



## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** October 19, 2023  
**To:** Competition File, World's Championship Horse Show  
**From:** Debbie Saliling, USEF Director of Compliance & Caroline Jennings, USEF Compliance Liaison  
**Re:** Compliance Inspection – World's Championship Horse Show – August 19-26, 2023 (#335)

---

### I. Introduction/Overview

On behalf of the USEF Compliance Department, the USEF Compliance Team conducted an inspection of the World's Championship Horse Show (#335), which took place at the Kentucky Fair & Exposition Center, located at 937 Phillips Lane in Louisville, KY 40209, from August 19-26, 2023. The competition was a USEF-licensed regular competition hosting Saddlebreds, Hackneys, and Roadsters. The purpose of this evaluation was to review the competition's fulfillment of USEF rules and competition standards.

Additionally, USEF Senior Staff Veterinarian, Dr. Katie Flynn, was present to observe the implementation of biosecurity protocols on August 22 and August 24, 2023.

### II. Background

This year was the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the World's Championship Horse Show. The USEF Compliance Department conducted the compliance inspection to review the areas of improvement communicated to management following the 2022 inspection. These areas included stall doors without safety stops at the bottom of sliding doors, rainwater collected in sharps containers, insufficient drainage for washing horses in the tent stabling and electrical wiring across these puddled areas, as well as concerns about mixed traffic following the conclusion of evening session classes. In addition, USEF received a call from a concerned participant upon moving horses into tent stabling the week prior to the 2023 show, sharing that a stabling tent had only one entrance/exit with a narrow aisleway.

The weather during our visit was hot with highs of approximately 96 degrees with high humidity. Approximately 1,800 horses competed, and 2,880 stalls were used.

### III. Inspection

The inspection was conducted on Wednesday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> from mid-morning until the end of the last class of the evening session. The photos in this report are from the USEF Compliance Team's inspection on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, in addition to observations and photos from Dr. Flynn. During the inspection we spoke with the following people:

- Competition Manager and Licensee – Scarlett Mattson
- USEF Stewards – Nancy Noble, Stacey Wright, Joyce Hamblin, and Dorothy Trapp
- Numerous competition participants



**a. Riding and Lunging Areas**

- **Footing:** The sole competition arena is located inside Freedom Hall. The footing is a clay base topped with traditional green sawdust and we understood it was maintained prior to the morning and evening sessions (Image 1). Exhibitors shared that the competition arena footing was suitable for the level of competition taking place at this event.

There were three areas available for warm-up and exercising: Stopher Walk, the make-up ring which is immediately outside of Freedom Hall, and a covered arena behind the permanent stables (Images 2-3). The footing in these areas was also a clay base with sawdust. We observed the covered arena being watered and dragged prior to the evening session. A few exhibitors shared that the footing in Stopher Walk was deeper than usual.

**b. Facilities**

- **Stabling:** There are 16 permanent barns, five tent stables, and in addition, temporary stalls are located inside the North Wing at this facility. During the 2022 USEF Compliance inspection, some nails were observed inside stalls, and multiple doors did not have door stops at the bottom of the sliding doors in the permanent barns. This year, very few nails were observed, however door stops on multiple doors were still missing (Image 4), resulting in sliding doors that could be easily pushed outward at the bottom, creating a potential safety hazard for horses. There appeared to be sufficient electrical outlets and water sources in the permanent barns. Exhibitors shared they were generally satisfied with the permanent stabling.

Four clear-span tents were provided on the parking lot outside of Freedom Hall. The aiseways between Tents A and B appeared to be narrow, especially due to exhibitors' trunks, carts and other equipment also lining the aisle, along with wash water runoff and electrical boxes (Images 5-7). The aisleway between Tents B and C was slightly wider, and the aisleway between Tents C and D appeared to be ideal, with sufficient space for multiple horses to pass and exhibitors' carts and trunks to be near their stalls (Image 8).

