

Annex 11: FEI Guidelines for Pre and Post Competitions Training Techniques

1. Background

The purpose of the warm-up period is to prepare the horse and rider both mentally and physically to enable their best possible performance in the competition arena. This should be done in as sympathetic way as possible with the welfare of the horse respected in all cases.

It is recognized that the competition environment presents special and sometimes unpredictable circumstances in contrast to a normal training situation. The Steward must be aware of the uniqueness of every competition and be able to react accordingly.

2. Permitted Training

The use of correctly executed stretching techniques both before and after training and competition is recognized as an important and long-established practice in almost every sport.

In equestrian sport it is used to maintain the suppleness and health of the equine athletes.

In most cases, the warm-up will consist of alternating periods of stretching and contracting the horse's muscles; periods of relaxation and periods of heightened physical effort. Stretching and contracting involves the lengthening and/or shortening of the horse's topline and can be done at the halt (statically) or in motion (dynamically).

Athletes should aim to warm up all the relevant muscle groups within the horse. A cool-down period after the performance is critical to the horse's well-being. This consists of a decrease of exercise intensity allowing the horse to relax mentally, to restore normal heart rate, respiration rate and fluid and electrolyte balance. Post-competition training of exercises following the performance is permitted but must be kept to a minimum. In any case a relaxation period after post-competitions training is mandatory.

3. Aggressive Riding

In addition to the FEI Dressage Stewarding manual, the following points must be considered in assessing aggressive riding for dressage:

- All head/neck postures must be achieved as sensitively as possible. A resisting hand must be followed by a release immediately at the moment the horse responds.
- All corrections should be done as tactfully as possible. Inappropriate or disproportionate corrections are not allowed
- Excessive use of any aid including spurs, whip and bit are forbidden.
- Excessive repetition of any specific exercise is not allowed
- The Steward must intervene and ask the competitor to immediately ride in a nonaggressive way in cases when the competitor's stress appears to have overcome their Judgement.

4. Variation of Exercises

Continuous variation of exercises and head/neck posture is essential. Aggressive riding will be stopped immediately. Variation constitutes a period of relaxation and lengthening or a movement which involves stretching the head and neck.

5. Maximum Duration Of Pre-Competition Warm-Up And Post-Competition Cooldown Periods

Only in exceptional circumstances and with the permission of the Chief-Steward, may a warmup session exceed one hour. The warm-up session must include a number of relaxation periods. Walking in hand or riding the horse at walk whether prior to or following the warm-up session is not considered to be part of the one hour period. There should be at least one hour break between any training and/or warm-up periods. Corrective riding including the cool-down following a competitor's performance may not exceed ten minutes.