



# NORTH AMERICAN RIDERS GROUP

Together, we can improve our sport.

## *NARG UPDATE:*

### *New USEF Mileage Rule Changes Explained*

*October 8, 2015* - In an effort to support growth and accessibility to our sport, the USEF has and is continuing to make significant changes to the mileage and licensing rules this year. NARG has lobbied for this since our inception. Even though the mileage rule isn't abolished, which was our original goal, it has significantly improved, which is a major step forward. Below is an explanation based on NARG's perception of the rules as well as statements from key USEF officials.

#### **NEW: Objective - Redefining the Mileage Rule**

Note that the Mileage Rule Exemption Process has changed. More on that process is covered in this news update. First, the revised rule, GR307, now begins with a clarification of why the rule exists, as newly added in GR307.1:

"One objective of the Federation is to provide a competition environment that is in the best interest of the sport of equestrian and to provide for viable competitions and a balanced competition calendar to meet the needs of the sport at all levels within a geographic area. The [USEF] utilizes mileage as a method of managing the calendar and to assist in achieving an adequate base of competitors, thus enabling a competition to better meet the rules, requirements and standards for a given rating or level."

With this explanation of the objective, the focus on sport is apparent. From this objective, the details of how to achieve this within equestrian sport - in our case, show jumping - are enclosed within a detailed set of rules. The rules that have changed are geared towards achieving that objective.

## ***NEW: Competition Licenses Allowed One-Year Term Only***

On February 23, 2015, in order to improve the process, procedures, and fairness of competition licensing, as well as in response to feedback from membership, the USEF Board of Directors took the following action:

"The Federation office will no longer issue competition licenses extending beyond a one-year term, allowing the Board time to evaluate the mileage rules and the criteria for issuing and renewing competition license agreements. Existing multi-year license agreements will be honored. This took effect immediately upon announcement."

This allows the calendar to adjust more quickly as dictated by new rules and future mileage exemptions. In association with the other rule changes, it opens up possibilities for approval of events that were previously blocked by organizers holding three-year licenses.

## ***REVISED: Special Competitions Adds CSI 5\* Events***

The rules for Special Competitions were also modified. As defined by the USEF, a Special Competition is an event, which may not fully meet the requirements for obtaining Federation licensing; however, it has been deemed in the best interest of the breed and/or discipline and/or sport, and the Federation that the event be sanctioned by the Federation.

Special Competition classification may include, but is not limited to, the following: Olympic Games or Trials; Pan Am Games or Trials; World Equestrian Games or Trials; World Cup™ Finals or Qualifiers; FEI CSI 5\* events held as a standalone event and not in conjunction with any other competition; Nations Cup Finals; Nations Cup CSIO events; Federation National Finals; Federation National Championships; Recognized Affiliate championships; and any other events deemed by the Board of Directors as fitting in this classification.

Competitions classified as Special Competitions are exempt from the mileage rules for the classes and divisions approved by the Board of Directors. The Board approved adding CSI 5\* events to this pre-existing rule.

## **NEW: Exemption Rationale Criteria Defined - Should You Apply?**

According to revised GR307.3, the new descriptions in the list that follows applies to those who seek a mileage exemption in order to produce an event. USHJA President and Mileage Rule Task Force Co-Chair Bill Moroney explained that an Applicant should check this list, and identify the deficiency in the marketplace that their event will satisfy relative to the published criteria.

These criteria include, but are not limited to, the following:

**1. Competition Standards:** If the Priority Date Holder is not adhering to competition standards then the Federation will consider the following relative to granting an exemption:

- Whether the Applicant competition may alleviate concerns about the safety and welfare of horses, competitors, and/or spectators for a given rating and/or level at a Priority Date Holder's competition
- Whether the Applicant competition may enable a Priority Date Holder to better achieve the competition standards for a given rating and/or level;
- Whether the Applicant competition may alleviate overcrowding of horses and/or competitors in a given geographic area at a given venue.

**2. Competition and Calendar Factors:** The Federation will consider the following calendar factors when considering whether to grant an exemption:

- Whether the Applicant competition provides access to competitors that may need a choice based on a Priority Date Holder's costs to competitors or offered ratings and/or levels;
- Whether the Applicant competition serves a need that the Priority Date Holder does not serve as to the schedule of classes, sections, and divisions, which may be too limited;
- Whether the Applicant competition should be given an opportunity to enter the marketplace where a Priority Date Holder seemingly dominates the calendar in a given geographical area, which may create unilateral competition effects;
- Whether the Applicant competition alleviates the negative impact on competitors that may occur when the number of consecutive competitions of the same rating and/or level in a given geographic area at a given venue creates unilateral competition effects.

**3. Sport Growth and Visibility:** The Federation will also consider granting an exemption if the Applicant competition may create growth and visibility of the sport in one of the following ways, which is not exclusive:

- The Applicant competition is warranted due to community support and/or involvement;
- The Applicant competition may broaden access to competitors at all levels of the sport;
- The Applicant competition is unique and provides exceptional promotional benefits to the sport.