The temporary fence separating the tents from the parking area was placed approximately 8-10 feet from the far side of Tent D, resulting in space used by exhibitors to wash horses and store equipment (Image 9). The temporary fence, which appeared to be used to secure the enclosure for horses, was observed to have been opened/closed several times and in several locations, allowing for breaks in the fencing barrier around the temporary stables and manure to be dumped outside the fence (Image 10). The concern shared by an exhibitor with USEF the week prior to this show, regarding a narrow tent aisleway with only one entrance/exit, was not observed in any of the tent stabling we entered.

We learned from speaking with exhibitors that the generators for these tents had failed earlier in the week, and they were without power for several hours in the heat and were frustrated because this issue also occurred in 2022. Ms. Mattson shared that Kentucky Venues Executive Director of Operations, Mr. McCoy had replaced two generators this year, and both failed. Walking through these tents, we found TVs, air conditioners, decorative lights, and mini refrigerators appeared to be running all day, in addition to fans for horses. We observed multiple electrical boxes at the back side of the tents placed in areas where water runoff collected, resulting in wiring and hay mixed in wet areas (Image 11-12).

There was one pole-tent behind the covered exercise arena behind the permanent stables. We observed one stall with a tent pole in the interior which was occupied by a horse. Walking through this tent, we came upon a loose horse outside of its stall who may have exited the stall due to a faulty stall latch, as there was no one around.

The temporary stalls inside the North Wing appeared to be older. Several exhibitors described their vinyl stall partitions as “filthy” upon arrival at the competition. Some vinyl stall partitions were torn. We understood from Ms. Mattson that the panels are cleaned prior to being set up, however, exhibitors shared a different experience (Image 13). We also observed some gaps between panels that may have been a potential safety issue (Image 14). Additionally, exhibitors pointed out to us that the sandpaper material underneath the shavings in some aiseways was beginning to show and was a tripping concern (Image 15).

- **Wash Areas:** There was one large wash area designated with panel fencing and multiple hoses set up in the loading dock area of the North Wing (Image 16). There was no designated wash area in the permanent barns or tent stabling, and it appeared that exhibitors either walked to the North Wing loading dock/wash area, washed horses in the aisles of the permanent shed row-style stalls, or in the aiseways of tented stabling (Image 17). There appeared to be no drains in the tented stabling area so water runoff puddles in the heavily used areas, mixes with any refuse, and collects near electrical boxes (Image 18).
- **Waste and Trash Containment:** Upon our arrival Wednesday morning, we observed several dumpster containers in the tent stabling area that were not full, but the manure waste was piled into the walkways in the stabling areas (Images 19-20). We understood from Ms. Mattson that facility workers push the waste back into the containers with a skid steer, and once full, the containers are switched out for empty ones. We also learned that in previous years, exhibitors put manure in trash cans, making them very difficult to empty, therefore no trash cans are placed in the stabling areas and waste of every kind is intended to be collected in the dumpster containers (Image 21). Exhibitors in the North Wing shared that the manure container collection was inadequate. In the stabling areas outdoors, exhibitors shared that the removal of full dumpsters was extremely disruptive, and they would appreciate it if the containers could be removed during times of non-competition.
- **Level measurement area:** A measurement area was provided inside the North Wing stabling area. It was designated with signage and sandpaper material was placed over the concrete (Image 22).
- **Restrooms:** There were portable restroom trailers with showers, individual portable restrooms, and permanent restrooms available for exhibitors. The restrooms we observed appeared to be reasonably clean and stocked with supplies.
- **PA System:** The PA system utilized by the paddock master in the make-up ring and the arenas were clear and appeared to be audible throughout the stabling areas.

c. **Operations and Safety**

- **Competition Personnel:** There were four USEF Stewards officiating this competition. At 6:20pm, on Thursday evening, August 24, 2023, Dr. Flynn shared that she observed horses warming up in the make-up area outside Freedom Hall prior to the 6:30pm start of the evening show and that no USEF Stewards were observed in the area at that time. Dr. Flynn observed three Stewards arrival to the make-up area/competition arena at 6:42pm. While the Stewards may have been elsewhere onsite at that time, it is important this area is monitored while horses are preparing to enter the competition ring.

