

# The Grooms Charter



## Stage 1 Action Plan

The FEI Grooms Charter signals the commitment of the international equestrian community to ensure the highest levels of care for our equine athletes by supporting grooms in continuing their professional development.

The Charter was signed at the 2024 FEI Sports Forum by the International Equestrian Federation, the International Grooms Association, Equestrian Organisers, Jumping Owners Club, International Jumping Riders Club, International Jumping Officials Club, International Dressage Riders Club and International Vaulting Officials Club.

Following the signing of the Charter, the IGA has taken on the task of creating a Stage 1 Action Plan. The aim of this document is to guide signatories (and the wider community) through the steps we will all take to ensure the principles of the Charter are realised (highlighted in purple on each page).



## The Grooms Charter

Grooms are essential contributors to the equestrian sport, in the day-to-day life of equine and human athletes and at equestrian competitions, whatever the level may be. They are key to the welfare of our horses and in many cases also for the well-being of our human athletes. The grooms community is composed of a diverse group of individuals, from the full-time professional groom to the volunteer, friend or family member who helps out an athlete.

The FEI Grooms Charter sets out fundamental principles endorsed by the equestrian community. It aims to ensure that grooms are knowledgeable, skilled and committed to providing the highest level of care for the horses in their charge and that they are respected and supported in their role.

The FEI Grooms Charter also aims to promote the central importance of the groom's role in the equestrian industry and sporting landscape.

### PRINCIPLES

1. **Horse Welfare:** Grooms should always prioritise the welfare of the horses in their care.
2. **Integrity:** Grooms undertake at all times to adhere to the highest standards of integrity when performing their jobs and to strive to maintain the uppermost reputation of equestrian sport.
3. **Education:** Grooms should continually strive to improve their knowledge and skills through continuing education and professional development.
4. **Safety:** Grooms should always work in a safe environment with respect to their mental and physical wellbeing as well as their fundamental human and labour/employment rights; this applies to both at home and when working at a show/event.

**Commitment:** Each organisation which is a signatory to the Charter commits to adhering to and supporting compliance with the Principles and undertakes to use its best endeavours to ensure that all Grooms who participate in its activities are aware of and commit individually to the Principles.

## 1. Good Employment

The promotion of, and adherence to Good Employment is vital; not just for grooms, but for employers too.

International horse sport cannot deny people their fundamental employment and human rights. The impact is damaging to the integrity of our sports, and makes it harder to recruit Gen Z to the exciting career path of an international groom.

Good Employment has both ethical and practical benefits.

It is proven that Good Employment leads to staff who feel respected and are able to maintain their physical and mental wellbeing. As a result, they are more easily retained in the industry.

**Safety:** Grooms should always work in a safe environment with respect to their mental and physical wellbeing as well as their fundamental human and labour/employment rights; this applies to both at home and when working at a show/event.

### Action

Write a Code of Good Employment for international horse sports and gain FEI endorsement.

Promote the Code via the signatories of the Charter and the NFs.

Use the IGA website as the source of educational content for grooms to understand their fundamental human and labour/employment rights; this applies to both at home and when working at a show/event.

Ensure that as many languages as possible can be understood by investing in a translation for all content (ESP and FRA as a first instance).

Promote best practice and celebrate Good Employment from FEI level employers who adhere to the Code.

## 2. Clean Sport

Understanding how to avoid an Anti-Doping Rule Violation (ADRV) is one of the most important aspects of the groom's role.

Giving grooms formal anti-doping education will empower them to make better choices for their horses and give riders confidence that their grooms understand the risks and responsibilities of being a Person Responsible.

Additionally, any rider should be able to demonstrate efforts have been made to educate their grooms about anti-doping.

**Education:** Grooms should continually strive to improve their knowledge and skills through continuing education and professional development.

**Integrity:** Grooms undertake at all times to adhere to the highest standards of integrity when performing their jobs and to strive to maintain the uppermost reputation of equestrian sport.

### Action

Create a focus on groom specific education regarding anti-doping - 'International Groom Clean'

Develop a rider-specific campaign where leading riders endorse the IGA and Anti Doping education.

### 3. Improvements on the shows and reporting

All shows from 1\* to 5\* must have suitable and best-practice facilities for grooms.

Quick access to food, water and serviced washroom facilities are all fundamental human rights and should be the minimum expectation for all shows.

Grooms must be able to report issues with confidence that it will not affect their own employment status, and that their complaint is received and actioned, when possible. Riders need to support the reporting of issues to result in better facilities for their staff, and their horses.

**Safety:** Grooms should always work in a safe environment with respect to their mental and physical wellbeing as well as their fundamental human and labour/employment rights; this applies to both at home and when working at a show/event.

#### Action

Increase trust and understanding of the FEI Reporting system and how it works.

IGA, IJRC and IDRC work together to encourage grooms to report when they encounter a problem, and for riders to also encourage their staff to report.

The FEI to give an annual review of reports received and actions taken to mitigate problems at shows.

Develop education resources and review the current remit of the FEI Stewards and their interaction with grooms and their facilities.

EO to work with the IGA to create a brand which identifies best practice, and celebrate those shows which are 'Good for Grooms'.

Influence show and Championship sponsorship acquisition leaders to consider CSR within their pitches with an ultimate aim of a change of culture of the awarding of grooms' prizes within the international scene.

## 4. Education for grooms

Caring for elite-level equine athletes is complex and skilled work, but still, too many grooms learn 'on the job'. Whilst there is no substitute for experience, giving grooms access to Continued Professional Development (CPD) and education would benefit all.

Prioritising groom education is also an important way to demonstrate the importance and sustainability of this career path.

None of us can afford to ignore the issue of Social Licence – it is vital grooms know what to do, and who to go to, in the event they have serious welfare concerns about training or management methods.

**Horse Welfare:** Grooms should always prioritise the welfare of the horses in their care.

**Education:** Grooms should continually strive to improve their knowledge and skills through continuing education and professional development.

### Action

Consult with riders to understand what areas of education they feel would benefit international level grooms.

Work with the IGA Experience Directors to create education content.

Ensure that international grooms have a better understanding of the issues surrounding horse welfare and provide a safe process for whistleblowing.

Prepare advice for grooms who encounter horse welfare issues. This will sit on the appropriate stakeholder and NF websites.

Signatories of the Charter and NFs to promote the upskilling of our workforce.

## 5. Recognition

As international horse sport increasingly struggles to attract and retain grooms, changing perceptions about this career path is essential.

People outside the horse industry must understand the extent of the groom's contribution and responsibilities. This is a career that offers the opportunity to be around the very highest levels of horse sport. Working as an international-level competition groom should be something any young horse enthusiast might aspire to.

Sharing the professionalism and skill of our current grooms not only is a way to thank them for their work but also to attract the next generation.

The FEI Grooms Charter also aims to promote the central importance of the groom's role in the equestrian industry and sporting landscape.

### Action

Groom facilities, services and inclusion in awards ceremonies to be included in Championship and show planning from the outset.

Grooms to be featured on signatories' and NFs social media and websites:

- Grooms should be named on team announcements.
- When photos of grooms are used on social media they should be named.
- Grooms should have their own page within each Signatories website architecture – with a link to the Charter.

Grooms prizes to be established at more shows, with an eventual aim of making this 'the norm'. Grooms' prizes should be for the benefit of the groom, with the eventual aim of establishing a system where the groom is awarded a portion of the prize pot.

Encourage more public acknowledgement of grooms by riders in the media and on their own social media.