

Introduction

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The goal of this Workshop is to share information and to help National Federations, veterinarians, riders, Chefs d'Equipe, owners, members of the press and others to understand the science and reasoning behind the rules and recommendations that will be in place to protect the equine athletes at the Olympic Games in 2008. The Workshop, which is sponsored by the FEI, the International League for the Protection of Horses (ILPH) and Peden Bloodstock, provides a unique opportunity to listen to the collective wisdom and advice from the best veterinary team in this field in the world.

The day's programme is comprehensive and has been designed to blend relevant science with applied knowledge to benefit all stakeholders. The Chairman of the FEI's Veterinary Committee, John McEwen, will set the scene for us. Then, Mr Lam Woon-kwong, Chief Executive Officer of the Olympic Equestrian Company, will outline how Hong Kong has prepared itself for the equestrian events. Also from Hong Kong, Dr Keith Watkins, on behalf of a team of distinguished co-authors, will talk on quarantine and biosecurity management, and Dr Chris Riggs, Head of Veterinary Clinical Services for the Hong Kong Jockey Club, and BOCOG's Veterinary Services Manager, will explain the local arrangements for veterinary care and attention at the Games. Martin H. Atock, Managing Director, Peden Bloodstock, will outline the logistics of transporting the equine athletes to Hong Kong.

In August 2007, the Good Luck Beijing - Hong Kong SAR 10th Anniversary Cup was held and enabled a number of the procedures and facilities to be tested. Dr David Marlin, who (with many others) did considerable work to help understand the impact and control of heat and humidity on equine athletic performance before the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, will advise on air conditioned facilities and cooling stations at this year's Games. Professor Leo Jeffcott, Veterinary Delegate to the 2008 Games, and for 8 years Chairman of the FEI Veterinary Committee, will report on an extensive, highly relevant and important 2-year study undertaken with Mr Wing-Mo Leung, Senior Scientific Officer, Hong Kong Observatory, to understand the likely weather conditions in August and September 2008. Dr Catherine Kohn, President of the Veterinary Commission of the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, and intimately involved with horse sports throughout most of her working life, will present the results of the horse monitoring work undertaken in August 2007 and explain their significance.

The second part of the programme will comprise a Panel Discussion with all of our speakers and will allow the opportunity for you to ask any question that may concern you about the health and welfare of the horses competing in Hong Kong this summer.

When the proposal for the meeting was first discussed by the Welfare Sub-committee, I commented that FEI must be proactive in providing the necessary information to ensure that National Federations are fully informed to enable them to prepare their horses optimally for the challenging climatic conditions that they will face in Hong Kong. The Workshop will enable the leading scientists and veterinarians in the field to share all available information with stakeholders. This is therefore an important and timely meeting.

I am particularly pleased that the FEI decided that this Workshop should be run under the auspices of the Welfare Sub-committee. Welfare can be an emotive subject but it is essential that the FEI is perceived to be a responsible body that does not shirk its responsibilities when it comes to ensuring that every effort is made to protect the health and welfare of horses competing under its rules and regulations.

I do trust that you will enjoy the Workshop and find it to be of benefit to your teams in preparing for the forthcoming 2008 Olympic Games.