy since joining the FEI family of disciplines. This has been in recognition of the welfare requirements peculiar to this sport.

For all the reasons listed above, we strongly recommend that the FEI Bureau, in consultation with the Veterinary and Endurance Departments maintain a “Zero Tolerance” medication policy reflecting the status quo whilst incorporating all other aspects of the newly approved Veterinary Regulations and Medication Rules for the discipline of Endurance. Failing this we, as clinicians await explicit guidance from the Veterinary and Endurance Departments on how to apply the Veterinary Regulations and Endurance Rules within the context of the FEI’s new policy of permissive medication.

Yours respectfully,



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