

The Hard Line



PS VIDEO

Reiners react to wide reaching changes that 2006 rule modifications will present.

BY HEATHER McCUTCHEON

Reiners in Canada and around the world are bracing for changes in 2006 as the rule changes approved in August 2005 will take effect. Two changes in particular have been the most controversial and reflect the shifting landscape of the reining industry and go a long way to help set the stage for true and fair international competition.

By far the new rule that has come to be called 'the new judge's rule' has been creating the most ripples in the international pond. Lance Griffin of DeWinton, Alberta, an National Reining Horse Association Board member who attended the recent meeting simply states, "This rule is causing the largest amount of controversy and will have the biggest impact out of any rule change that we have made in a long time."

The rule states: "Any NRHA Judge(s) that judges a reining show where there are classes offered that coincide with NRHA Categories but are not NRHA approved (excluding beginner and green classes, shows that have less than \$500 added money and FEI events), or is not held by an NRHA breed association affiliate and/or affiliated discipline associations will be subjected to an Investigative Judges Review."

Griffin explains that basically, all classes that have the same eligibility requirements from Rookie up to Open must be NRHA approved for an NRHA judge to judge the class without repercussions. "It is better for the entire sport because it takes everyone in the world that competes at an NRHA reining and puts him or her on the same level because all earnings for riders and horses will be tracked and recorded properly."

Dan Wall, the Executive Director of the NRHA explains further, "Our intention with the rule change is pretty simple, that is to do what is best for the association and the NRHA membership. We are trying to protect the NRHA members, officials and resources by regulating ourselves. The rules for judging are considered our bible, the standards of competition and rules of eligibility are also integral to the success of the NRHA. We hold these things in very high regard."

As it stands now, there are many shows and associations that utilize the NRHA Rulebook and patterns, employ NRHA judges, but hold shows with a minimum amount of NRHA approved classes – or none at all. Within the scope of this rule, the consequences are that the earnings at these shows are not being tracked.

Gerri Greenall from Calgary, Alberta, competed for the Rookie of the Year title in 2004 and qualified for the finals in Oklahoma City, OK. "Currently we have an industry that has an oxymoron occurring. We offer classes that are not NRHA approved but use NRHA earnings

as an eligibility requirement. That allows people to win or place in the unapproved class every year and still be eligible for the NRHA class."

Greenall knows what she is talking about. In 2004 she competed in some unapproved classes and has won several hundred dollars. But because of current rules, she is still eligible for the Rookie class because her NRHA dollars do not total more than \$200. Although she is still eligible, Greenall opted not to compete for the *Horse & Rider* Rookie of the Year title this year, feeling that it would be inappropriate.

"Moving towards approving all classes means all of our reining earnings will be tracked and our eligibility rules will become much clearer.

"In addition, and perhaps more importantly," says Greenall, who volunteers on the board of the Canadian Reining Breeders Classic, "all of our hard earned added money classes will be approved making those dollars attributable and traceable to the winning horses, thus making our horses more valuable and much more marketable. Another benefit I see is that since we will be using consistent and standardized classes in the reining industry, Canada can look ahead at establishing some Canadian recognition programs such as the Top Earning Canadian Horse, or Top Canadian Open Rider etc., allowing us to offer our competitors more

recognition for their achievements."

"The intent of this rule change," says Griffin, "is to create a situation where the existing show committees will want to have all of their classes from the Rookie level up to the Open level in all money categories be NRHA approved due to the fact that they will not be allowed the use of NRHA approved judges if they do not."

The current judging system could be viewed as being owned by the NRHA. It was invented by the NRHA, is taught to anyone who wants to attend a seminar, its rules are reviewed by the board of directors, and is policed, maintained and enforced by the NRHA. And until now, it has been given away to those around the world who have never joined the NRHA. A case in point is the Australian Reining Horse Association that holds a large futurity every year and awards in excess of \$100,000. None of the riders, including the highest money earning riders have their earnings tracked because there are currently no NRHA approved shows in Australia. Yet, NRHA judges are sent to judge the Futurity and judging seminars are held on the continent.

According to the National Reining Horse Association of Australia's web site, at least three horses currently being shown have won in excess of \$20,000 each and 22 horses have won over \$10,000 each – a total of \$280,000. These earnings are based on the NRHA's



Rather than creating a parallel system, reiners can work within the established and trusted guidelines that have been the



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class levels, but because the money won has not been at an NRHA approved show, they have not been recorded.

