



Social Licence to Operate and The Use of Equipment in Horse Sports

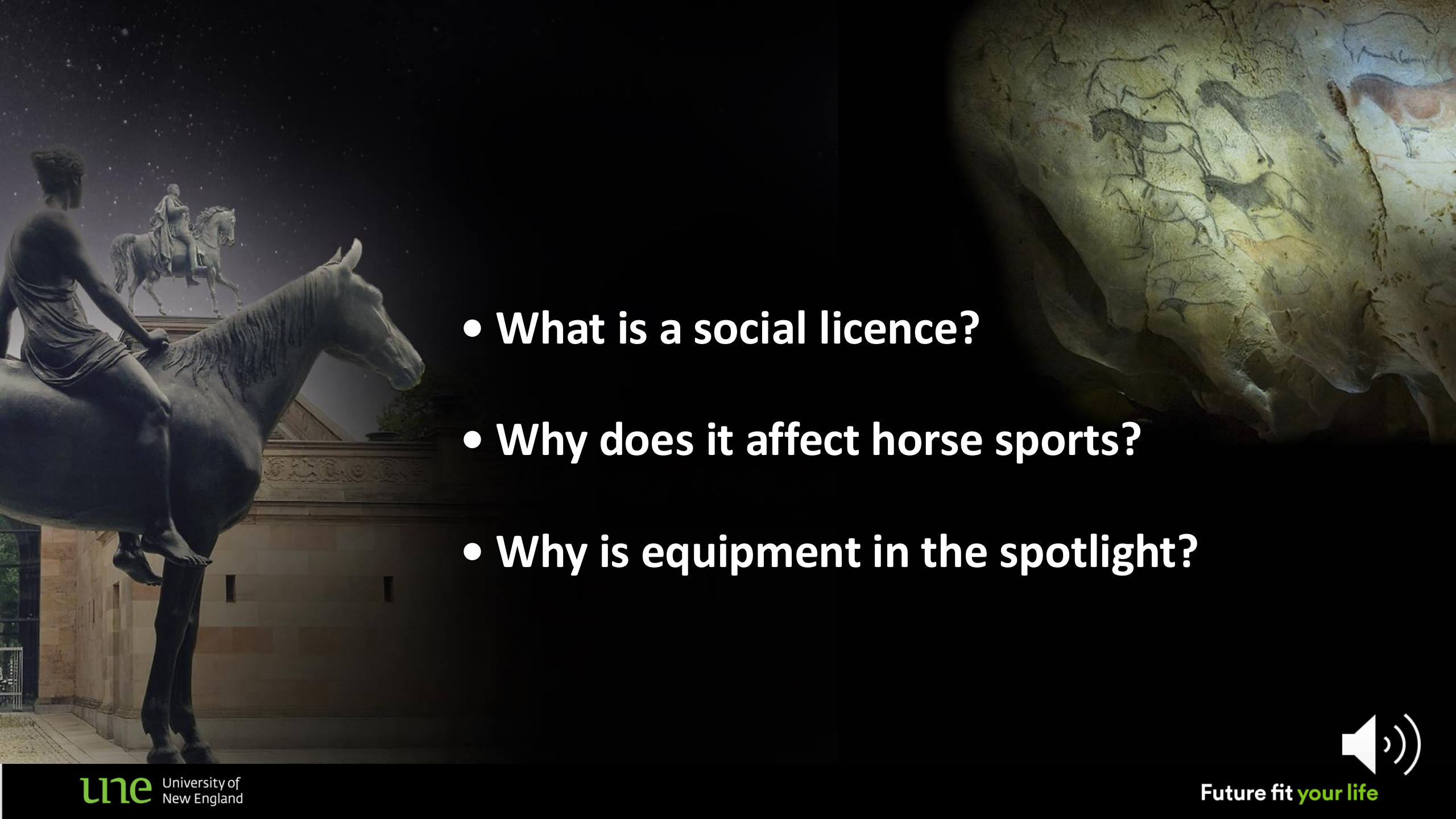
Cristina Wilkins

PhD Candidate, the University of New England, Australia
Editor, Horses and People

