

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

August 14, 2024

Thomas Bach
President
The International Olympic Committee

Dear Mr. Bach and Committee Members:

Congratulations on the conclusion of the Games of the XXXIII Olympiad, Paris 2024.

We're writing on behalf of PETA entities around the world, representing 9 million members and supporters, to urge you to eliminate equestrian events from future Olympic Games. The safety of horses and the reputation of the Olympics are at stake.

Paris 2024 was marked by nonstop scandals over the treatment of horses, beginning before the games with the stunning video of British Olympian Charlotte Dujardin viciously whipping a horse and allegations that German rider Max Kühner had been seen "barring" a horse, i.e., striking the animal's shins with a stick to make him jump higher. During the games, two horses bled, riders repeatedly violated the rules against hyperflexion of the neck, and there were instances of "blue tongue," which describes the effect when harsh gear and handling result in loss of blood flow to the tongue.

These incidents follow the disastrous equestrian events in the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, from which a modern pentathlon coach was ejected for punching a frightened horse. Another horse bled from the nostrils from forced overexertion, and a horse was euthanized after sustaining a leg fracture.

The committee's plan to prevent a repeat of these issues was doomed because many competitors, coaches, and veterinarians routinely violate regulations in international competition and have been continually permitted to do so. The Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) doesn't enforce the regulations uniformly or consistently. It [announced](#) last week that it had identified "blue tongue" in several horses used in the dressage competition—but inexplicably says this serious breach of the rules warrants nothing stronger than a lecture. The judges and stewards who were present at the competition would surely have seen the horses' mouths yet took no action. They would also have seen the marshmallow cream smeared on some horses' lips—a technique used to hide the grotesque blue tongue. But there was no inquiry. Similarly, the regulation prohibiting hyperflexion of the neck (known as "rollkur") was repeatedly violated throughout the dressage competition. No action was taken.

Washington1536 16th St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
202-483-PETA**Los Angeles**2154 W. Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90026
323-644-PETA**Norfolk**501 Front St.
Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-PETAInfo@peta.org
PETA.org**Entities**

- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

When there is no intention by competitors to comply with the regulations and no enforcement of those regulations, scandal and abuse are inevitable.

The FEI and its member nations will now likely promise increased scrutiny and reform, as they have every time a video or photo depicting abuse has been released. Consider the following: Colombian-American Olympic coach and former rider Cesar Parra was caught on [video](#) whipping one horse and tying down the head of another. Swiss Olympian Martin Fuchs [whipped](#) a clearly terrified horse who didn't want to jump a fence. Canadian Eric Lamaze's horse [dropped dead](#) during a stadium jumping event. German Olympian Ludger Beerbaum was caught "[barring](#)" a horse. New Zealand Olympian Sir Mark Todd [repeatedly beat](#) a reluctant horse with a thick tree branch. A video reported to be of Danish Olympian Carina Cassøe Krüth [whipping](#) a horse while training under bronze medal winner Andreas Helgstrand in 2022 has just surfaced.

The abuse is entrenched, and all efforts to eradicate it have failed. This was not a problem for the committee when the public was unaware of it. That time has passed. The public has made it clear that it will not tolerate animal suffering for entertainment. The Union Internationale de Pentathlon Moderne (UIPM) recognized this in 2021 when it saw the outrage in response to the whipping and punching of the terrified horse Saint Boy. The UIPM acted swiftly to announce a phaseout of the horse jumping.

Subjugating animals to force them to perform dangerous and unnatural acts is contrary to the physical excellence and harmony among willing human competitors that characterize the rest of Olympic competition. Even if the IOC could achieve the impossible and end the violence and violations, dressage, eventing, and show jumping would still stand in stark contrast to every other sport, as they're the only ones in which participants must be forced to compete.

We urge the committee to take action now by eliminating all equestrian events from the Olympic Games. Thank you.

Respectfully,

PETA U.S.
PETA Asia
PETA Australia
PETA France
PETA Germany
PETA India
PETA Netherlands
PETA Switzerland
PETA U.K.