

Rule Change Type	Effective Date	Draft Received	Board Action
Standard	12/1/2025	8/29/2024	

Rule Change Intent

Proposing to change the rule that safety stirrups must have closed branches. A small opening on a safety stirrup's branch is part of many models' safety features. Safety is of paramount importance in the equestrian sport and design will support this. Safety stirrups are often designed with a flexible side or a side that can open up to prevent a foot from getting stuck during a fall. In no way does the small opening interfere with, or impact riding performance in one way or another. Using safety equipment should not eliminate you from competition. FEI changed its rule on this matter in 2019, and most European countries have followed suit, allowing the use of stirrups with a small opening in the branch in competition. I think the USDF should allow this going forward as well to keep up with safety standards around the globe.

We have come a long way in the equestrian sport when it comes to safety, so why not allow safer options inside the competition ring as well? Safety is of paramount importance and high priority in Equestrian Sport nowadays; design will support this and I do not think using safety equipment should possibly eliminate you from competition.

Today, we have stirrups with safety features designed for both riders and horses and, unfortunately, the design of these means that most have an opening on their outside branch for the functionality of the safety component. As a rider myself and as a mother, I do not want myself or my children riding with non-safety stirrups. One of the most dangerous accidents in this sport happens when somebody gets caught and dragged/kicked. We have come a long way in the equestrian sport when it comes to safety, so why not allow it for competition as well? Safety is of paramount importance and high priority in Equestrian Sport nowadays; design will support this and I do not think using safety equipment should possibly eliminate you from competition. FEI changed their rules on this in Moscow 2019, and a lot of other countries have followed suit. Below is an excerpt from the FEI ruling:

“Proposal from HQ for the following reason:

Safety stirrups often have a flexible branch that is open at the top so is not closed. This rule was not intended to exclude those from use in FEI Dressage competitions.

This quote below is the final wording change for The FEI rule change that then took place in Moscow 2019:

“Stirrups and Safety Stirrups must have closed branches, and no attachments. The foot must not be fully or partially enclosed and must in no way be attached to the stirrups (for example with magnets). Safety stirrups may have an opening on the outside branch.”

I ride in safety stirrups every day and feel safe and supported. As competition season is now starting, I will have to change my stirrups for the sake of my 6 minutes in the ring, and I do not understand why. I want to be able to use the equipment I feel is the safest and best choice for myself to avoid a serious accident when I show. I would love for there to be a review of this rule in the wake of the new exciting development we are seeing in safety equipment in the horse world.

Proponent Details

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Contact Information

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Linked Rules

Comments

Committee Actions

DR121 Saddlery and Equipment

The provisions of DR121 apply to both competing and non-competing dressage horses from the time horses are admitted to the grounds, which are designated for the Dressage Competition. The responsibility for the correct attire and equipment rests with the competitor. All saddlery and equipment must be attached, worn, and used in a conventional manner.

1. Saddle. An English type saddle, with or without a tree, with flaps, stirrups and a girth is compulsory for all tests and classes other than FEI tests. For FEI tests it is compulsory to use a well-fitting dressage saddle that is close to the horse with long, near-vertical flaps and stirrups (except for FEI Para Dressage tests) and a girth. The use of a saddle with a horn, swell, gallerie, or open gullet, or the use of an original or modified Australian, Baroque, Endurance, McClellan, Spanish, Stock, or Western saddle is prohibited. See DR308.4 for Para Dressage requirements.

a. Stirrups. English-style stirrups without attachments or safety stirrups shall be used. Safety stirrups must have ~~closed~~ branches of metal or other breakaway material or mechanism. The foot must not be fully or partially enclosed and must in no way be attached to the stirrups (for example with magnets); however, a safety stirrup may have a magnetic mechanism that closes the breakaway branch **and may not be fully closed**. The stirrup leathers must hang freely from their anchor point without additional attachments to the saddle or girth.