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University of
New England

**Future fit
your life**

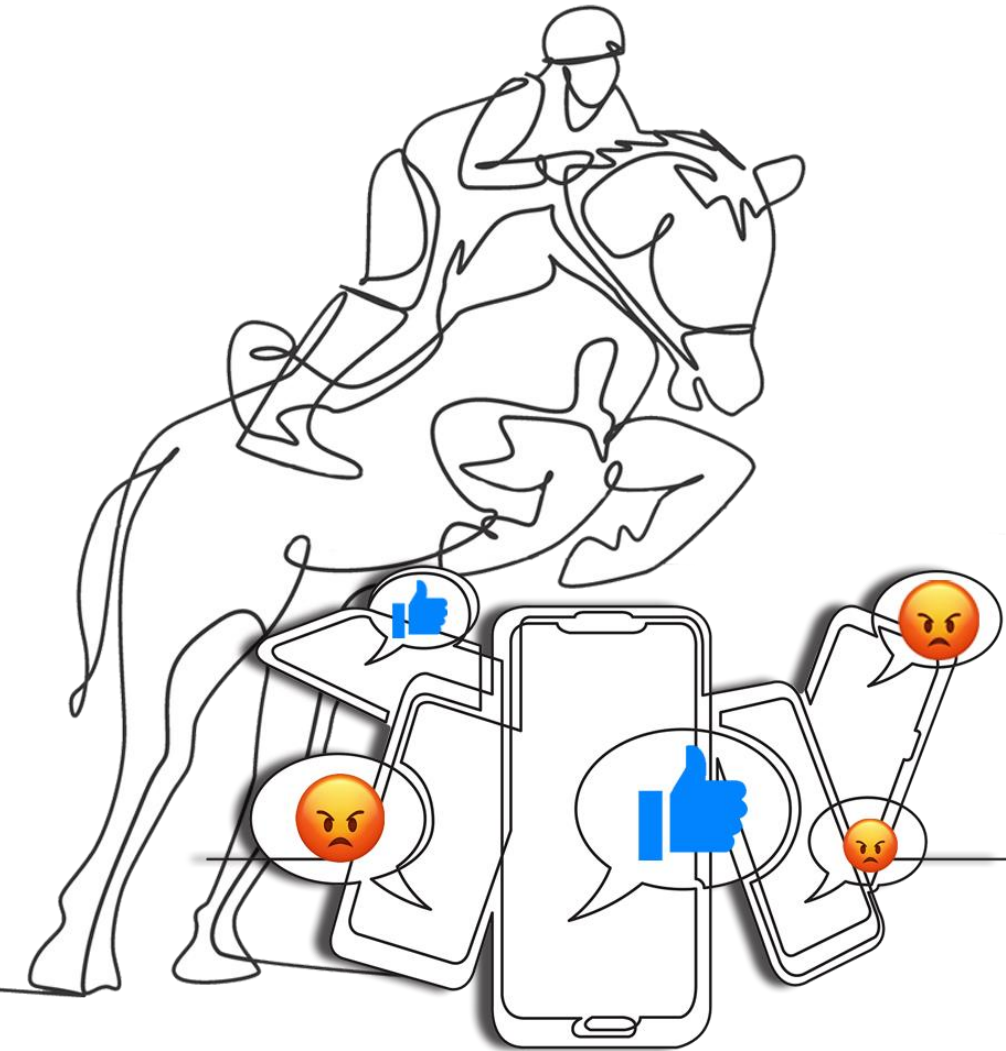




- **What is a social licence?**
- **Why does it affect horse sports?**
- **Why is equipment in the spotlight?**



Social Licence to Operate

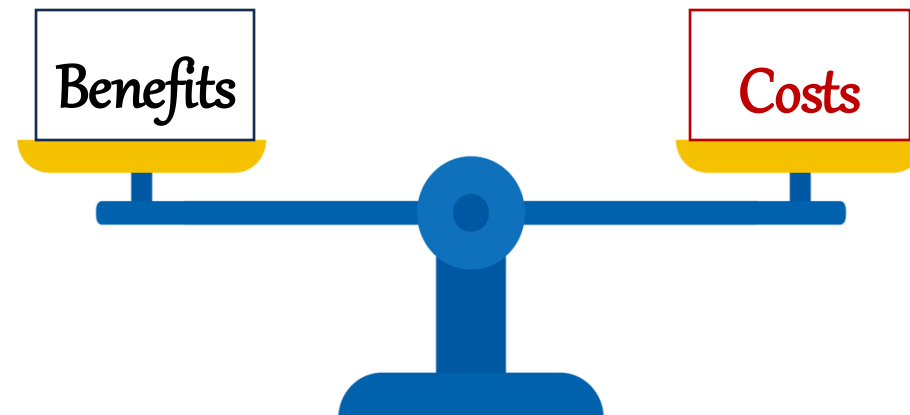


Society's acceptance of the practices and activities of any organisation

A virtual licence, unwritten and informal

Sits apart from formal, legal licences

(Moffat et al., 2016)



Costs

WATER POLLUTION EFFECTS FROM MINING

Social licence is the **ongoing public debate over whether the end justifies the means**

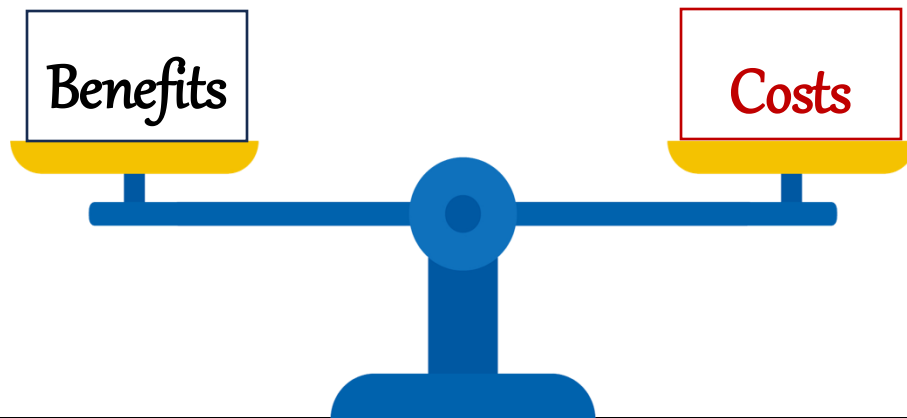


Three Pillars of the Social Licence

Legitimacy: Follow the rules, including social norms (integrity).

Credibility: (And accountability) Be transparent, fulfill any commitments made.

Trust: Positive feelings associated with predictability



The pillars are built and maintained over time...

But they can be destroyed quickly!



The first published results from Juukan Gorge show 47,000 years of Aboriginal heritage was destroyed in mining blast

Published: July 19, 2024 3.11pm AEST



Juukan Gorge traditional owners show destruction from Rio Tinto blast of Aboriginal site

“Don’t let this happen... Don’t trust the people... Make them work hard for the trust.”





Why does this affect horse sports?

People are increasingly sensitive to animal welfare issues.

Widespread recognition of animal sentience

A horse is not 'just' a horse





Shift in attitudes to animals

- **20%** of surveyed adults **did not support the continued involvement of horses in sport, in any circumstances.**
- **40%** said they would support the continued involvement of horses in sport **ONLY if their welfare was improved.**

(World Horse Welfare survey, 2022 & 2023)



(Equine Ethics & Wellbeing Commission, 2022)

