



## Why We Need an Equine SafeSport Program

By Armand Leone

*In this opinion piece on The Chronicle of The Horse, Armand argues for the introduction of a mandatory equine SafeSport training program to bolster education and improve the public's perception of horses in sport*

We apply the adage that prevention is better than cure when it comes to keeping our human athletes safe by requiring all participants in U.S. Equestrian Federation competitions to complete SafeSport training. Our equine athletes deserve the same approach.

Every participant in USEF-recognized competition must complete an online SafeSport training course annually. The courses are designed to educate our community about best practices for preventing physical and sexual abuse in the sport — and rightly so. Any opportunity to prevent abuse in all its forms should be seized upon, rather than simply castigating the behavior after the fact. Education and prevention are more important than punishment.



*Correct and ethical handling of horses is just one topic that an equine SafeSport course could address. Photo by [Jump Media](#)*

The required training courses, run by the U.S. Center for SafeSport, focus on awareness and prevention of athlete abuse. They tackle thorny topics such as defining what constitutes an appropriate relationship between a coach and a minor pupil, and what behaviors are acceptable versus what crosses a line to harassment or abuse.

A similar equine SafeSport training program is needed for everyone in the industry — including trainers, riders, drivers, vaulters, owners and grooms.

Like athlete SafeSport, equine SafeSport for horses should be a mandatory annual online education course required for participation in USEF events. This would help competitors know what stewards are looking for and what behaviors or training practices are injurious to the horse.

Equine SafeSport would discuss the best practices on issues such as:

- **Training aids:** Outlining appropriate and inappropriate use of training devices such as whips, spurs and draw reins.
- **Nutrition:** Teaching requirements about proper hydration, nutrition and heat exhaustion.
- **Lungeing/exercise:** Determining appropriate limits for lungeing horses and riding per day.
- **Suitability:** Making sure the rider is suited to the horse.

Positive and proactive steps to prevent horse abuse should be taken through the education of our community and the establishment of agreed-upon training and care standards. An annual mandatory equine SafeSport program that all participants must complete to enter a USEF competition is needed.

We would be providing a genuine service to our equine partners by improving their welfare and also to our sport by helping people better understand and trust that what they are seeing on the field of play is geared toward protecting the horse's wellbeing at all times.

[Read the Full Article on Chronicle of the Horse](#)

## Q&A: Key Considerations When Donating Your Horse to a College Riding Program

**Question:** *I'm no longer able to ride and show my horse regularly, so I'd like to donate my horse to a college riding program. What do I need to consider?*



**Answer:** There are a number of things to take into consideration. First, consider how well you know the college's riding program and if your horse is a suitable fit for that program. If it's your own alma mater, you're likely familiar with the quality of care of the horses and how they are used. If not, ask questions about how the horse will be used. You also should be realistic about your horse's abilities to do well in that program. For instance, is the horse tolerant of numerous riders? If the horse generally needs a large amount of turnout, can the program facilitate that?

Next, find out the requirements for donation for the school. If it's a university with a highly successful riding program that accepts donated horses on a regular basis, the school likely has a donation application and screening process in place, like [this one](#) from the University of Findlay.

All colleges will require some form of paperwork, and many may request that the horse be appraised by a certified equine appraiser as part of that paperwork and application process. When hiring an appraiser, be sure to ask around for reliable references and find someone with experience with your style of riding and type of horse, as they will be basing the appraisal on factors such as the fair market value for your type of horse, the horse's show record, and its behavior and conformation.

Once the paperwork is completed and the horse is initially accepted, the university will very likely want to take the horse on trial. If this is the case, make sure you put into writing the details of the trial, much as you would a [lease agreement](#).

If the trial goes well, you'll need to complete the proper paperwork to officially transfer the ownership of the horse to the university, and you'll want to ensure that they have any registration paperwork for the horse, such as its passport.

Now, here's where my initial concern comes in. Your horse will inevitably reach a point where he can no longer be ridden by the university's students. What happens then?

You can help eliminate that risk by ensuring that this is discussed, that you are fully informed, and, if possible, that it is put into writing. Although there are risks, donating a horse to a university can be a very rewarding experience. With the right homework, a very beneficial one for you, the horse, the college, and the students who now get to learn from, love, and enjoy your horse!

[Read The Full Q&A](#)

*For advice and counsel related to the equestrian industry, contact Leone Equestrian Law at [info@equestriancounsel.com](mailto:info@equestriancounsel.com).*

*Led by Armand Leone, Jr., MD, JD, MBA, Leone Equestrian Law LLC provides legal services and consultation for equestrian professionals ranging from riders and trainers to managers in the FEI disciplines on a wide variety of issues.*

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