

**Rule:** DR121

**Rule Change Type:** Extraordinary - Health and welfare of the horses is the very nature of this rule change proposal. Currently competitive dressage horses are overly constrained and restrained with improper use of bitted bridles by the riders. To the point that the competitive dressage horses, as shown by the winners, cannot even physically meet the requirements contained in the Rules of Dressage. DR101 which states in part 6: "The head should remain in a steady position as a rule slightly in front of the vertical with a supple poll as the highest point of the neck and no resistance should be offered to the rider." Currently competitive dressage horses are overbent and behind the vertical when ridden with bits. DR 101 part 1 states: "As a result it makes the horse calm, supple, loose and flexible..." Rigid muscles, primarily in the neck, do not allow a horse to be supple, loose and flexible. DR 101 part 3 states: "The horse thus gives the impression of doing of his own accord what is required of him." Competitive dressage horses do not have such appearance as the riders using bitted bridles are applying such pressures to the bit as to inflict physical restrictions to the horses' muscle operations. The welfare of the horse rule GR839 Cruelty to and Abuse of a Horse, part 4 uses the words "...but are not limited thereto:..." Physical constraint and restraints imposed upon the horse by the rider through excess pressures applied to the bit cause muscle injuries to separate and/or combined muscle regions of the horse. These tonic spasm injuries can be easily identified by onsite palpation of the muscle structures. The welfare of the horse rule GR841 states: "...such animal must not show evidence of lameness..." Lameness is not just a hoof and/or lower leg issue. Lameness does include muscle injuries which impede the anatomical freedom of the operational functions of the individual and group muscles. These tonic spasm injuries can be easily identified by onsite palpation of the muscle structures. 1. Horses ridden in bitless bridles, under normal circumstances, do not suffer from tonic spasm injuries to the muscle structures. 2. Horses ridden in bitless bridles, can with correct schooling practices, meet and exceed the descriptions of the movements contained within the Rules of Dressage. 3. Refusing to allow bitless bridles to "immediately" be able to compete in "all" levels of dressage is forcing the competitive owner/rider to impose unnecessary physical abuse upon the competitive dressage horse.

From time to time rules are adopted which change the sequence of rule numbering. The rule reference used here is the rule number that appears in the current website version of the United States Equestrian Federation, Inc. Rulebook

**Proposed Change:**

**DR121 Saddlery and Equipment.** [Chapter DR. Dressage Division] **Change to read:**

2. For Training, First and Second Level tests and FEI Pony tests, *a bitless bridle* or a plain snaffle bridle is required. *Bitless bridles may not use* with a regular cavesson, a dropped noseband, a flash noseband (a combination of a cavesson noseband and a dropped noseband attachment) or a crossed noseband. Except for the FEI Pony tests, a crescent noseband is also permitted at these levels. Except for the crescent noseband, buckles and a small disk of sheepskin, which may be used in the intersection of the two leather straps of a crossed noseband, the headstall and cavesson/noseband of the bridle must be made entirely of leather or leather-like material. A padded cavesson/ noseband and crownpiece are allowed.

3. For Federation Third and Fourth Level tests same as (2) above, or a simple double bridle (bridoon [snaffle] and bit [curb] and curb chain, lip strap and rubber or leather cover for curb chain optional, cavesson noseband only).

4. FEI tests ridden at national competitions (excluding USEF High Performance classes, USEF Young Adult qualifying classes, as well as FEI Junior and FEI Young Rider qualifying classes), a plain snaffle bridle, or simple double bridle, *or bitless bridle* may be used, as above in DR121.2-.3. Only snaffles, curbs and bridoons pictured under Figure 1-B are permitted in FEI tests. For the FEI Dressage Tests for 4, 5, and 6-year-old horses and the USEF Dressage Test for 4-year old horses, a plain snaffle bridle *or bitless bridle* is required, as above (DR121.2). However, when a snaffle is used in FEI tests, a crescent noseband is not permitted and a snaffle is required as described in Figure I and as pictured in Figure 1B. In addition to the crescent noseband, the crossed (figure-8, Mexican) noseband is not permitted for the FEI Dressage Tests for 4, 5, and 6-year-old horses and the USEF test for 4-year old horses.

**Proponent:** E. Allan Buck

**Contact:** E. Allan Buck  
 PO Box 711908  
 Salt Lake City, UT 84171-

**USEF #:** 5127939      **Daytime Phone:** (801) 678-4259  
**Date Received:** 4/13/2010      **Email:** spiritbridle@yahoo.com

**Intent of Proposal:**

To create the opportunity for owner/riders of bitless dressage horses to alleviate the negative impacts that are associated with riding in a bitted bridle. By competing against bitless horse/rider combinations, the bitted rider will be given the opportunity to see horses moving according to the descriptions of the movements. This opportunity should create an incentive for the bitted rider to learn to ride with softer contact and bring the horse

**Proposed Rule Change/Bylaw Change**

into the descriptions. This proposal will benefit the dressage industry because it sends a clear and concise message to participants and to the observing public that the Mission Statement regarding the health and welfare of the horse is taken extremely seriously by USEF. Ultimately this proposal is directed at having a positive impact upon the muscular health and welfare of the dressage horse. USEF, through this rule change, will be the world wide leader in establishing changes that are actually for the betterment of the health and welfare of the horse.

*Proposed Effective Date:* 9/1/11

*Linked Rule Changes:*

*Proponent*

E. Allan Buck

*Action**Date**Committee/Organization**Draft: Action-Date*

*Budget and Finance Committee Comments:*

*Staff and Committee Comments*

*Legal Comments:*

*Other Comments:*

*Board of Directors**Action**Date*