With 15 years as an NRHA Judge, and 30 years as a trainer and competitor, Lyle Jackson, currently lives in Calgary, Alberta, but spent many years training and showing in Europe so he has a unique perspective on the scope of international competition. “I certainly agree with the intention of the rule. That being to standardize the industry, under one set of rules, one set of classes and one office to keep track of winnings. I am particularly sensitive to it because I have shown a lot in Europe and I have over \$35,000 in European winnings that are not recorded by the NRHA because they were won at shows not NRHA approved.

“Several of the European associations thought they had better ideas than the NRHA and wanted to do things differently, it always ended up being disadvantageous to the sport,” explains Jackson. “The NRHA has been regulating this sport for a long time and have done a great job in developing a judging system that is superior and unique among judged sports. I have a lot of loyalty to them for teaching me, and allowing me to use the system as an NRHA judge. So if his rule causes me a little inconvenience, so be it. From now on I will have to make certain that the classes I am judging are NRHA approved. I will do everything I can to encourage the show committees to approve all of their classes.”

The costs of this rule will be felt most by competitors and show committees. Any rider wishing to show reining and be judged by an NRHA judge will need to have an NRHA membership for 2006. Show committees will be required to purchase the NRHA trophies and follow the NRHA’s payout schedule for all NRHA approved classes from the Rookie to Open level. The exceptions to this will be classes that are open only to foals of a subscribed sire or dam program such as the Canadian Supreme or the Canadian Reining Breeders Classic. While their classes will still have to be NRHA approved, they do not have to purchase NRHA trophies or follow the NRHA payout schedule.

Betty Gardner, who works in the office of the Canadian Supreme believes that it is the competitors who will feel the change, “Other than more paperwork and a small percentage going to the NRHA, I don’t think it will make that much difference to the Canadian Supreme – it’s the competitors who may not like to pay more.”

This rule change may present a large benefit for Canadians and all international riders, but this is also where the second most controversial rule change comes into play.

The NRHA has established the International Affiliate Program. When a country’s National Federation elects to become an international affiliate of the NRHA, they will receive rebates from the NRHA for every approved show and for each membership.

The National Federation (NF) for each country is selected by the Federation Equestre International (FEI). This NF may elect to become an international affiliate of the NRHA. Canada’s NF is Reining Canada which is an autonomous entity that exists to promote reining in Canada and abroad. If Canada elects to become an international affiliate of the NRHA, the following benefits will apply:

foundation of the NRHA since 1966.

- Once there are 100 members and four NRHA approved classes we will be granted one seat on the NRHA Board of Directors.
- Once there are 1,000 members and 25 NRHA approved classes, we will be granted three seats on the NRHA Board of Directors.
- Reining Canada will be charged with reviewing all Non Pro declarations submitted to the NRHA.
- Reining Canada may elect to establish a dual membership between Reining Canada and the NRHA and in return, the NRHA will rebate \$20 to Reining Canada for every member that has an NRHA membership in Canada.
- 50% of all show fees for every NRHA approved show (2.5% of the 5% payback) will be rebated to Reining Canada.
- All NRHA money earned in Canada will be tracked and maintained by the NRHA.

This would effectively remove the argument many reiners in Canada have had regarding Reining Canada and the past year's hassles of dual membership fees, dual earnings trackings, and dual rule books. Now, rather than creating a parallel system, reiners can work within the established and trusted guidelines that have been the foundation of the NRHA since 1966.

For riders such as Greenall, these changes are nothing but beneficial. "The cost of the mandatory approval will be the NRHA 5% retention fee (50% of which will be returned to Canada) and the cost of the trophy, which is not insurmountable particularly given the many benefits, in my opinion."



NRHA rule changes are being made with the intention of making reining, truly, an international sport.

PS VIDEO



Using Conventional Dewormers...
is like shutting the gate after the horse gets out



Encysted small strongyles are known to be the most serious equine parasite today. When this parasite emerges from the lining of your horse's intestinal wall, it causes damage including fever, diarrhea and colic. Conventional single dose dewormers don't eliminate the encysted form, working only after they have emerged and caused damage. This opens the gate for potential health risks and more frequent treatments.

Conventional dewormers are ineffective against strongyles in their encysted stage as shown here.

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