



CANADIAN EVENTING COMMITTEE

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Dear Eventers,

I am writing to you concerning a very important topic for everyone who loves the sport of Eventing. That topic is Safety.

The Equine Canada - Canadian Eventing Committee (CEC) is saddened by tragic accidents that have plagued Eventing in 2007 and early 2008. We are deeply sympathetic to the families that have tragically lost riders and horses.

In January 2008, the FEI hosted an International Safety Forum in Copenhagen Denmark in to which Jo Young, Chair of the Equine Canada Canadian Eventing Committee (CEC) Officials and Rules Committee attended as Canada's representative. Jo's written report was provided to you in the last edition of the Canadian Eventing E News and a report on thee complete proceedings including all presentations, as well as the FEI Safety statistics are available on the FEI web site – www.horsesport.org – Eventing – Safety. In addition, the report on the USEA/IUSEF Eventing Safety Summit June 7-8, 2008 is available on the US Eventing web site www.useventing.com. Read all you can about it so any opinions you form are thoughtful and educated.

One of the outcomes of the Copenhagen Forum, was that the FEI requested each NF (National Federation) to identify and provide the name of a contact person/ Safety Officer (by March 31st) and also to provide a framework for the Safety Plan. As chair of CEC I was named the Safety Officer on an interim basis. However I am very pleased to report that Peter Gray has come forward with an offer of his services as Safety Officer. Peter, a former National Eventing Team Coach and Olympic rider, is leading a series of clinics for riders and coaches with a primary focus on improving the rider's ability to ride cross country correctly and safely this year. Peter's article on safety accompanies this communication.

For the past twenty years, the Canadian Eventing Committee and its sub-committees have taken a leadership role to improve the safety of the sport through such programs as – the Cross Country Course Standardization Program, the Officials Education Program, the NCCP Coaching program, the Statistical Research program and the Athlete Development Program.

Since 2004 Equine Canada –Canadian Eventing has required that information on every rider or horse fall is recorded and filed with Equine Canada. This means we are able to use these reports to identify issues and primary safety considerations and then prioritize what areas we need to improve.

Partially as a result of this ongoing analysis – the Canadian Eventing Committee has:

- Implemented stricter eligibility standards for upgrading to a higher competitive level,
- Instituted a series of cross country skill development clinics for riders and coaches lead by former National Team Coach – Peter Gray,
- Instituted a nation wide education program to improve and standardize cross country fence design and construction methods including frangible pin installation and how to best secure portable fences,
- Developed training and certification program for Cross Country Course Designers with a goal that by 2010, all courses up to Preliminary level inclusive in Canada will be designed by certified designers and all courses by 2012,

- Developed a training and certification program for Three Day Event Judges,
- Enhanced education and training programs for all eventing officials,
- Implemented stricter rules for dangerous riding.

In May 2008 the CEC approved the framework of the Eventing Safety Committee. This committee will hold its first meeting in the very near future. A description of the Committee is included with this communication.

The FEI has recently implemented new regulations including new regulations for dangerous riding which are defined in Art 519 (modified Nov, 2007) and have just announced that a competitor will be eliminated after ONE fall of horse or rider in the cross country and jumping tests effective August 1, 2008 (which includes the Olympic Games). The USEF /USEA have already implemented this modification on May 19, 2008. Expect to see some rule changes shortly to the Canadian Rules and other areas of safety addressed.

Lastly, I would like to address Rider Accountability. Riders themselves must, from the lowest level to the highest level, understand their own strengths and weaknesses. The riders are accountable for their actions at all levels. Too much emphasis is placed on speed. Too many people move up before they are ready. Make sure the horse is ready for the level as well as the rider. There is no excuse for bad riding. Prepare, prepare, prepare!!! Prepare more. Be ready when you go to an event. The event is not the place to school. This sport requires competence in three different areas. Experience some success before you move up. Learn your speeds at home, not at the competition. Riders, if you truly love our wonderful sport, you will do whatever is necessary to be fully prepared when you arrive at the show and be able to ride every stride in every phase. It all starts with dressage, willingness and obedience. Get better at all three phases.

