

Abstract “The Future of Eventing – at a crossroads”

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The equestrian triathlon named eventing has had to deal with serious or fatal accidents in the past. The accidents leave a trail of discussion by experts and non-equestrians and are a constant call for action. With the power of public opinion and social media growing by the day eventing could be under serious threat, if more and more serious accidents would happen. In the sport itself there is a need for more professionalism. In recent years, riders have been more open about the financial aspects of eventing and earnings at an eventing competition. This research looked into professionalizing the eventing sport and the demands for increasing welfare for both horse and rider.

Method: This research consisted of a millennial survey for eventers born between 1981 and 2000, and 20 interviews with eventing-, animal welfare- and animal rights experts. The survey consisted of 65 eventing specific questions. The interviews entailed questions about the Dutch eventingsport, welfare of the eventing horses and safety. The emphasis on a specific topic differed between experts. The experts were chosen based on experience, field of expertise and organization. Multiple models were made based on the literature, results of the survey and expert interviews for the future of eventing.

Results: The millennial survey has been filled in by 159 respondents meeting the birth year criteria of 1981 to 2000. The largest group of respondents consist of riders and instructors (N=145). Most millennial riders participate in grassroots (B till Z) eventing (N=103) and a smaller group (N=40) participates in international one to four star eventing. Most Millennials see themselves as all-round amateurs (N=93). Millennial professionals in eventing are a minority group (N=11). A total of 20 interviews were taken with a solid and diverse group of eventing-, animal welfare- and animal rights experts. In order to practice eventing, riders, organizations and others who are involved in eventing have a responsibility to assure proper safety and welfare for both horse and rider, according to eventing experts. Overall welfare is highly valued by millennials and interviewed experts. In order to maintain or reach an “ultimate” form of welfare, several improvements could be made. Millennials and experts both agree that Dutch eventing courses could be improved on the style of building and by implementing a learning curve throughout the season. Next to that, (more) rider fitness and training the horses with wearable technology are future trends. Millennials and experts also agree on more education on the management of eventing horses.

Conclusion: Based on this research, it can be concluded the future of Dutch eventing consists of multiple factors, such as the level of cross country building, skills of the eventing rider, management of eventing horses, level of professionalization and pro activeness. The monitoring of eventing horses and focus on the fitness and riding skills of the eventing rider are returning factors throughout this research. This shows that both millennials and eventing experts highly value the welfare of Dutch eventing horses. In addition, this research shows that safety has an influence on welfare. By increasing safety the welfare of the horses will go up. This is seen in the demand for a learning curve throughout Dutch eventing competitions and more focus on the riding skills of the rider. Millennials and eventing experts find that the Dutch eventingsport has a good foundation. However, there is room for improvement. This is concluded based on the demand by millennials and eventing experts for more good quality eventing competitions and training facilities, more advancement of eventing riders throughout the Dutch eventing classes and to create more of a top sport environment for ambitious (young) eventing riders.