

ESNZ Eventing

Guide for Cross Country Judges



Job Description:

At all National Short format events there is a Chief Cross Country Judge, plus one or two Assistant Cross Country Judges. These officials make up the Ground Jury for the event and they are in charge of the event, while it is in progress, and all final judgement decisions will be made by them. In the event that there is a judgement to be made in the dressage or jumping tests, the relevant judge from that test will join the Chief Cross Country Judge and his/her assistants to form the Ground Jury and make the decision. There is no appealing their decisions.

In National Long format competitions, the Ground Jury is made up of the two or three dressage judges from the FEI Eventing Judges' List, or ESNZ Eventing Cross Country Judges list who are qualified to judge the dressage as well according to the ESNZ Eventing rules. They will be in charge of the event including assessing and passing the cross country course, are tasked with the approval of horses at the Horse Inspections and all judging decisions that need to be made or to impose disciplinary sanctions.

Duties and Responsibilities:

- To inspect the cross country course at all competitions to make sure that the various courses are at the correct level in discussion with the Technical Delegate (TD) and Course Designer (CD).
- That the questions on the cross country being asked are fair and safe. Remember you are a fresh pair of eyes on the course so may have a slightly different perspective to that of the CD and TD who have been working on the course for some time.
- To be the final decision makers in any matters that require adjudication.
- To be in charge of the Cross Country start, once you have been given the all clear from the TDs.
- To be responsible for the Cross country fence judges, timekeepers and other personnel required.
- To conduct the fence judge briefing although the TD can also do this duty.
- To discuss with the TD any fences that may require extra attention for judging faults e.g. a camera on a skinny fence, more than one jump judge where there is a combination.
- To watch riders/horses on the cross country course. If a rider is deemed dangerous you have the duty to stop them. If a horse appears to be lame or otherwise compromised that would affect their welfare you have a duty to stop that competitor.

How this unfolds:

On being asked to be a Chief Cross Country Judge or Assistant please declare whether you have any conflicts of interest or any perceived conflicts of interest. NZ is a small country so conflicts of interest do arise with our small volunteer base. If Organising Committees know your conflict, then arrangements can be made if those conflicts appear to be coming into play. Some examples might be but not limited to: a partner or family member competing, owning or have some financial interest in a horse competing, another official is a partner or family member.

Find out who your TDs and CDs are and make arrangements, preferably before the start of the event, to look over the cross country course. It is probably impractical to walk every course however any combinations, water jumps, black flag alternatives and skinny jumps should be given special attention. Take note of any judging difficulties that might arise. Try to imagine all conceivable alternatives that a rider might take. Think about the time of day that you are starting or finishing and whether sunlight might be a problem. Think about where a crowd might gather and whether this could cause a problem. Should some areas be roped off if you think there could be a problem with spectators getting in the way of a competitor. Discuss all these points with your TD. Working as a team the OC, TD and CD, should try to cut off any foreseeable problems before they become an issue.

All going well you shouldn't have to do much more until the SIM (Serious Incident Management) meeting. You should make sure there are good processes in place and everyone is familiar and comfortable with their jobs in case of an incident. Make sure you know where you sit in this system.

Often you will be asked to do the fence judges' briefing. Try to be very clear in the instructions. It has to be long enough to cover all the relevant information but not so detailed that people stop listening. TDs can brief fence judges at their fences if there are things that pertain to their particular fence without going through it with every jump judge at the briefing. It is good to ask if there are volunteers jump judging for the first time, so that at the end you can give them a few more words of wisdom and assurances.

Remember the fence judges are your deputies and you want them knowledgeable enough to make good decisions. You would not want to have to decide against a fence judge unless you have a very good reason to do so.

At the start of the cross country the TD will radio you saying that the course is ready. If they haven't also told you that the vet and medics are in place be sure to ask this before giving the starter the go ahead to start.

Your job during the cross country is to monitor the riders. You need to be clear in your mind what is dangerous riding as opposed to not having a good ride over the fences. We can't expect all riders to be experts, however we don't want them riding consistently in a manner which could harm themselves, their horses, or the sport. If you have concerns about a rider, you can ask other officials to keep an eye on their progress around the course.

Once the event is over, you need to wait patiently at least 30 minutes after the final results are posted in case there are any queries to be sorted.

It is preferable that you stay out of any of the general queries that happen during the event and leave these up to the TD. When you are coming into the decision process it is better to have not been involved up until you have to view evidence and make a decision. That way you get a fresh uncompromised view of the situation.

All in all, it is not an intense or hard-working job, however it is a very important position as there needs to be someone (with the help of the assistant cross country judges) who can make final decisions on matters that require a judgement call.