Eventing is a risk sport, but through the continuing Safety program the Canadian Eventing Committee will work towards managing that risk to provide the safest arena for competitors and horses while retaining the essence of the sport. The CEC welcomes your suggestions to make the sport safer – please email canadianeventing@equinecanada.ca

Sincerely,

Peggy Hambly
Chair, Canadian Eventing Committee

CEC SAFETY STATUS REPORT – Article by Peter Gray, Eventing Safety Officer

PREAMBLE

The recent memorandum from CEC Chair Peggy Hambly has given the CE membership a synopsis of the state of the sport following a dramatic start to the 2008 competition season; it has been a tragic and unacceptable 18 months experiencing too many rider and horse fatalities - perhaps the worst in the history of the sport.

USEF President David O'Connor has announced some major rule changes proposals and safety considerations, some of which have already been implemented and some which were discussed at the recent USEF/USEA Eventing Safety Summit. I would like to reflect on the suggestions of the USEA and share my opinion with those who will continue to lead the sport in Canada in a safe and positive manner.

THE SPORT IN CANADA

My involvement in the sport as a competitor and organiser has spanned over 20 years and during that time I can count on one hand, the number of serious accidents that have occurred during competition. For this, we are extremely lucky but I fully support Peggy's voice encouraging event organisers to have the tools to run safer competitions and to make safety a bigger priority for 2008. Earlier this winter (before the start of the competition season) I was asked by Sue Hershey, the Director of the US Instructors Certification Programme (ICP), how the sport is different in Canada and why we have been so fortunate to experience so few major accidents. While there are many contributing factors, my opinion and response was two fold;

1. EDUCATION

A very good Canadian coaching programme (NCCP) has been in existence for many years (the US ICP programme is fledgling in its evolution) and I would like to think a majority of our young competitors have been positively influenced by the structure of our coaching system which I would describe as comparatively more progressive in nature and detail oriented in terms of basic educational fundamentals putting an emphasis on learning before competing.

2. HIGH PROFILE COMPETITIONS

Canada is a wonderful training ground for aspiring riders and provides for the most part, safe and encouraging competition venues. Our more accomplished riders head south of the border for winter training in pursuit of a young rider or high performance team spot. In addition, we sadly showcase very few international competitions anymore as seen in the US....and with this higher profile competition comes a more demanding championship type courses and unfortunately, higher risk. The Young Rider programme is definitely more intense in the US and I frequently observe these immature riders striving for results that are beyond their capability and rushing to get qualified; the judgement of teenagers is known to be inconsistent and often impaired with the stress of competition making them vulnerable to accidents.

HOW DO WE STAY ON A TRACK GIVING OUR MEMBERSHIP A SAFE EVENTING PLAYGROUND

Many factors influence the safety of cross country courses; rules, speeds, cross country course design, jump building techniques, qualifications, upgrading, safety and crisis management for organizers. But for me, without hesitation, the number one factor is **EDUCATION!!!!!!!** It is by no fluke that I am working with an enthusiastic Athlete Development Committee to spread the word of 'safe cross country riding techniques' with my clinic series across Canada this summer. EC has budgeted funds for an important video and picture presentation which will be used during these clinics targeting eventing competitors and coaches.

FACT: grim, but to me it is very clear; of 13 rider deaths in the last 18 months, 11 were rotational falls.

FACT: as we disseminate information, it is becoming clear that most rotational falls are as a result of unsafe riding practices.

So we have to educate coaches and riders across Canada about safe cross country riding techniques. It is common practice to have a dressage or show jumping trainer, but believe it or not, there are definite short comings when teaching the technique for riding approaches to

galloping fences, technical questions, questions off a turn or with a change in terrain or lighting, jumping a tired or inexperienced horse. At what point are you ready to be competitive, the preparedness of students, when to upgrade, suitability of horse.....these fundamentals are rarely taught correctly because coaches have not been educated...so this is the purpose of my clinic series.