**In addition, the Federation will consider the following factors in determining whether a mileage exemption should be granted:**

- Geographic location and time of year with regard to concentration and migration of competitors;
- Experience and expertise of competition management;
- Competitions outside of boundary mileage of Priority Date Holder and Applicant Competition, which may affect density and competitive level of competitors;
- Density and competitive level of competitors in a given geographic area at a given time of the year

## **How and When to apply for an exemption, In Proper Procedural Order**

### **Mileage Exemption - as defined in GR 307.2:**

"When a competition license application is **denied** by the Federation due to a mileage conflict, the Applicant may seek a mileage exemption to allow the applying competition to occur. The Federation will send a Mileage Exemption Request Form along with the notification of denial to the Applicant."

### **Mileage Exemption Policies and Procedure**

- Before applying for an exemption, an Applicant must contact the Priority Date Holder (PDH) to seek cooperation in holding the proposed event, essentially asking permission to proceed.
- IF the Applicant and PDH agree, then the terms of the agreement must be disclosed to the Federation via submission of the Mileage Exemption Response (MER)
- IF the Applicant and the PDH do not agree, meaning the PDH denies the exemption request, then the Applicant submits a Mileage Exemption Request Form (MERF) to the Federation

- Beginning in the 2017 competition year, the Applicant can submit a fully completed MERF between eight months (240 days) and one year (365 days) ahead of their dates. Which means one must apply in 2016 for 2017 dates.

The process that follows submission of the MERF involves the Federation, the Priority Date Holder in question, potentially FIRP (Federation Internal Review Panel), the Affiliate and FMEP (Federation Mileage Exemption Panel), described below. It is detailed in [GR307.4 Mileage Exemption Procedure](#), which was also recently approved by the USEF Board.

## **Definition of Parties Involved in Exemption Process**

### **Once MERF is Submitted to the Federation:**

**Federation Internal Review Panel (FIRP)** - The Federation Internal Review Panel consists of the Federation Chief Executive Officer or designee, the Director of Competitions and a staff member from the relevant breed or discipline.

**Affiliate** - organization with niche specific expertise that governs a particular discipline. The Affiliate can play a role in the Mileage Rule Exemption Process.

**Federation Mileage Exemption Panel (FMEP)** - Appointed by the Federation President, the Federation Mileage Exemption Panel consists of the Federation Chief Executive Officer or designee; a Senior Active Member with competition management experience; and a Senior Active Member who participated in the determination of the Affiliate.

Together this Panel shall consider all materials received from all parties related to the request and the recommendation of the Recognized Affiliate. Upon completion of its review, the Federation Mileage Exemption Panel shall determine whether it is in the best interest of the sport to either deny or grant the approval and under what terms and conditions such approval shall be given. The Applicant will be told who the Panel members are as this is intended to be a transparent process. ***This is a big change.*** Note, it will be a violation of the rules for an applicant to directly contact a reviewer outside of the process.

## **NEW Appeal Option**

### **GR 318: License Application Disputes and Resolution**

1. Any competition license applicant may dispute the denial of a license application or renewal. In addition, a Mileage Exemption Request applicant and Priority Date Holder(s) may dispute a mileage exemption request decision. The initiation of a license dispute must be made in writing and received by the Federation within ten (10) calendar days of the date on the Federation notice of the approval or denial and

must be accompanied by a fee of \$1,000.00. If the petitioner prevails, \$500.00 will be refunded.

2. License disputes will be decided by the Federation Hearing Committee in accordance with the Federation rules and procedures. The Hearing Committee shall only determine if the mileage exemption process was conducted in accordance with the rules. The Hearing Committee shall provide the parties with the opportunity to be heard pursuant to written submissions and shall issue a written decision within thirty (30) calendar days following receipt of the initiation of dispute and response(s) from affected parties. If the Hearing Committee finds a procedural defect, the exemption request will go back through the process beginning at the point where the defect occurred.
3. The Hearing Committee's decision is final and not appealable.

## **What Else is Being Worked On - Show Standards & Licensed Officials Assessment**

Also on February 23, 2015, in order to improve the process, procedures, and fairness of competition licensing, as well as in response to feedback from membership, the **USEF Board of Directors requested an immediate assessment regarding the enforcement of show standards, safety standards, and reliable reporting from licensed officials.**

Bill Moroney explained this next essential step as a way to "... create a valuable useful and enforceable competition evaluation process," which is not currently in place. Using the NARG and FEI forms potentially, horsemen who are trained on the evaluation process will report without being identified to the show management. Still in process, it's clear that NARG has paved the way to evaluating events through the NARG Top 25.

## **Bottom Line**

Although the Mileage Rule is still in place, significant steps have been taken that are intended to allow increased competition where needed, provide availability to competition dates for events important to the growth and access of our sport and adherence to quality standards. They are designed to help improve our Sport. NARG encourages existing and potential organizers to take advantage of these rule changes.