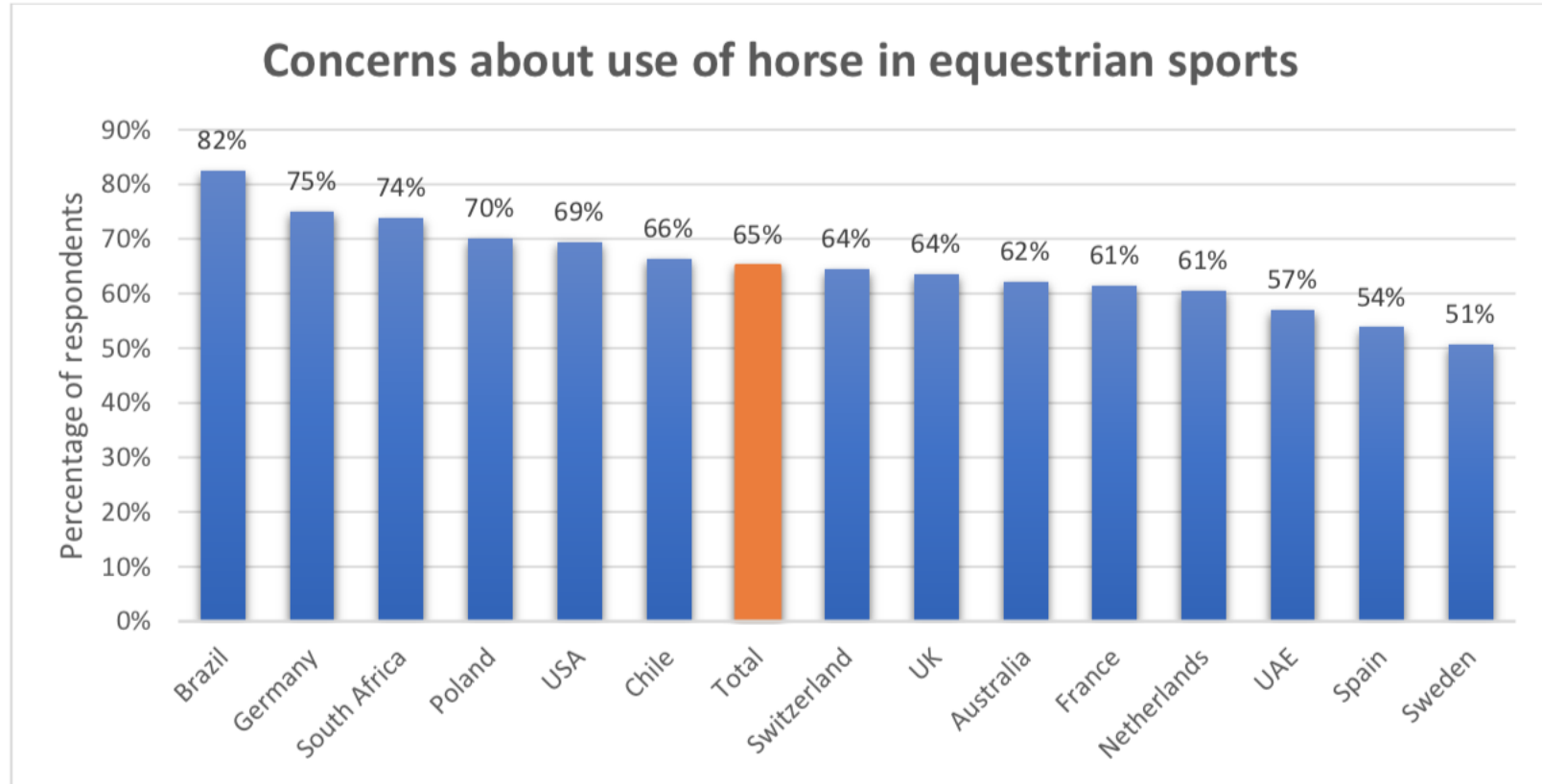
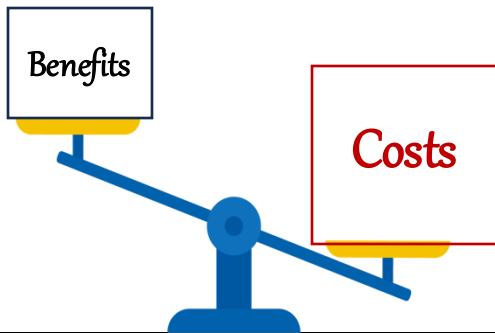


Figure 7. Percentage of respondents that have concerns about use of horses in equestrian sports, in total and per country. The question in the survey was: “Thinking about horse welfare, how concerned, if at all, are you about each of the following equestrian uses?”

Respondents were mostly concerned about the welfare and safety of the sport horse (see Figure 8). Furthermore, respondents were concerned about human safety and the impact horse sport has on the environment.





“If the dog is man’s best friend...

Then the horse could well be described as man’s best slave.”

Desmond Morris, *Horse Watching* (1988)



Reaction: Danish Animal Welfare Reports Helgstrand to the Police



screen shot documentary
(Photo © TV2)

Dyrenes Beskyttelse, the Danish animal welfare society like RSPCA, has reported Helgstrand Dressage, Andreas Helgstrand and the involved riders to the police for mistreatment of horses after seeing Operation X.

"At Dyrenes Beskyttelse we are appalled by the documentary. The hidden recordings show that the horses at Helgstrand Dressage have been systematically treated in a way that is deeply worrying and goes against basic principles of responsible training and animal welfare. We believe that it has character of animal cruelty," says Yvonne Johansen, head of animal protection at Dyrenes Beskyttelse and veterinarian specializing in horses."

[Full statement here.](#)



Another Olympic rider relentlessly whipped a horse.

Terms for automated texts/calls from PETA: <http://peta.vg/txt>.
Text STOP to end, HELP for more info.
Msg/data rates may apply. U.S. only.

Text OLYMPICS to 73822 to urge the International Olympic Committee to ban all equestrian events.