POTENTIAL MODIFICATIONS TO RULES

I vehemently support the following modifications to the current rules and proposals for new rules – many of these were discussed at the recent USEF USEA Eventing Safety Summit;

1. *Modification:* A fall of horse or rider on cross country is penalised with an immediate ELIMINATION.
(Riders at any level will be rattled by a fall making them vulnerable to further mishap). Both the FEI and the USEF have taken steps to implement this modification
2. *New:* Frangible pins to be used in the construction of oxers that are not enclosed and whose dimensions exceed 1 meter.
3. *New:* If a fall of horse or rider is deemed to be the result of unsafe riding, a suspension of 3-6 months from competition is awarded; the severity of the suspension to be decided by the Ground Jury and is awarded without the possibility of appeal.
4. *New:* All competitions have a cross country safety steward mid-way on course. This person may be a ground jury member, knowledgeable horseman, competitor or coach of high regard and has the authority to communicate with control and request the IMMEDIATE disqualification of any competitor riding in an unsafe manner. All jump judges will be equipped with a RED FLAG and will stop the rider from proceeding when alerted by control.

One of the first tasks of the Canadian Eventing Committee's newly formed Safety Committee will be to carefully review all of the published material including rule modifications, proposals, research and information. The Safety Committee invites your suggestions – please email canadianeventing@equinecanada.ca.

CANADIAN EVENTING COMMITTEE -- SAFETY & IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Approved by CEC May 21, 2008

Introduction:

Eventing is a risk sport, but through the continuing Safety program the Canadian Eventing Committee works towards managing that risk to provide the safest arena for competitors and horses while retaining the essence of the sport.

As stated in the Strategic Plan for Eventing, Canadian Eventing is committed to:

- *Inviting and encouraging the lifelong participation in the sport of Eventing by providing programs and support services based on established principles of long term athlete development for all levels of eventing*
- *Ensuring the wellbeing and safety of horses, riders and all individuals participating throughout the sport.*

The Canadian Eventing Committee and its sub-committees has taken a leadership role to improve the safety of the sport through programs such as – the Cross Country Course Standardization Program , the Officials Education Program (including the new Course Designer Training and Certification program) , the NCCP Coaching program, the Statistical Research program and the Athlete Development Program . The CEC will continue to provide strong leadership and technical expertise adopting a proactive, inclusive and flexible approach to delivering creative and innovative solutions.

Goals of the Program:

1. To reduce or eliminate the chance of riders and horses being seriously injured through a fall
2. To put in place all efforts to prevent a horse from falling
3. To improve the knowledge of cross country riding
4. To promote responsible riding by all competitors
5. To improve the safety standards at eventing competitions

Components of the Safety & Improvement Program may include the following:

1. Training /Education of Riders, Horses and Coaches
2. Training/Education of Officials and Organizers
3. Cross Country Course Design and Construction
4. Medical
5. Veterinary
6. Information & Statistical
7. Rules and Regulations- discipline , qualification and eligibility
8. Communication
9. Research

In 2008 the CEC moves forward to create a sub committee whose single purpose is Safety. It shall be known as the Canadian Eventing Safety Committee. This committee shall be accountable to the CEC through its Chair. Members of the Safety Committee may include the expertise from the following areas of the sport: Cross Country Course Design and construction, Coaching, Medical, Competitor, Officiating, Veterinary, or Competition Organizer. The Chair of CEC will sit on this committee. The Chair of the Safety Committee shall also be liaison to the FEI Safety Committee.

The Safety Committee may request each Provincial Horse Trials Association to identify a Safety Officer as a liaison.

In recognition that many of the components identified in the Program fall under the responsibility of the CEC sub-committees, it shall be the responsibility of the Safety Committee to work in partnership with these committees in achieving the goals.