



**UNITED STATES EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION  
GR838 - UNETHICAL TREATMENT OF THE HORSE  
IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE**

The Unethical Treatment of a Horse rule (formerly titled Cruelty to and Abuse of a Horse) was amended to ensure the safety and well-being of horses on and off competition grounds. As part of the rewrite of this rule, the United States Equestrian Federation (“Federation”) focused on creating a rule that meets the needs of equestrian sport and provides clarity for its members and community.

This document is intended to serve as a guide to the implementation of the Federation’s newly revised [General Rule 838, Unethical Treatment of the Horse](#), and is not intended to supersede the rule.

**Scope and Jurisdiction of the Rule**

Currently, GR838 applies to abuse and neglect of a horse that occurs on competition grounds.

- Beginning December 1, 2024, GR838 applies anywhere, regardless of whether the Unethical Treatment occurs on or off the grounds of a Federation competition, including home facilities.
- The Federation does not have the authority to make site visits to private property.

**Definition of Unethical Treatment of a Horse**

The Unethical Treatment of the Horse involves any action or inaction that may compromise the horse’s health, safety, or wellbeing, including those that may cause a horse pain, a state of obvious distress, or unnecessary discomfort. It may include any action(s) or inaction(s) that causes or is likely to cause a horse pain, a state of obvious distress, or unnecessary discomfort.

**Unethical Treatment of the Horse**

Behaviors that may constitute Unethical Treatment of a horse may include, but are not limited to:

- Excessive use or misuse of a whip, spur, or bit, including use for punishment, rather than as a training aid used properly to provide encouragement;
- Misuse of any equipment or device including tack;
- Creating of hyper or hypo-sensitization of any physical part of a horse to enhance performance;
- Any practice or use of devices or objects to enhance a horse’s performance base on fear or intimidation rather than educating or entertaining the horse by engaging its natural curiosity;
- Restricting a horse’s access to food or water (except under the guidance of a licensed treating veterinarian for health reasons);
- Withholding medical treatment for a prolonged period;
- Training, riding, or competing a horse with raw, bleeding, or irritated skin or welts consistent with excessive, persistent, or inappropriate use of equipment, including spurs; and
- Continued riding, driving, or lunging an obviously exhausted, lame, or injured horse.

**Definitions**

- **Participant**
  - Any person who is or has been a USEF member;
  - Any person who has participated in a Federation Licensed or Endorsed competition as a rider, vaulter, driver, handler, owner, lessee, trainer, coach, groom, competition veterinarian or support personnel for any of these identified roles; or
  - Any person who is present on the grounds of a Federation Licensed or Endorsed competition.
- **Covered Horses**
  - Any horse that is or has been recorded with Federation;
  - Any horse that has participated or is entered to participate in a Federation Licensed or Endorsed Competition; or
  - Any horse that is on the grounds of a Federation Licensed or Endorsed Competition and in the care, custody, and control of a Participant.

### **Reporting Unethical Treatment of a Horse**

- At Federation Licensed competitions - Unethical Treatment of a horse at a Federation competition must immediately be reported to a licensed official at the competition.
- Outside of Federation Licensed competitions - Unethical Treatment of a horse outside of a competition should be reported to the local authorities and the Federation as soon as possible.
- Reports can be made by submitting a [Horse Abuse & Unethical Treatment Report Form](#), or calling [\(859\) 225-6954](#). Reports can be made anonymously by texting 2USEF (28733).

### **Filing a Report of Unethical Treatment of a Horse**

The Federation does not have governmental authority in its investigation and pursuit of rule violations. Therefore, we rely on the willingness of our licensed officials and witnesses to file reports with the Federation and to participate in the investigation and disciplinary process. When reporting an alleged violation of the Unethical Treatment of the Horse rule, the following information will be useful in the Federation's investigation:

- Unaltered photographs;
- Unaltered videos;
- Names and contact information of any individuals involved; and
- Names and relevant identification information for the horse(s) involved.

Reporting parties and participants in the process are protected from retaliation. Any person who knowingly files a false report will be subject to penalty.

### **Enforcement at Competitions**

Enforcement of this rule will rely on substantiated, fact-based, evidentiary reports received during the Federation's investigation.

- Federation Licensed Officials, Competition Management, and competition veterinarians at Federation Licensed or Endorsed competitions may issue an official written warning, elimination, or disqualification against any Participant they deem to have unethically treated a horse on competition grounds or directly related to a Federation Licensed or Endorsed competition and those found to have instructed another to Unethically Treat a horse.
- Additionally, anyone found to have Unethically Treated a horse on competition grounds may be removed from the grounds.
- A Participant may be subject to further penalty by the Federation.

### **Review Process**

Upon receipt of reported Unethical Treatment of a Horse, the Federation will undertake a review of the information received in the report and may contact individuals related to the reported Unethical Treatment, including eyewitnesses, reporting parties, Federation Licensed Officials, and others with information related to the reported Unethical Treatment. Upon conclusion of the review period, should the information support a possible violation of the Rule, the Federation may issue a Notice of Allegation to the person(s) involved in the Unethical Treatment of the Horse. At this point in time, those individuals will be provided an opportunity to respond to allegations. Prior to advancing to a hearing before the Federation's Hearing Committee, the Federation may offer the person(s) involved in the Unethical Treatment of the Horse an administrative penalty, including any of the penalties listed in the section below. If the administrative penalty is not offered or not accepted, the Federation may issue a Disciplinary Action Complaint and present its findings before a Hearing Panel for resolution. More information on the Regulatory Process can be found on the [Federation's website](#).

### **Penalties**

If found to have violated the Rule, the individual(s) will be subject to such penalty in accordance with the published Penalty Guidelines and Federation rules, which may be a censure, fine, suspension, expulsion, or permanent ineligibility.