Dr Cesar Parra - A Former Olympic rider pt.2

Alexa Equestrian
172 subscribers

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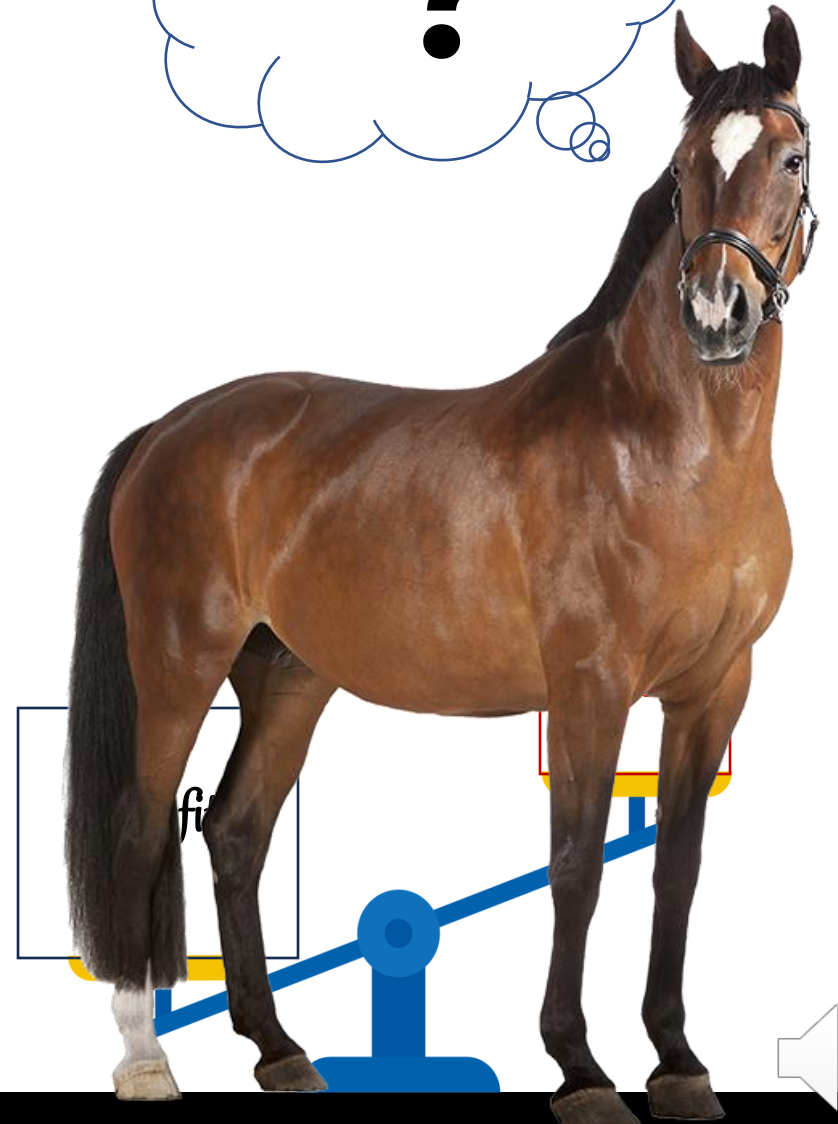
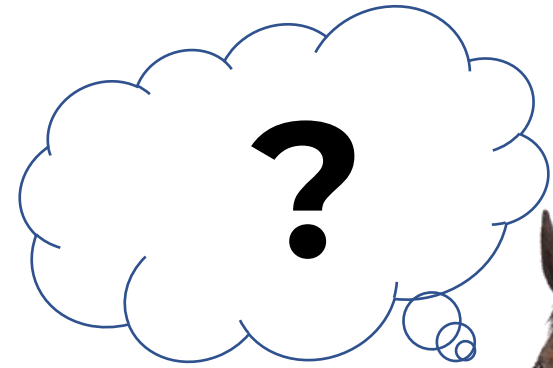
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“The highest standards of integrity”

“The welfare of the horse must be **paramount**”

Reaction: Danish Animal Welfare Reports Helgstrand to the Police

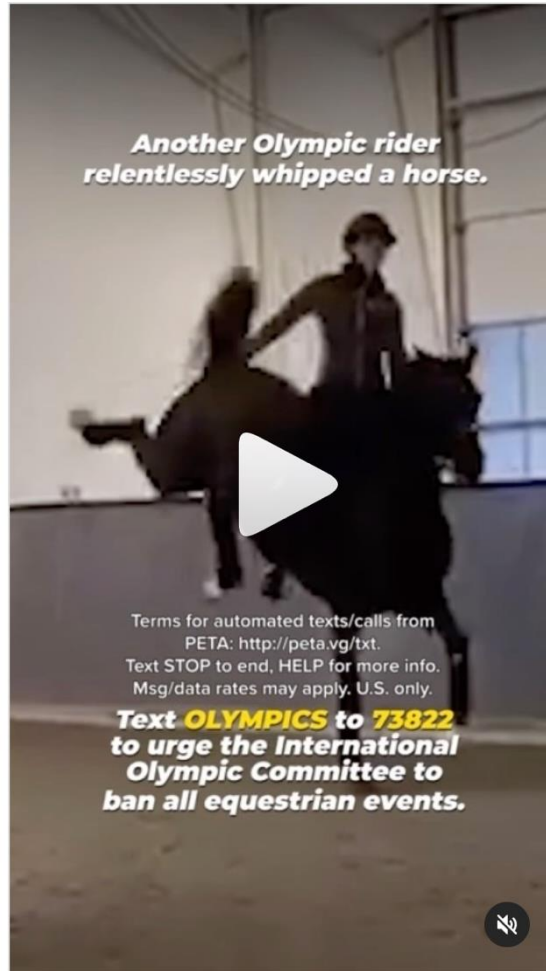


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screen shot documentary (Photo © TV2)

Full statement [here](#).



Dr Cesar Parra - A Former Olympic rider pt.2



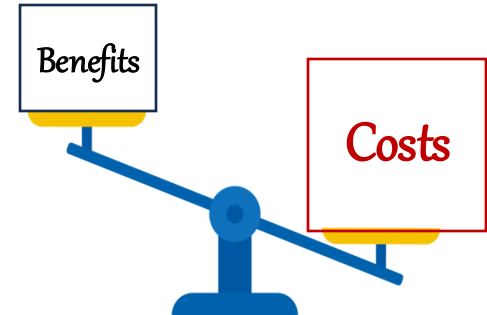
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Welfare:

More than
Physical health
and performance...

What matters to
animals in welfare
terms is their
subjective experience.

(Mellor et al. 2020)

*I am a
horse!*



WELFARE VISION:

A Good Life for Horses

To acknowledge and respect
the natural needs of horses
within the context of
international equestrian
sports



WELFARE VISION:

A Good Life for Horses

To acknowledge and respect the natural needs of horses within the context of international equestrian sports



FEI Legal Director Mikael Rentsch (left), FEI Veterinary Director Göran Åkerström (center) and FEI Secretary General Sabrina Ibáñez (right) walked participants through some highlights of the Equine Ethics and Wellbeing Commission's report. FEI/Richard Julliard Photo

FEI Secretary General Sabrina Ibáñez emphasized that maintaining social license and pursuing optimal equine welfare will be a never-ending task. The next step will be developing a detailed action plan to be presented at the FEI General Assembly in November in Muscat, Oman. She also urged members of the equestrian community to provide their feedback by May 15 to a dedicated email address: welfare@fei.org.





“The highest standards of integrity”

“The welfare of the horse must be **paramount**”

Journal of Veterinary Behavior (2012) 7, 295-304



ELSEVIER

RESEARCH

Divers
welfar

E. Kathal

^aWageningen
^bAgricultural
Den Haag, T

KEYWORD
welfare;
horses;
horse enth
attitude;
emotional i
information
knowledge;
daily pract

Animal Welfare
The international journal of animal welfare science

How equestrians conceptualise horse welfare: Does it facilitate or hinder change?