When a rider has a query:

In the first instance a rider who has a query regarding their score should go the secretary and fill out a query form. This is then handed to the TD who will investigate the query and come back with an

answer. Usually, the TD will be able to sort the problem. However, if he can't or the rider is not happy with the answer, the rider is entitled to put in a protest on the payment of a fee (usually \$50) if it's a national event.

It is then a case for the Cross Country Judge and his/her assistances to hear all evidence from the rider, TD, witnesses, jump judges or others and come to a decision.

If you give a decision in favour of the rider they get their fee back, but if not, the OC gets to keep the fee.

The judging of skinny fences should be filmed by a fence judge as requested by the TD who will have positioned them in the correct place. This is the only film, deemed the "official film", that should be considered in a query regarding penalties at a skinny fence. When viewing the footage, it should only be done once at normal speed and once or twice in slow speed. If you are unable to make a decision, having viewed it two or three times, then it is obviously not at all clear and the benefit should go to the rider. A rider should be allowed to look at the official video if they want to in cases where there needs to be a decision on penalties.

Criteria for making decisions:

In all cases in our sport, you should hold the welfare of the horse to the highest degree for consideration. If the horse's welfare is compromised in anyway then some action should be taken so that the issue will not happen again.

In areas where it is not a case of welfare of the horse, then fair play must be the founding criteria for any decisions made. This is fairness to the rider as well as to other competitors in the competition. Our sport must be conducted within the rules laid out in the ESNZ Eventing rule book and any relevant General Regulations and FEI rule books. Not knowing the rules is not an excuse for the rider, however since our national events cover a vast range of experience and knowledge from the competitors, it would be wise to try to educate rather than punish every incident of rule contravention.

How to come to a decision:

Have all the evidence collected by the TD. Have an in-depth discussion with them to discuss what they have found out regarding the query. This may include also interviewing a jump judge or any other witnesses to the incident. You may wish to go to the particular area the incident occurred so you can see for yourself where it happened.

Give the competitor the opportunity to discuss the issue with you. Remember if they are young (16 years or under) they should be accompanied by a parent or an adult to give them support and confidence to air their view. Even if they are older, they have the right to have a support person with them, perhaps the rider's representative for that class. Be sure this is conveyed to them before you have a meeting with them.

Having heard all the evidence, give yourself a little time to reflect away from the riders, OC or TDs if you need to. Find the appropriate rule/s that will be relevant to the issue and be prepared to show and discuss clearly with the rider what the rule is and how it affects your decision. You need to make sure the rider is fully aware of why the decision is made, especially if it is going against them. You need to get them to understand even if they are not totally happy, but they need to feel that they have had a fair hearing to their protest or disciplinary sanction.

What knowledge does a Cross Country Judge need?

A good understanding of the rules. You don't necessarily have to know every rule but do need to be familiar with the layout of the rule book. Be sure to have it clear in your mind what sanctions/penalties are fair and appropriate for different cases of contravening rules, dangerous riding, abuse of horse or inappropriate conduct. The rule books that you should have with you and be familiar with are:

- ESNZ Eventing Rules
- ESNZ General Regulations and Vet Regulations
- FEI Rules for Eventing, Dressage, Jumping

Be knowledgeable about the levels of cross country courses. What is expected at the introductory levels of the sport (CCN65 and CCN80) and then following this through to the training levels of (CCN95 and CCN105). Then the start of the more competitive levels of CCN2* and above are more advanced in the questions however it also requires more skill from the Course Designer (and TD and Chief Cross Country Judge) to have a test that will still give confidence to the horses and riders and fill the requirement of a competition.

You should be familiar with the NZ Guide to Cross Country Course Design which covers the levels CCN65 to CCN105/1* as well as the FEI Cross Country Design Guidelines.

Process and Progress;

The structure ESNZ Eventing have for the progress through the levels of Cross Country Judges are as follow:

To apply to become a List 3 Cross Country Judge download the form from the Officials Resources page on the ESNZ website. This will detail minimal previous experience that you will need to gain. If you have not done everything that is on the form, don't worry. Just complete the form as much as possible and send it in to the Sport Manager. It will then go to the Technical Advisory Group, and you will be assessed as to whether you need to complete a few more tasks before being put on the list or you will go straight on the list and the tasks can be completed as you progress. Once on the list you will then be available to be an Assistant Cross Country Judge under the supervision of a more experienced Judge. From there the progress is up to you, and how fast you want to progress through the levels. Area committees are only too happy to have people step forward and volunteer their services and you will soon gain valuable experience working with different committees.

When you feel that you would like to step up a level, download the list 2 form from the website and see what the requirements are that need to be fulfilled. It does take quite a few events to become familiar and comfortable in the roles and before becoming a List 1 you should feel totally confident in your ability to manage most situations. However, running events is always about being part of a team and you should never feel that you are being left on your own to make decisions.

