

FEI Reining – Executive summary

16 October 2020

A. Introduction

On 13 November 2019, further to several discussions and meetings held between the FEI and the National Reining Horse Association (NRHA), the latter signed an agreement (“New Agreement”) that defines the rights and responsibilities of both organisations to govern the Discipline of Reining worldwide.

The General Assembly, on 19 November 2019, voted on keeping Reining as a FEI Discipline.

Shortly after the decision taken by the General Assembly, on 25 November 2019 the NRHA contacted the FEI and surprisingly provided an interpretation of the New Agreement that significantly modified the core principle of the New Agreement.

This different interpretation was about the jurisdiction of the FEI and NRHA over International Reining Competitions with mixed age Horses. While the New Agreement clearly stated (as it was expressly explained to NRHA in different occasions both in writing and orally, including specific examples, before NRHA signed the New Agreement on 13 November 2019) that the NRHA recognised the FEI as the sole worldwide authority and governing body for all International Reining Competitions which are organised for Horses 7 years old and above, regardless whether these Competitions were with mixed age Horses (Article A of the New Agreement), the NRHA gave a different interpretation to this clause stating that NRHA would be the sole worldwide authority and governing body for all International Reining Competitions with mixed age Horses, regardless of the Horses’ age, hence including Horses 7 years old and above.

In addition, one of the fundamental conditions of the New Agreement was the implementation by NRHA of a control system for non FEI International Reining Competitions to ensure that no more than 4 National Federations (including the host National Federation) and/or more than 15 foreign Athletes (not counting Athletes Living Outside their Country of Nationality) enter and/or participate in the Competitions.

That system was due to be implemented within 3 months of signature of the New Agreement (i.e. by Thursday 13 February 2020) and subject to prior written approval of the FEI.

The New Agreement stated that failure to comply with this obligation would be considered a material breach of the New Agreement.

The purpose of the control system would be to allow the identification of International Reining Competitions prior to an Event in order to ensure that the relevant FEI Rules and Regulations could be complied with; these Competitions have to be included in the FEI Calendar, the Athletes/Horses have to be entered/registered with FEI registration system (passports etc.), entered by the National Federation (member of the FEI), the Competition schedule have to be approved by the FEI and the Event included in the FEI Calendar (among others FEI legal requirements).

The NRHA never implemented such controls.

B. FEI Board's Resolution 25 June 2020

Between November 2019 and June 2020 a number of discussions and exchanges took place and finally, the NRHA President and Commissioner were invited to meet with the FEI Board on 25 June 2020.

During this meeting, the NRHA representatives confirmed to the FEI Board that there were cultural and business differences in the two competition management systems (NRHA and FEI systems) and that as a result, it was impossible for their Organisation to abide by the terms of Agreement as per FEI's interpretation

In light of the fundamental difference in the interpretation of the Agreement, as well as in control mechanisms around international competitions, the FEI Board accepted that there were irreparable differences between the two bodies, therefore the Board agreed: (R)

- Not to counter sign the New Agreement signed by NRHA on 13 November 2019;
- To establish a Working Group composed by FEI Headquarters Representatives, the FEI Reining Technical Committee and other representatives (to be confirmed by the FEI) to evaluate the consequences for FEI of governing Reining without an agreement with NRHA (e.g. but not only: governance, legal and sport consequences) and reconsider, under these new circumstances, the KPIs defined by the Reining Committee in November 2019; and
- To defer any decisions on Reining Championship allocations until a decision on next steps for FEI Reining had been confirmed.

C. Follow-up meetings with the Reining Technical Committee and National Federations

Following the resolutions approved at the FEI Board Teleconferences in June 2020, there had been a number of internal meetings which included the FEI President, the FEI Reining Committee, the FEI Director of Reining, the FEI Director of Governance and a number of National Federations active in FEI Reining in the last years. Likewise, the Reining Committee met twice to discuss the future of FEI Reining.

The main conclusions of the meetings were the following:

- **Future of FEI Reining without an agreement with the NRHA**

Consequences of a non-existing agreement between the FEI and the NRHA:

One of the main legal consequences of a non-existing an agreement between the FEI and NRHA for the governing and management of Reining as FEI Discipline is the application of the "Unsanctioned Events" Rules to NRHA Events.

As a consequence of this Rule, Athletes, Horses and Officials that participate in NRHA Events will be subject to a period of ineligibility of 6 months to participate in FEI International Events or NFs National Events.

- **Future of FEI Reining**

The discussion with Reining Committee about the future of FEI Reining independent of NRHA have concluded that FEI Reining could not survive by itself without NRHA, because of 2 main reasons:

1) the first condition of the strategic plan made by the Reining Committee on November 2019, as presented to the General Assembly 2019, was the need of an agreement between the FEI and NRHA for the governing of the Reining Discipline, and;

2) In absence of an agreement FEI-NRHA, the majority of Athletes, Horses and Officials would chose to compete at NRHA Events and they would be subject to the above mentioned period of ineligibility of 6 months to participate in FEI International Events or NFs National Events.

- **Legacy to NRHA**

The FEI was proposing to discuss with a number of NFs, active in the Reining Discipline, what knowledge transfer and collaborative project could be found to be worked out with NRHA and leave a legacy of FEI Reining in the future, e.g. a World Championship for teams under certain conditions agreed or having the FEI international competition format integrated into the NRHA to be ran as closely as possible to FEI rules (which could be used by NRHA if desired).

The Reining Committee is working on a document outlining the principles and requirements to hold a Championship with the team competition. These principle will include aspects such as, but not only, result management, competition format, venue requirements, Officials requirements, Horse welfare and anti-doping principles.

This document outlining these principles for legacy will be submitted to the FEI Board on 18 November 2020.

- **FEI Reining Championships**

Any decisions on Reining Championship allocations, in 2021 and onwards, are deferred until a decision on next steps for FEI Reining had been confirmed

- **Future of FEI Reining**

Discussion and decision about the removal of Reining as FEI Discipline and/or about the future of Reining will not take place at the FEI General Assembly 2020. Instead it will be on the Agenda of the FEI General Assembly 2021.