Published online by Cambridge University Press: 01 September 2023

Karen L Luke , Andrea Rawluk , Tina McAldie , Bradley P Smith and

Animal Welfare

Article

The Easiest Becomes the Rule: Beliefs, Knowledge and Attitudes of Equine Practitioners and Enthusiasts Regarding Horse Welfare

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Simple Summary: Good welfare is an emerging issue in the equestrian world, yet it is essential for those wishing to remain in the field, especially with society’s growing concerns about human activities involving animals. Recognizing this, our research aimed to understand the barriers equestrian practitioners face in implementing improvements for equine welfare. Findings indicate that while enthusiasts are aware of and acknowledge the need for good welfare practices, several factors hinder application: financial constraints, lack of physical space, insufficient skilled labor, time limitations, inadequate resources or materials, and a lack of technical knowledge. Most strikingly, despite acknowledging the need for improvement and professing love for their horses, participants did not recognize that the conditions under which they keep or use horses often fall short of their own standards. They attributed the inability to make changes not to themselves but to external circumstances beyond their control. These results pave the way for further research to determine whether equestrian activities are based on a respectful relationship with horses or if belonging to the equestrian world takes precedence, even at the expense of equine welfare.

animal welfare, equestrian, five Domains model, horse welfare, horse-human relationship, systems thinking

“Most strikingly, despite acknowledging the need for improvement and professing love for their horses, participants did not recognize that the conditions under which they keep or use horses often fall short of their own standards.”

Mauricio et al. (2024)





Why is equipment the #1 priority for welfare reform?



Actions – By Focus Areas

1. Training, Riding, Tack & Equipment	6 Actions
2. Recognizing physical and emotional stress	6 Actions
3. Accountability, enforcement and knowledge	5 Actions
4. The other 23 hours	2 Actions
5. Competitive drive/the horse as a number/object	2 Actions
6. Not fit to compete/masking health problems	2 Actions
Other Areas	11 Actions



Double Bridles

EQUINE ETHICS AND WELLBEING COMMISSION

Recommendation 1

Tack and Equipment – Double Bridles

Double Bridles should **not** be mandatory and should be made optional in FEI Grand Prix Dressage. Currently the use of double bridles is mandated by FEI regulations for dressage when horse and rider achieve a specific level of competition (FEI, 2022). The Commission recommends that double bridles should not be mandatory at any level of dressage, and the regulations changed so that use is optional for riders competing at Grand Prix level.

1. Supporting Information

- Although bits can be extremely effective and especially when used with great care, bits and especially more severe bits are a risk in that they can cause extensive damage to the tongue, bar and hard palate of a horse's mouth (Cook 1999, Mellor 2021)
- It is already the case that double bridles are optional for riders competing under a number of National Federation regulations at Grand Prix level
- Use of more severe bits designed with stronger deceleration pressures used in conjunction with accelerator devices such as spurs are a welfare risk (Hill et al., 2015; Condon et al., 2022)
 - Increased chance for misuse through overshadowing of "go" and "stop" responses (Condon et al., 2022)
 - Increased conflict behaviours (Condon et al., 2022)
 - The use of a double biting system for the horse has the potential to increase the effectiveness of the cues/aids (Cross et al., 2017)
 - Repeated mouth opening (used as an indicator of discomfort) has been observed in more than 50% of horses competing in Grand Prix level dressage
 - Double bridle noseband designs have been linked to additional welfare concerns as they can be overtightened (McGreevy et al., 2012)
 - Double biting increases the risk of a horse experiencing pain/fear and conflict. Additionally, the use of levers that amplify rein tension, with the shank of the bit, increases the potential for harm and risk to welfare (Condon et al., 2020).
 - Extreme overbending (Rolkur) is associated with use of Double Bridle
 - A port on a curb bit has been shown to influence both the location and the severity of the lesions. The use of curb bits with a port was found to be a decisive risk factor for lesions on the bars of the mandible, most of which were regarded as severe. The results also raised questions about the head and neck carriage demanded for the competition horses.
 - With two bits in the horse's mouth – the bits are likely to be "on top of each other". The bits come into constant contact with the various parts of the mouth and there isn't enough space in the mouth for horse to gain relief from pressure. A blue tongue" may result when the horse is unable to open its mouth to relieve the pressure (Nordic College of Equine Dentists).

2. Research Publications

1. Björnsdóttir S, Frey R, Kristjánsson T, Lundström T. Bit-related lesions in Icelandic competition horses. *Acta Vet Scand.* 2014 Aug 13;56(1):40. doi: 10.1186/s13028-014-0040-8. PMID: 25116656; PMCID: PMC4236600.

- 12 welfare-related risks
- 18 scientific references

Spurs

Equine Ethics and Wellbeing Commission

Recommendation 2 –

Tack and Equipment - Spurs

Spurs should not be mandatory for any equestrian discipline

1. Supporting Information

- Intended purpose is to enable more precise stimuli (leg aids) to be applied, leading to further refinement of basic aids (Lemon et al., 2020) but no evidence of that being the case
- Dummy spurs are allowed where spurs are mandatory, –so there appears to be no rationale for wearing spurs to be compulsory
- Use of spurs has led to welfare concerns by public, and elimination of professional riders at high profile events due to blood rules, impacting on industry SLO (Lemon et al., 2020)
- Increased prevalence of ridden behavioural problems reported with use of artificial aids (Hockenhull & Creighton, 2012)
- Physiological impacts correlated to length and type of spur (Uldahl & Clavé)
 - Shanks >1cm
 - Roller ball / hammer style knobs
- Incorrect use of spur correlated to level of competition
 - Lower levels (suggesting less experienced riders) more likely to result in rub marks, loss of hair or blood
- Incorrect use of spur not correlated to level of competition (Condon et al., 2019)
 - Prevalence of lesions on the lower limb in the particular sporting area
- Use of spurs has been shown to increase the use of stronger bits (Hill et al., 2015; Condon et al., 2022)
- The largest welfare concern is the use of spurs as an indicator of discomfort or pain during grand prix dressage (Condon et al., 2022)
- The use of spurs is currently inconsistent as to whether or not spurs are considered prohibited entirely