Separately exhibitors shared with USEF that during the lightning/rainstorm that occurred during the Friday evening performance, mounted riders were prevented from leaving Freedom Hall at the conclusion of their class due to the storm, however, we understand that exhibitors who were in the make-up area, awaiting entrance to Freedom Hall, were not informed about the delay. USEF was also advised that announcements communicating any delay due to the storm were not made in the stabling area, and it is unclear what actions management took to mitigate the situation.

- **Accident Preparedness Plan:** Upon our arrival at the venue on Wednesday morning, the Compliance Team members learned that a tragic accident had just occurred in the competition arena where a horse passed away while exhibitors were lining up at the end of the class, and a young rider was injured.

We understood from speaking with exhibitors and the Stewards that there was a delay in placing privacy screens around the dying horse in the arena, as the screens were stored inside the horse ambulance trailer which was parked near Freedom Hall. Further, there was confusion regarding the location of the keys for the horse ambulance trailer, and who would drive the designated horse ambulance trailer. It was also shared with us that there was at least a 30-minute delay in an ambulance arriving at Freedom Hall to transfer the rider to the hospital. We understood that the ringside medical personnel provided aid to the rider immediately until the ambulance crew arrived at the scene. We heard the medic speaking with the Stewards, sharing that she alerted her supervisors about the delay in the ambulance's arrival.

It was unclear as to the actions conducted by the designated Safety Coordinator, Ms. Mattson, in managing the implementation of the Accident Preparedness Plan as per responsibilities outlined in GR846. Exhibitors expressed concerns to us about an apparent lack of a plan in place, as required by GR845, for any emergency related to human or equine illness or injury.

Additionally, we learned from exhibitors that following the accident, the children who had been competing in the 9-and-under equitation class in the ring when the horse collapsed, were excused to the make-up area while the situation was being managed. Once the arena was cleared, the class resumed, and the children were brought back into the competition ring to receive their placings and ribbons.

At the same time, it was shared with us that exhibitors for the following classes were becoming backlogged in the make-up area and Stopper Walk due to a lack of announcements that there had been a pause in the competition related to the injured rider and deceased horse.

- **Isolation Protocol:** We understood from Ms. Mattson that if a horse appears to be ill from a suspected infectious disease, it is trailered from the grounds to either Bannon Woods Veterinary Hospital in Fairdale or Kentucky Equine Hospital in Simpsonville. It was unclear how this process would be managed. In Dr. Flynn's discussion on previous occasions with the State Veterinarian's Staff and Fair Veterinarian, she was made aware of isolation stabling available on site if necessary for isolation of any sick animal. However, when we met with Ms. Mattson prior to departing the competition on Wednesday evening, she stated there is no onsite isolation stabling.

On Saturday, August 26, 2023, at 7:37am Dr. Katie Flynn, USEF Equine Health and Biosecurity Veterinarian was contacted by KY State Veterinarian, Dr. Steve Velasco about a down horse in Barn P that was a suspect infectious disease case and that onsite state animal health officials were coordinating transport to Hagyard Equine Hospital for emergency care. Dr. Flynn communicated with State Veterinarian Staff and treating veterinarian Dr. Garrison regarding this case and transport. During the calls, Dr. Flynn identified the lack of planning to handle a down horse during an event as there was delay in moving the horse. At 5:25pm, Dr. Seth Sadler, KY State Fair Veterinarian called Dr. Flynn to alert her to the situation. He stated the delay in contact was due to the delay in the private practitioner treating the horse providing details to Dr. Sadler. Regarding the down horse transported to Lexington, Dr. Flynn and the USEF Veterinary Department received no communications from Ms. Mattson nor the USEF Stewards.

