



PENALTY GUIDELINES FOR CRUELTY, ABUSE, OR UNETHICAL TREATMENT OF A HORSE

Introduction

A common thread that binds all of the Federation's breeds and disciplines is a dedication to the health, safety, and well-being of the horse. US Equestrian is committed to ensuring the ethical treatment of our horses and providing a safe and fair competition environment to all of our members and their equine partners. To do this, US Equestrian has created rules to govern the actions of our members and protect both horses and humans, allowing them to experience the joy of equestrian sport.

Cruelty, abuse, or unethical treatment of a horse is one of the most egregious violations under the Federation's Rules. Accordingly, the penalty for abuse or unethical treatment of the horse must reflect the severity of the violation and the potential impact on the future of the sport. There is an increasing opinion that equestrian sport (or any use of horse), especially for profit or entertainment, is unacceptable. This growing movement to recognize the rights of the horse is often predicated on animal welfare. This is where the concept of the Social License to Operate is relevant in our sport. Not only are the right ethical choices for the horse imperative, but we must also consider the changing attitudes of society, which are constantly shifting, and fueled by technology and social media. General awareness of horse welfare, both mental and physical remains in the spotlight, thus we are under a heightened level of scrutiny in how we address these situations. Any example of unethical treatment can result in a public outcry and loss of trust in the integrity of equestrian sports. Any instance of mistreatment poses a significant threat to the future of the sport. We must now more than ever hold ourselves to the highest standard when it comes to the treatment of our equine partners, holding each other accountable and imposing appropriate consequences when their welfare is called into question. We must all be a voice for the horse.

Penalty Guidelines ("Guidelines") assist the Hearing Committee with the types and ranges of penalties to impose in such cases. They also assist the Hearing Committee Panels ("Hearing Panels") with consistent application of penalties. The Federation regularly evaluates penalties imposed in cases to ensure the Guidelines remain appropriate for future matters brought to the Hearing Committee.

Penalty Range is a Guideline Only

The penalty types and ranges below are simply guidelines. These Guidelines are not binding on the Hearing Panels. Rather, the Guidelines are intended to provide a basis upon which discretion can be exercised consistently in like circumstances. Depending on the facts and circumstances of each case, a Hearing Panel may determine that no purpose is served by imposing a penalty within the range provided in these Guidelines. In some cases, a penalty below the stated range, or no penalty at all, may be warranted. Conversely, a Hearing Panel may determine that the facts and circumstances of a specific case may call for penalties above or otherwise outside of a stated range. Examples include, but are not limited to, prior rule violations, egregious misconduct, the need for increased deterrence, or certain policy considerations.

Hearing Panel Discretion

Hearing Panels must always exercise judgment and discretion and consider appropriate aggravating and mitigating factors in determining appropriate penalties in every case. In addition, regardless of whether the penalties are within the range stated in the Guidelines, Hearing Panels must identify the basis for the penalties imposed.

Categories of Violations

Category I violations include the misuse or excessive use of a whip, spur, or bit; or the misuse of any equipment or device, including tack.

Category II violations include the following:

- Creation of hyper or hypo-sensitization to enhance performance
- Enhancing performance based on fear or intimidation
- 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
- Continuing to ride, drive, or lunge an obviously exhausted, lame, or injured horse
- Excessive riding, lunging, or training
- Depriving a horse of water and/or feed
- Striking a horse with an object

Category III violations include the unintentional death or maiming of a horse.

Category IV violations include the intentional death or maiming of a horse.

The penalty for any unethical conduct not expressly included above will be determined based on substantial similarity with the existing categories.

The chart below sets forth the recommended penalties. A fine always accompanies a suspension, expulsion, and lifetime ban. When violations involve multiple horses, the Respondent should be penalized for each violation, and suspensions should run consecutively.

Category	First Offense	Second Offense	Third Offense
I	6+ months / \$6,000+	12+ months / \$12,000+	24+ months / \$24,000+
II	12+ months / \$12,000+	Expulsion / \$24,000+ May petition for reinstatement after 24+ months	Expulsion / \$60,000+ May petition for reinstatement after 60+ months
III	Expulsion / \$36,000+ May petition for reinstatement after 36+ months	Expulsion / \$60,000+ May petition for reinstatement after 60+ months	Lifetime Ban
IV	Lifetime Ban	N/A	N/A

Expulsion – When an expulsion is imposed, the Respondent may petition the Federation for reinstatement after a period of time determined by the Hearing Committee and subject to conditions imposed by the Hearing Committee.

Reciprocity– In cases of reciprocity of a finding from a civil or criminal court, administrative proceeding, arbitration, or other tribunal finding, the minimum penalty should at least mirror the penalty assessed by that other authority, with latitude given to impose more severe penalties.