2. Research Publications

1. Condon, V. M., McGreevy, P. D., McLean, A. N., Williams, J. M., & Randle, H. (2022). Associations between commonly used apparatus and conflict behaviors reported in the ridden horse in Australia. *Journal of Veterinary Behavior*, 49, 1-14.
2. Dyson S, Pollard D. Application of the Ridden Horse Pain Ethogram to Elite Dressage Horses Competing in World Cup Grand Prix Competitions. *Animals (Basel)*. 2021 Apr 21;11(5):1187. https://inside.fei.org/sites/default/files/FEI_Dressage_Rules_2022_Clean_Version_V2.pdf.
3. Federation Equestre Internationale. 2022. Dressage Rules. 25th Edition. Switzerland. https://inside.fei.org/sites/default/files/FEI_Dressage_Rules_2022_Clean_Version_V2.pdf.
4. Federation Equestre Internationale. 2022. Eventing Rules. 25th Edition. Switzerland. [side.fei.org/sites/default/files/2022%20Eventing%20Rules_clean%20version.pdf](https://inside.fei.org/sites/default/files/2022%20Eventing%20Rules_clean%20version.pdf).
5. Federation Equestre Internationale. 2022. Jumping Rules. 27th Edition. Switzerland. https://inside.fei.org/sites/default/files/Jumping_Rules_2022_final_clean.pdf. 28. Federation Equestre Internationale. 2022. Driving Rules. 12th Edition. Switzerland. https://inside.fei.org/sites/default/files/FEI%2020Driving%20Rules%202022_Clean_v6.pdf.
6. Hill, E., McGreevy, P. D., Caspar, G., White, P., & McLean, A. N. (2015). Apparatus use in popular equestrian disciplines in Australia. *Journal of Veterinary Behavior*, 10(2), 147-152.

- 10 welfare-related risks
- 9 scientific references

Nosebands

Equine Ethics and Wellbeing Commission

Recommendation 3

Tack and Equipment - Nosebands

Develop and implement an evidence-based approach to measuring noseband tightness to identify and eliminate the use of overtight nosebands including the following:

1. Agree where noseband pressure is to be measured (the frontal nasal plane under the noseband where pressure is known to be greatest) and a consistent approach to what is acceptable regarding noseband tightness based on scientific evidence related to equine welfare needs (note this is suggested as equivalent to no less than 2 fingers),
2. Use an accepted evidence-based method of measurement regarding noseband tightness (there is a "taper gauge" already in use but a FEI preferred technological solution is being tested),
3. Educate stewards and riders/grooms so that they are clear about how and where to measure

NEW TIGHTNESS CHECK

Update on FEI Measuring Device for the control of noseband tightness at FEI Events

Following a successful testing phase, the design of the FEI Measuring Device has now been finalised after more than 600 tests were conducted at FEI Events across the disciplines of Jumping, Dressage, Eventing, Endurance and Driving.

The tests were well accepted by the participating Horses, Athletes, Grooms and Officials.

The tightness of nosebands at FEI Events across all FEI Disciplines, will be assessed using the following FEI Measuring Device designed by the FEI in collaboration with external experts.



- 19 welfare-related risks
- 50 scientific references



Dreamstime image



Image by Crispin Parelius Johannessen



Dreamstime image



Dreamstime image



Image by Crispin Parelius Johannessen



Dreamstime image



Dreamstime image



Dreamstime image





Myler Gag Lynn McKenzie 3-Ring
Combination Bit with Tie Down and
Sweet Iron Low Port MB 04, Level 2,
Size 5"

PARELLI MYLER
CRADLE C2

PRODUCT CARE



MAX 90 KG

Bombers prides itself on striving to ensure the highest level of manufacturing and craftsmanship. It is for that reason we have added a maximum weight rating of 90kgs on certain bit models, namely the barrel, Bomber Blue and cable mouthpieces.



MATERIAL CAN BE CHEWED

CHEWABLE - NO GUARANTEE

Some mouthpieces are not suitable for horses that chew – no guarantee is offered on wear and tear of these materials:

- Cable
- Leather
- Flexible Tube
- Bomber Blue
- Moulded



MOVING PARTS WEAR

Mouthpieces that have joints will wear over time. Check your Bombers Bit before use, send us a image if you would like it to be assessed. Brass is a soft metal and will wear quicker over time.



OXIDISATION

Please note due to oxidisation the blue sweet iron will fade with use.



ABOUT MYLER BITS®

YOUR HORSE'S MYLER LEVEL

The Myler Level of any horse is based on his disposition and experience. It's a graduated system, meaning that as he learns, he earns more tongue relief. As you go up the

Myler Levels, the correlating mouthpiece designs offer more tongue relief and apply less tongue pressure. When the horse resists the bit, go softer not harsher.

LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 2-3	LEVEL 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young or green, just beginning training, with a challenging disposition • Riding in a discipline that restricts bits to a single-jointed mouthpiece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young or green, just beginning training, with a steady disposition • Older, just beginning training, training for a new discipline, or retraining after a long lapse • Riding in a Level 1 mouthpiece and showing resistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic training with a good disposition and self-control, can handle more tongue relief • Advanced training but a challenging disposition — anxious, aggressive, or fearful • Riding in a Level 2 mouthpiece and showing resistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance horse with advanced training and a solid disposition • Experienced trail horse with a solid/trustworthy disposition • Riding in a Level 2-3 curb bit and showing resistance

SELECTING A MYLER MOUTHPIECE

Myler mouthpiece designs correspond to the Myler Level of a horse's behavior and experience. The mouthpiece Levels start at Level 1, which apply maximum tongue pressure, and go up to Level 3, which apply minimum tongue pressure and offer the most tongue relief. Most

horses can avoid Level 1 altogether; it's quite possible that your horse can enter the Myler System at Level 2, 2-3, or even 3. The overview of mouthpiece levels below explains how the design and function changes from level to level.