- **Medical Personnel:** On Wednesday, the Stewards brought our attention to the medical personnel onsite, located inside Freedom Hall near the ingate. We understood the medical team's office is inside Freedom Hall close to the tunnel into the arena and they were equipped with a radio.
- **Veterinarian and Farrier:** We understood the onsite official veterinarian was also the veterinarian for the entire state fair, thus responsible for the care and oversight of all livestock and horses on the grounds. We observed several veterinary trucks within the equine competition grounds. There were several farriers' stations in the stabling areas.
- **Sharps Containers:** We observed that most sharps containers were compliant with USEF requirements outlined in GR1210.4. However, one container in permanent Barn L had a large hole in the side, and one container in Barn G had collected rainwater (Image 23), and when we spoke with the USEF Stewards, they were unaware of this non-compliance with the rule. Similar to 2022, there were a few sharps containers which were on the external pole of barns increasing the likelihood of collecting water during rainstorms.
- **Traffic:** During the 2022 compliance inspection, heavy traffic following the evening sessions along Circle of Champions Road was observed where horses from the permanent barns cross to Stopher Walk. While this year we did not observe instances of heavy traffic, several exhibitors shared concerns about crossing this road at night, following the completion of the competition – particularly once the crossing guards are gone for the evening. We are aware that many exhibitors exercise their horses at night, and with no crossing guards on duty during this busy period just after the conclusion of the evening performance, access to Stopher Walk and Freedom Hall is a safety concern for them. We learned from Ms. Mattson that the crossing guards are present from 6am until the last class is completed, and that in her view, this crossing area is not an issue.
- **Loose dogs:** We observed multiple loose dogs in the stabling areas.
- **Signage:** Inside the show office there was posted information for the on-site veterinarian, directions to the nearest equine and human hospitals, and USEF Safe Sport posters. There was also a copy of the accident preparedness plan, however we did not see the isolation protocol for horses posted.
- **Food:** Inside the North Wing a restaurant was set up for dinner, and several food options were available within walking distance of Freedom Hall. There was also a food vendor next to Stopher Walk, however exhibitors told us this vendor was closed in the afternoons, despite the "Open" sign being on display.
- **Entry software used:** This competition utilized Horse Shows Online for entries.

- **Internet:** We learned that the Fairgrounds has an IT Department which maintains the internet service at the grounds. The show office utilizes internet from a private Fair network and Wi-Fi is available for guest users.
- **Collection of release agreements:** During our conversation with Ms. Mattson, we understood that exhibitors sign the Federation Entry Agreement along with the waiver/release together upon entering online. Ms. Mattson was unclear if the release used was Kentucky specific, or general. She provided copies of releases signed by a licensed official, an owner and a minor athlete.

**d. USEF Safe Sport**

- **Ineligibility list checking:** Ms. Mattson explained that she runs the entry list from Horse Shows Online against the USEF ineligibility list, and then manually reviews the entries for flagged exhibitors who may be ineligible due to membership or Safe Sport requirements not met. She shared that since she knows many of the people who compete at this competition, she will reach out to them individually and advise them on any outstanding requirements they need to remedy prior to competing.
- **Direct Communication:** Ms. Mattson also shared that once an entry is accepted, the individuals on the entry are sent an email notifying them of the USEF Safe Sport policies in place. We advised her to also place a copy of the sample letter and USEF MAAPP poster at the show office and request all participants on the ground read it upon checking in.

**V. Conclusion**

- **Positives**
  1. Entertaining opportunity to expose the public to the Saddlebred breed
  2. Clear and audible PA system throughout the barns and arenas
  3. Generally sufficient footing maintenance in exercise, warm-up, and competition areas
  4. Regular water truck rounds conducted in the permanent stabling improved dust control
  5. Broader aisleways between Tents C and D helped relieve congestion
- **Recommended**
  1. Ensure exhibitors in all areas of the competition grounds are notified in a timely manner about competition ring delays, such as weather or accidents, to prevent a backlog of competitors warming-up in the make-up ring.
  2. Encourage food vendor adjacent to the North Wing to either maintain open hours during the afternoon, or erect signs accurately advising exhibitors of the opening times.
- **Required**
  1. Ensure USEF Stewards are present on competition grounds in sufficient time to monitor the warm-up areas prior to the start of any classes per GR 1033.2.e.
  2. Ensure the Safety Coordinator fulfills all duties outlined in GR 846, and that staff and officials are fully informed regarding the implementation of the accident preparedness plan, including but not limited to the following:
    - Ensure the individual who is designated, in the written plan, as responsible for driving the designated emergency horse ambulance, has the keys on their person or has knowledge of the location of the keys and can provide immediate emergency horse ambulance services upon a call from Safety Coordinator.
    - Ensure a designated individual identified in the written plan knows the location of the privacy screen and understands responsibility for the immediate placement, upon fall of a horse in the competition area.