If you are a dressage judge with a keen interest in eventing and you want to progress towards an FEI Ground Jury role you need to start with being a List 3 Cross Country Judge and work your way through to List 1. Working through these levels gives you a very good grounding for your role as an FEI Judge. You also need to be at least a Level D on the ESNZ Dressage Judges' list.

If you are already a TD then you will automatically be a Cross Country Judge of the same level, however the reverse is not true due to the extra detail needed to be a TD.

Here are a few examples of possible queries. Have a go 😊.

1. A fence judge has deemed a horse has run off a jump and marked it as a refusal. The rider complains and says they had pulled the horse off as it wasn't going to meet the jump on the correct stride and therefore should not be faulted.
2. Rider A has caught up with Rider B. Rider B is taking the long route through the water jump. Rider A decides not to wait but to take the short route through the water. Should there be any consequences or penalties for Rider A or for Rider B?
3. A rider leaves the start but there was no time recorded. What would you do?
4. A rider has two horses in a class close together and another one in the following class. They ask the steward if they can ride one early. They are allowed to, and the rider rides the horse that is in the draw second in the class first. Is there a ruling against this and if so, what should the consequences be?
5. A rider accidentally jumps a jump that is not part of their course but realises this and jumps their correct jump in the correct order. Is there a penalty or any other consequence?
6. A rider has three stops on the cross country course and carries on to the finish. What would be their score, and should there be any consequences?
7. The vet has not arrived on course for the start of the cross country. What would you do?
8. A rider will not allow a steward to check his horses bit after they ~~done~~ finished their dressage test. What should happen?
9. A rider arrives late for their dressage test due to vehicle breakdown. Should you let them compete?

Suggested ways of answering the above:

1. Art 667 states that a rider may change their mind at any time on approaching the jump. Discuss this with the Jump Judge and in light of the rule ask whether they were sure that the rider hadn't pulled the horse off. Explain the rule to the jump judge as they might not be as familiar with it as you. Find out how far away from the jump that the horse either ran out or the rider pulled the horse off. Ask if they noticed whether the rider was still looking at the jump (indicating that the rider was intent on jumping the jump) or looking out to the side (implying the rider was intent on pulling the horse off. Perhaps there were other people at the jump that could help. You will have to decide on the evidence whether you think it was probably that the rider did or did not intend to change their mind.
2. Art 663 5.2 states that when a rider is committed to jumping an obstacle the following rider may jump that obstacle only in such a way that will cause no inconvenience or danger for either. You would have to decide whether jumping at the same time was dangerous or likely to inconvenience the other rider. You would need to interview the jump judge to get their take on it. Also talk to both riders. If you deem it dangerous riding, there are various penalties that could apply depending on what information that you have received and the level of competition. Penalties listed in Art.639.
3. If the error was not caused by the rider leaving early, then you need to be able to try to come as close to a time as possible. A good strategy is to have another synchronised stopwatch on the first jump and also the last fence for incidences like this. Then you can calculate how fast most horses take to get from the start to fence 1.
4. Art 647 2.1 The Organiser may arrange for horses in the final test of a CCN-S to compete in reverse order of classification otherwise the order for the starting at a CCN-S will be adhered to throughout the competition.

So in dealing with this you would have to decide whether the competitor is getting an advantage by riding their second horse first (e.g. their first horse is leading and they want to ride the course on the other horse to get a feel of the course.) Also what level you are dealing with. At the very least the rider should have the rule explained to them, and if you feel it was done on purpose then look through what penalty might be appropriate.

5. Art 639 1 (i) Dangerous riding – Jumping obstacles not part of the course. Under FEI rules it is mandatory to give an Eventing Warning for Dangerous Riding in FEI classes so it is viewed quite seriously because you are making the course more dangerous than it needs to be. So you can either add 25 penalties and/or give a Verbal Warning, or if you really thought it necessary Eliminate and a ESNZ Official warning. However, most instances of a rider jumping an incorrect jump is them making a simple mistake and not intentional and if you are dealing with a lower level or inexperienced rider a verbal warning may suffice.

6. If the rider was competing in a CCN105 and below class, they would be allowed to finish (don't get eliminated until they have had four stops.) If the rider was competing in a CCN1* and above class, they would be eliminated and at the very least be given Verbal Warning.

7. If the Vet has not arrived on course, you cannot start the cross country. Action needs to be taken to find out what the delay is, and whether another vet can be found.

8. Art 656 A rider can request that the bit is not checked until after the test. If in this case the rider just rides away when being asked the steward should probably have followed them back to their stable and check it there when it comes off. There may be a reason the rider didn't want it checked out in the open however if this isn't explained to the steward or if in any way there was a heated argument the rider could be given ESNZ Official warning for incorrect behaviour towards an Official. But again, always hear both sides on the discussion.

9. If there is the possibility for them to be slotted in, then in all fairness it would be harsh not to allow them to compete.