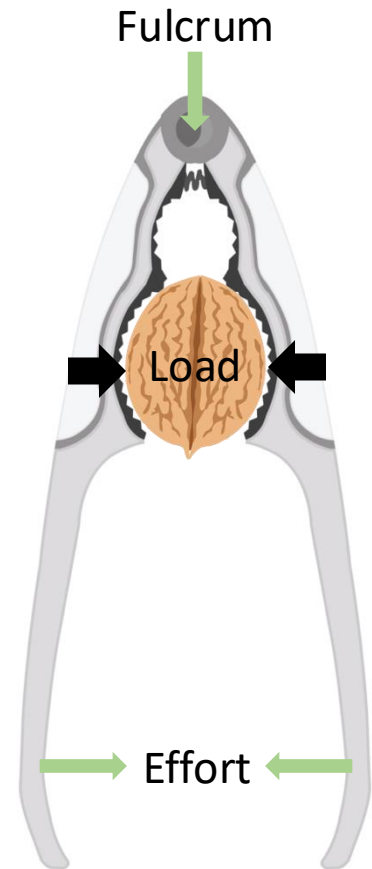
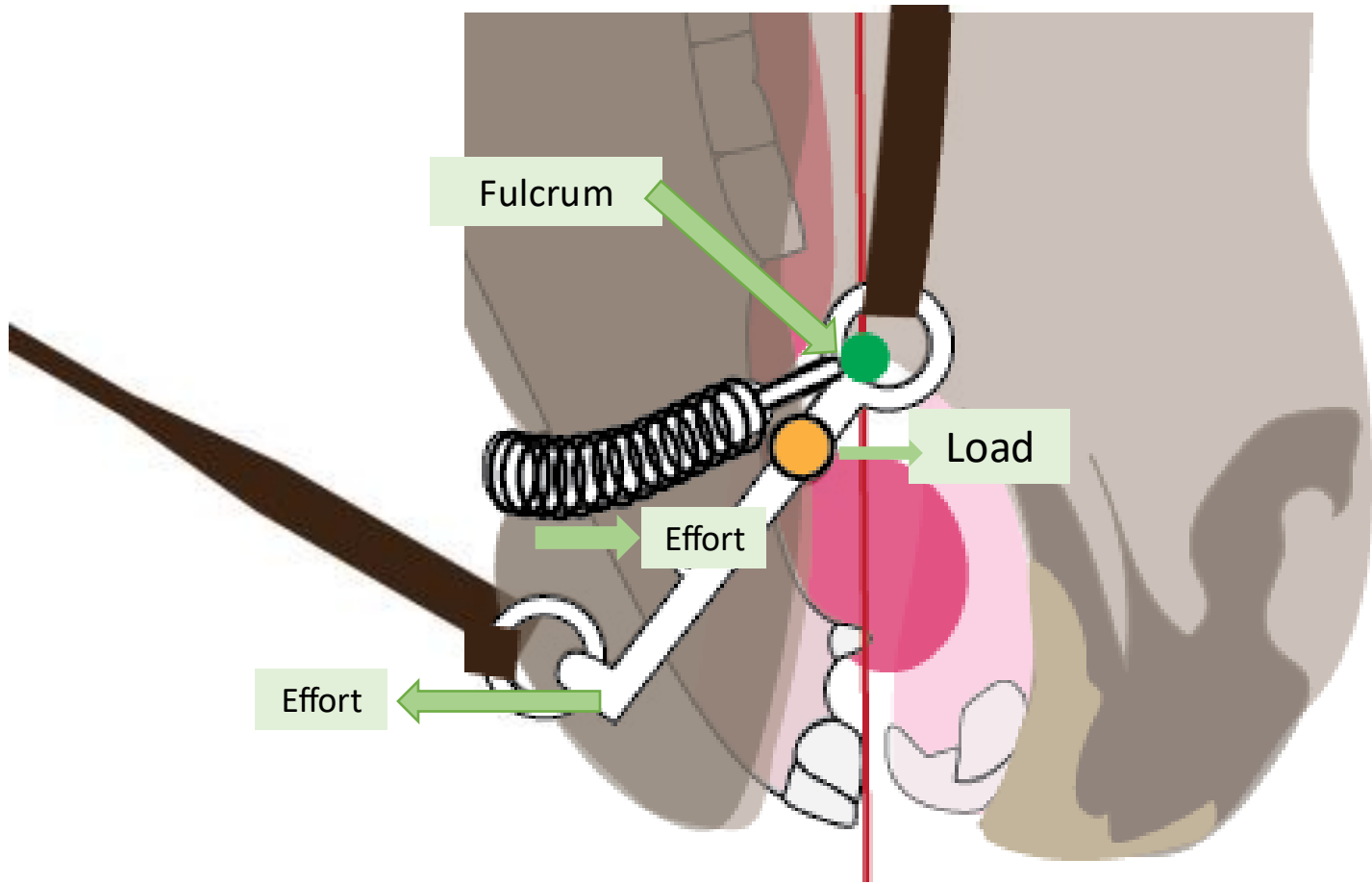
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 2-3	LEVEL 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotates on to the tongue to apply tongue pressure • Collapses to form a "U" instead of a "V", protecting lips and bars from being pinched • Curves to allow more room for the tongue, protects the lips and bars from being pinched • Independent side movement on most mouthpieces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers tongue relief with either a small port or flexible mouthpiece • Rotates on to the tongue to apply some tongue pressure • Collapses to form a "U" instead of a "V", protecting lips and bars from being pinched • Curves to allow more room for the tongue, protects the lips and bars from being pinched • Independent side movement on most mouthpieces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ported, offering more tongue relief than Level 1 or 2 • Correctional mouthpieces that apply some tongue pressure or curb mouthpieces that apply little tongue pressure • Uses more bar, poll, chin pressure than Level 1 or 2 • Curves to allow more room for the tongue • Options with and without independent side movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curb bits with wider ports for maximum tongue relief, little to no tongue pressure • Uses primarily bar, poll, and curb pressure • Curves to allow more room for the tongue • Options with and without independent side movement

You must be an Authorized Myler Bits dealer to purchase Myler Bits. Please contact Customer Service or your Service Representative for full details.

Myler Bits

3

Cavalier Equestrian 2023-2024



The Swede's horse had a blue tongue: "Unacceptable"

On an image from the Olympic Games dressage in Versailles, it can be seen how Swedish rider Patrik Kittel's horse Touchdown had a blue tongue, something that **Expressen** was the first to report. Unacceptable, says Göran Åkerström, chief veterinarian at the International Equestrian Federation.

» Updated: 28 September 2024, 08:15
» Published: 05 August 2024



- Protect entry to the Olympics
- Contradicted survey results (blame *"trolls"*, *"activists"*, and *"people who have no real understanding"*)
- Distanced themselves from other disciplines
- Contradicted themselves often (*"there are big problems"* ... *'actual abuse is very, very small', ...*)
- Sole arbiters of what is and is not abuse (*"things are being portrayed as abuse or welfare issues that are not [a welfare problem]"*)
- Want the public to believe that they are *"working on it"*

Three Pillars of the Social Licence

Legitimacy: Playing by the rules - Integrity - (includes social norms).