- Confirm with Kentucky Venues and Kentucky State Fair Board, the written protocols, and communications for immediate transport of human to hospital.
  - Ensure competitors in the barn area are notified immediately of a hold in the ring to deal with horse/human injury. Issue hold on all classes until the situation has been handled, with horse and human being appropriately managed by medical professionals outside of the competition area.
  - Ensure Stewards coordinate the collection of the blood sample in case of any fatality or collapse situation.
3. Ensure tent stabling provides adequate space between each tent, specifically between Tents A and B, and B and C.
  4. Monitor tent stabling areas for appropriate electrical wiring to identify any potential fire safety or hazard to those walking in the stabling areas. For the duration of the event, ensure all electrical outlets and wiring meet the state and county fire codes.
  5. Confirm that sufficient electrical generators are provided for the tent stabling area to avoid outages. For planning purposes, generator needs should be based on the prior year's electrical use as well as taking into consideration the predicted temperatures during the time of the event.
  6. For perimeter fencing surrounding the tent stabling, ensure it adequately secures the stabling area.
  7. Ensure horses are not occupying a stall with a tent pole.
  8. Address concerns from exhibitors about crossing Circle of Champions Road from the permanent barns to Stopher Walk during times of heavy fair traffic after competition hours.
  9. Ensure that all dogs are held on a leash or otherwise restrained as per GR 1301.6.
  10. Make certain all sharps containers are placed out of the elements and that all are in compliance with GR 1210.4.b.
  11. Ensure manure is placed in designated containment areas and removal is timely and safeguard stabling areas from waste spread.
  12. Wash, sanitize and repair temporary stall partitions prior to horses moving in; this includes partition repair/cleaning, as well as ensuring door latches are functional.
  13. Work with management to implement a solution to the numerous door stops that have not been addressed following each of the prior USEF Compliance inspections.
  14. Post the sample letter alongside the USEF MAAPP poster at the show office and ask that all participants read it upon checking-in.
  15. Designate wash areas in the tent stabling areas so that water runoff is routed away from electrical cords and stabling.



**Images: World's Championship Horse Show (#335); August 19-26, 2023**



**Image 1: Freedom Hall**



**Image 2: View inside the make-up area looking down Stoper Walk toward permanent stabling**



**Image 3: Covered arena maintenance Wednesday, August 23, afternoon**



**Image 4: Gap visible due to no door stop at bottom of sliding door in permanent barn**



**Image 5: Aisleway between Tents A and B Tuesday morning**



**Image 6: Aisleway between Tents A and B Wednesday evening**



**Image 7: Aisleway between Tent A and B Wednesday night**



**Image 8: Aisleway between Tent C and D**



**Image 9: Far side of Tent D**



**Image 10: Fence opening on far side of Tent D; manure dumped on outside of fence**



**Image 11: Electrical box adjacent to horse washing and mixed hay/detritus**



**Image 12: Electrical box at the back of Tent A adjacent to wet area**



**Image 13: Dirty stall partition, North Wing**



**Image 14: Gap between stall partition, North Wing**



**Image 15: Paper coming up through the shavings in North Wing**



**Image 16: Loading dock wash area outside North Wing**



**Image 17: Washing between tents**



**Image 18: Wash water in tent stabling Tuesday morning**



**Image 19: Dumpster in front of Tent D on Wednesday at 11:30am**



**Image 20: Dumpster behind Tent D on Wednesday at 11:40am**



**Image 21: Trash contents in a North Wing dumpster Tuesday afternoon**



**Image 22: Measurement area**



**Image 23: Broken sharps in Barn L**