

July 2025

Anti-Doping Rules and vaccinations in Horse Sports

In the world of horse sports, from racing to eventing to show jumping, the integrity of competition and the welfare of the horse are paramount; this includes horses competing at the lowest levels.

Doping refers to the administration of prohibited substances to horses in order to artificially enhance their performance or to mask pain, injury, or disease. These substances can include everything from anabolic steroids and stimulants to anti-inflammatories and tranquilizers. Even therapeutic medications or supplements if present, at the time of competition, can lead to a doping violation.

The FEI publishes a list of prohibited and controlled substances with detection times online. <https://inside.fei.org/content/2025->

Categories of Prohibited Substances

1. Banned Substances

These are substances that should never be present in a horse's system during competition under any circumstances. They include potent stimulants, narcotics, and certain hormones. The detection of a banned substance usually results in automatic disqualification and sanctions, regardless of intent.

2. Controlled Medication Substances

Controlled medications are therapeutic substances that may be used legitimately outside of competition to treat injuries or illnesses. However, they must not be present during competition, or they must be below an allowable threshold, such as anti-inflammatories like phenylbutazone and sedatives. The detection of a controlled substance can also result in automatic disqualification and sanctions, regardless of intent.

Horses are subject to both in-competition and out-of-competition testing. Samples are typically collected via blood, urine, or even hair analysis!

Advances in testing sensitivity now allow laboratories to detect minuscule traces of substances, making it more important than ever for handlers to practice strict medication control.

Positives have occurred due to errors such as people urinating in stables who are taking medications such as anti-histamines.

Even at Olympic level horses have been disqualified due to positives from supplements.

There are situations where horses may require urgent medical treatment close to competition. In these cases, regulatory bodies often allow for Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUEs) or Medication Authorization Forms, provided certain conditions are met:

- The treatment must be necessary for the horse's welfare.
- Prior approval (or prompt post-treatment notification) may be required.
- A veterinary report must document the diagnosis and treatment protocol.
- It is essential to be familiar with your sport's rules regarding exemptions, as failing to follow protocol can still result in a doping violation.

To minimize the risk of a doping violation, consider the following best practices:

- Ask your vet! And let them know at any visits when you are next competing.
- Have separate feed buckets that are used for any medications.
- Know the rules: Familiarize yourself with the prohibited substance lists and updates each year.
- Maintain detailed medical records: Log every treatment administered, including dates, dosages, and routes. (more important for FEI riders)
- Use licensed veterinary products: Avoid compounded or unregulated medications whenever possible.
- Be cautious with supplements: Use only tested and approved products and avoid last-minute changes to a horse's regimen.
- Consult withdrawal guidelines: When treating a competition horse, always check recommended withdrawal times.
- Educate your team: Grooms, assistants, and riders should all understand basic clean sport principles.
- Test if unsure: Pre-competition voluntary testing can provide an extra safeguard in high-stakes events.

Flu vaccination timing

Primary Vaccination Course:

- First vaccination (V1)
- Second vaccination (V2) — given **21 to 60 days** after the first
- Third vaccination (V3) — given **5 months** after the second (required under FEI rules)

Booster Vaccinations:

- Boosters must be given **within a year**
- Within 6 months and 21 days of the competition for FEI events
- Within 6 months and 21 days of British Eventing competition
- Every 6 months for racehorses

A horse **cannot compete** within **7 days** of receiving a flu vaccination.

We strongly advise that you check your vaccination requirements for your discipline and the event rules, for example some championships will require vaccinations within 6 months.

Although not mandatory by competition bodies, if you are competing at any level or your horse is interacting with other groups of horses, eg at fun rides, hunting or camps, it may be worth considering vaccinating your horse for both Equine Herpes Virus and Strangles.

Practice Events

10th September Pre- purchase examination @ Curland Equestrian

TA3 5SD

24th September Behaviour@ Drakes Farm, Ilminster. TA19 9EY

RSVP. Please bring a chair

Don't forget to follow us on our Facebook, Instagram and Youtube pages!