Credibility: (And accountability) Be transparent, fulfill any commitments made.

Trust: Positive feelings associated with predictability



The pillars are built and maintained over time...

But they can be destroyed quickly!



“The highest standards of integrity”

“The welfare of the horse must be **paramount**”

Nyheder Sport Vejr TV

Paris 2024 Sendepan Danskere i aktion Medaljer Seneste Danske atleter TV 2's dækning

Kontroversiel video kostede dansk rytter OL-plads i sidste øjeblik

Carina Cassøe Krüth var udtaget som reserve på det danske OL-dressurhold, men er nu i stedet indberettet til disciplinærudvalget.

Carina Cassøe Krüth på hesten Heilines Danciera under individuelfinalen i dressur ved OL i Tokyo onsdag 28. juli 2021. Foto: Liselotte Sabroe / Ritzau Scanpix





“The highest standards of integrity”

“The welfare of the horse must be **paramount**”

Breach of trust

Appropriate action taken ✓

Loss of credibility when promises are not fulfilled

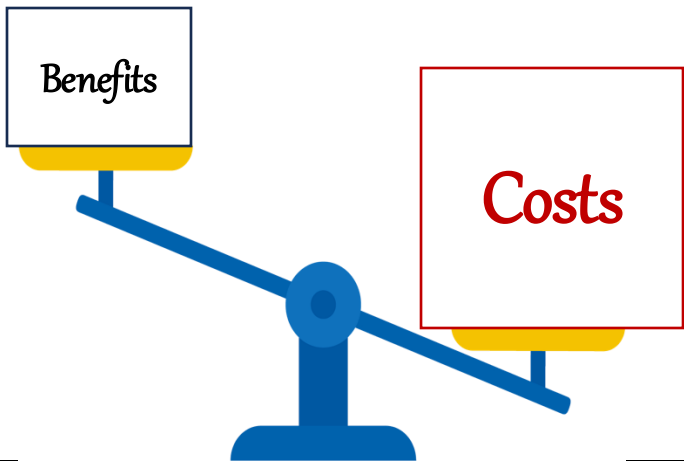
Legitimacy questioned
(Government intervention)

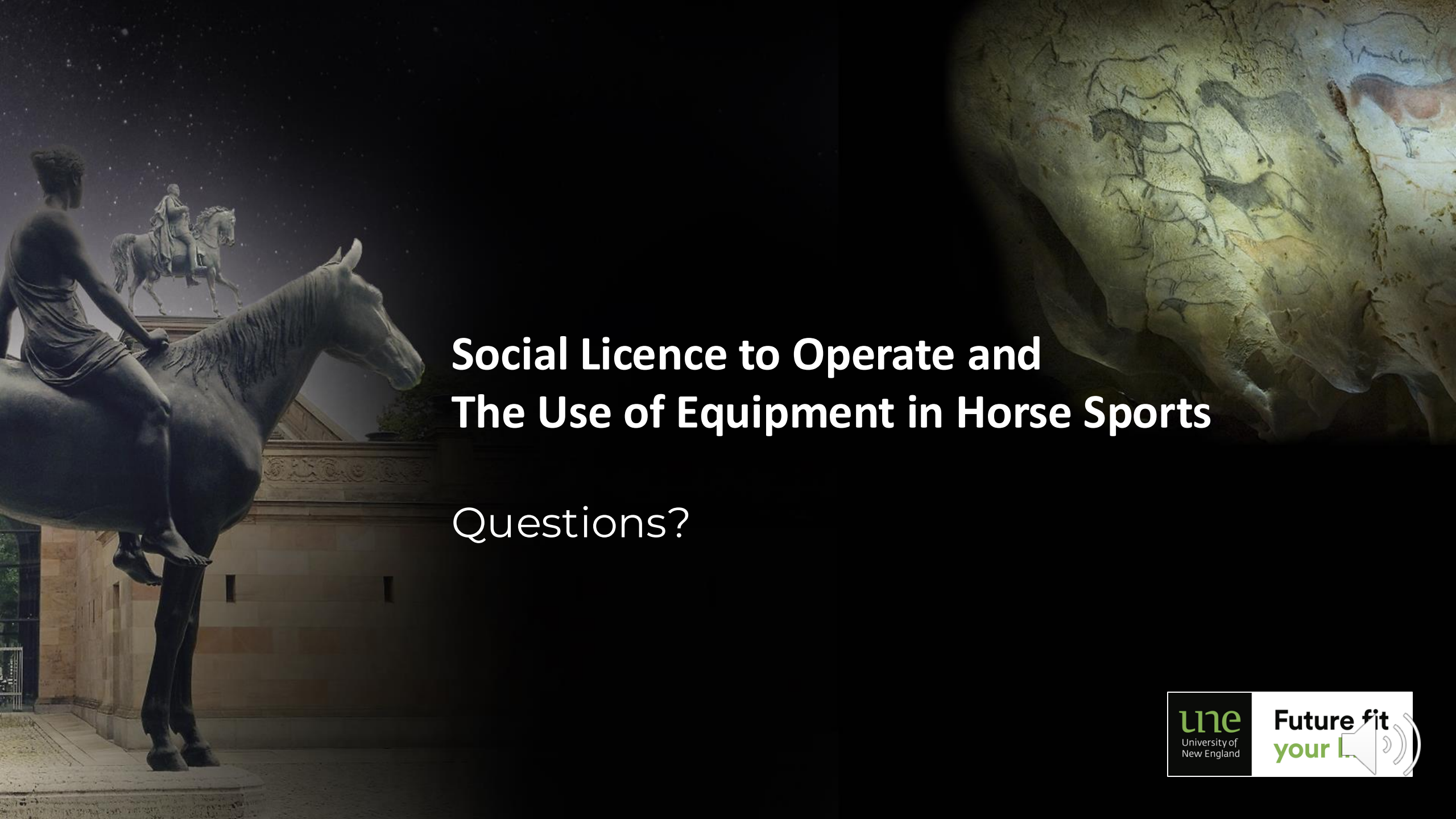


Decline in participation?

Economic Losses?

(e.g., loss of sponsors, tax benefits, government grants, (c.))





Social Licence to Operate and The Use of Equipment in Horse Sports

Questions?