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## Press release

7 March 2024

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### Horses at the heart of everything we do

For many years, the Jumping International de La Baule — Officiel de France has taken a battery of measures to guarantee horse welfare during the competition. This has always been a guiding principle for the organisation —a top priority, but also something that comes naturally.

#### Key points

- Horse welfare front and centre for many years in the Jumping International de La Baule
- First-class facilities to guarantee optimal comfort for horses during the competition
- Barrière Nations Cup format built around equine health in line with the wishes of riders
- A dedicated "Horse Welfare" space in the Village where equine professionals come together
- Kevin Staut has been coming to La Baule every year since 2007 to see the measures first-hand



Animal welfare, a cornerstone of equestrian sports, has been the top concern of the Société des Concours Hippiques de La Baule —the organiser of the Jumping International — for a long time. "The regulations have undergone a sea change in recent years", points out Anne Courouc , a vet at the Jumping de La Baule for over a decade who will serve as Veterinary Services Manager in the upcoming Olympic Games. "It is worth noting that La Baule was a trailblazer in this area. The CSIO has been taking measures to promote animal welfare for many years." The entire competition team understands the importance of this issue, starting with the FEI Veterinary Commission President for the Jumping de La Baule, Richard Corde, who is the president of the Ligue Fran aise de Protection du Cheval (French Horse Protection League) and designated Horse Welfare Officer for the upcoming Olympic Games.

In a demonstration of this philosophy, the Officiel de France has applied for EquuRES, the environmental and animal welfare label for the equine sector. It spans 10 lines of action (transportation, water, infrastructure, manure and waste, buildings, energy, feed, landscapes, care and communications) as the foundation of a continual improvement approach. The Jumping expects to receive the label in 2024.

### **5-star accommodation for the horses**

The Officiel de France benefits from permanent infrastructure allowing it to accommodate more than 98% of the participating horses in boxes belonging to the building, which guarantees optimal comfort. The box units do not exceed more than 26 boxes in the same barn, and each barn has its own shower and is ventilated thanks to openings in the roofs and side doors on either side.

The litters used are 100% natural, made of dusted wood and from sustainable forest management (PEFC label: Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification). In addition to the environmental aspect, wood shavings provide optimal comfort for horses thanks to their volume. The bedding thus creates a comfortable mattress. This also reduces the risk of respiratory problems in horses. A grassland and relaxation area is available near the stables for all the horses present for the competition.

### **The beach as a haven of physical and mental well-being**

The top horses in the world relaxing on the beach as the sun peeks over the horizon have become a regular view in La Baule during the Jumping. It is a salutary experience for the champions, who dip into the sea to get a natural muscle and tendon massage from the waves. In addition, the morning calm on La Baule beach, which stretches for several kilometres, boosts their morale. "Being able to exit the competition area and go to the beach is something that only happens in La Baule", explains Anne Courouc . "Everything is in place to ensure safety. There are no other horses on the beach and biosafety rules are followed to a T."

In fact, sanitary measures are front and centre from the moment the horses arrive. "Once here, the horses get their temperature taken following a well-defined protocol", says Anne Courouc  , who calls upon the students at the Nantes Veterinary School. "All the horses in the same lorry are tested before moving on. If something is wrong, we also have isolation boxes set up at a great distance. The FEI requires at least 50 metres, but we have more than 200 metres here! The boxes in each barn are large and well ventilated to keep the horses in optimal conditions."



### **A sporting programme built around horse welfare**

The events are scheduled and organised to keep the burden on horses to a bare minimum. The Barri  re Nations Cup is the perfect illustration. In contrast with the Olympic format (only three combinations and every score counts), the Jumping International de La Baule has retained a format consisting of four combinations per team with a drop score (i.e. the worst result in each round does not count towards the final score). This approach is perfectly aligned with one of the 46 recommendations of the report released in April 2022 by the Animal Welfare study group of the French National Assembly, on the subject of horse welfare. Representing the riders at the FEI General Assembly, Steve Guerdat stressed the issues at stake with the format of the Nations Cups, with a focus on animal welfare: "The [three-combination] format forces you to finish the round. If not, the team is eliminated. A rider should never be put in the position where he has to finish his round. From a pure point of view, it's much better for sport to have four riders and the drop score." The Jumping de La Baule could not have put it any better.

## A "Horse welfare" space in the village

The "Horse welfare" space, which saw the light of day last year, is returning to the 2024 exhibitors' village. Run jointly with Equus Project, a global project that aims to create the right ecosystem for the development of horses and people, this space will bring horse welfare professionals together. Conferences will be held throughout the competition about this vision, which permeates every aspect of the sector, namely: feed, training in horse-related professions, equine meditation, equicoaching and equine care.



## Kevin Staut: "It pulls out all the stops to keep horses happy"

"Animal welfare is something that comes naturally. When you strive for excellence, you are passionate about basic, fundamental concepts, in other words, everything around the horse. Animal welfare is at the core of everything we build. We need to spread the word about this approach even further. The organisers play a key role in all of this. I've been blessed with the chance to be part of the competition in La Baule for a long time. I've followed the trend that goes hand in hand with this focus on welfare. What sets La Baule apart is that you have a pressure cooker —the main track— for the events, but just a few metres away you have the stable area, where everything is nice and quiet and the pressure just melts away. Both the horses and the people who take care of them can kick back and relax here between one event and the next. They also get to enjoy a grass field where they can spend the day relaxing before heading to the sand warm-up track. The stables are permanent and made from wood, with wide aisles. On top of that, the main track undergoes constant improvements. FEI stewards oversee beach outings to make sure everything is done by the book. This competition leaves nothing to chance. It pulls out all the stops to keep horses happy."

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