

Board of Directors meeting outlines progress & plans for drug crack-down, membership growth, sport promotion & fee increases.

Letter to members from US Equestrian president Murray Kessler

The US Equestrian Board of Directors met July 24-25. During this meeting, it was evident that our Sport and our Federation is moving in the right direction and that our Strategic Plan, while still in its early days, is working.



This is evidenced by a growing membership, teams and individuals winning on the world stage, balanced financials, and the implementation of many new initiatives. The Board meeting was productive, energizing, and decisively put our members' best interests first. Importantly, there was unity and trust among the board members representing various disciplines, affiliates and athletes that allowed us to further advance our strategic goals. I saw a willingness to move forward and press towards positive change, with progressive ideas and unprecedented decision-making.

Your US Equestrian Management team, under Bill Moroney's leadership, has been making similar strides. They have analyzed the functions of US Equestrian to better focus their efforts and those of the Board on the areas valued by our members. For example, the demands by our membership to eradicate doping have been heard loud and clear and a much stronger stance has been taken. The result has been a significant reduction in positive doping tests so far this year. That is good news. Similarly, the Board of Directors approved new, stronger penalty

Written by CRM

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guidelines for abuse and welfare violations similar to those approved over a year ago for drugs and medication violations. You asked that our penalties match the severity of the violations, and we listened.

Continuing with our commitment to horse and human welfare, the Board approved the recommendations of the USEF Medroxyprogesterone Acetate (MPA) Panel. First, starting September 1, 2017, competitors will be required to file a medication report if their horse has received MPA, commonly referred to as Depo-Provera®, within 90 days prior to the start of a competition. Medication forms will be available to competitors online at www.usef.org. Second, the horrid misuse of large doses of injectable magnesium sulfate has been a hot topic in the show world for quite a while. In support of the 12 Hour rule, and to eliminate the misuse of injectable magnesium sulfate, the Board approved the addition of this medication as a US Equestrian forbidden substance to be implemented as soon as possible, while allowing proper communication to our members. Additionally, possession of injectable magnesium sulfate on competition grounds will be prohibited. Finally, to help our horses suffering the effects of Cushing's Disease, our Equine Drugs & Medications Department, at the request of the Board, is analyzing the ability to permit the controlled use of pergolide mesylate during competition. We look forward to making an announcement on this horse welfare friendly breakthrough very soon.

On the promotional front, US Equestrian has surged forward into the 21st century. Video views on the USEF Network, Learning Center, and social media topped seven million since the launch of the 'Joy of Horse Sports' campaign. Our social media ambassadors have an aggregated following of over 600,000 equestrian enthusiasts. We have partnered with production providers and organizers to livestream a diverse mix of new events via the USEF Network. Our new fan membership category has been popular, driving total membership up by almost 25% to nearly 105,000; sponsorship is approaching a record high and in addition to more education and human interest content, we are bringing back the suspension list in our US Equestrian magazine.

I also wanted to give you a heads up that in order to sustain growth and further develop benefits and programs to serve our membership and protect our horses, the US Equestrian Board of Directors approved several fee increases. Starting next year, the US Equestrian Membership fee will increase from \$55 to \$80, about the same or less than the membership fees of our major affiliates like USHJA, USDF and USEA. It's been a decade since we have increased fees. During that same time, the cost of doing business has increased 33%, which has been offset by cost containment efforts that have hurt our staff as well as member services, especially at the grass root level. This is unacceptable. The approved fee increases will allow us to address these issues and re-invest back into growing our sport at ALL levels, not just elite levels. A primary area of investment will be to bring unrated shows into the US Equestrian family and encourage the return of B & C rated shows. Our sport can't be strong without a strong

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foundation. We will also continue to invest in education, learning center videos, communication tools, athlete pathways, trainer certification, and the like. Finally, developmental funds will be allocated to help grow the sport across all breeds and disciplines.

Separately, the Drugs & Medications fee per horse, per show will increase to \$15. Sadly, this increase is necessary to fund the battle against cheating on the field of play and to defend the findings of the Hearing Committee in the court room. It is unfortunate that we all need to pay this tax because of a few bad eggs, but it is the price we must pay for clean sport and a fair and level playing field.

Another member change starting next year is that we will be moving to an anniversary membership model. This means that no matter when someone joins, they will enjoy a full 12-month membership. And, if the new auto-renewal option is selected, you will never miss points for a show or any other US Equestrian benefit or communication.

I am aware that some of you will speculate that these fee increases will be used to fund a new headquarters building that you may or may not have heard about. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, none of the funding resulting from this increase will be used to pay for construction of the new headquarters, nor will any incremental funds from on-going operations or reserves be utilized. Simply said, we are taking advantage of record low interest rates and a zero percent down loan backed by the state to build a new headquarters that will save our members over three hundred thousand dollars per year, versus our current expensive lease, while at the same time creating a more collaborative work environment. It's a win-win.

So, in summary, the entire team at US Equestrian, including the Board of Directors, is committed to making equestrian sport enjoyable for you and your horse. We will continue to actively seek your feedback and to do our best to provide you with relevant resources and education, a fair and level competition environment, and an organization that makes informed and responsible decisions without bias. Our athletes are winning. Our membership is growing. Cheating is declining. And, with the fee increases discussed, combined with our on-going cost control programs, our financial position will continue to strengthen.

Thank you for being a member of US Equestrian, for being involved in equestrian sport, and for sharing the joy of horse sports with everyone you know.