

## Question and Answers for Para Equestrians competing in Dressage

### How do I get involved in the Para Equestrian Classes at national level shows?

If you have a permanent, measurable disability you may compete in Para Equestrian (PE) Classes. PE classes are held at either FEI/USEF PE shows (for riders with a disability) or at open USEF/USDF shows.

If you require compensating aids or adaptations to allow you to compete, you must apply for a United States Equestrian Federation "USEF" Dispensation Certificate. To learn more about the USEF Dispensation Program, please go to the following web page of the USEF: <http://www.usef.org/Contentpage2.aspx?id=hppara> . Or by following this path: [www.usef.org](http://www.usef.org) - breeds/disciplines - disciplines - Para Equestrian - High Performance Para Equestrian.

The dispensation certificates are used only for permanent measurable disabilities, not those that are temporary. This dispensation certificate will list all appropriate compensating aides and adaptive equipment that the particular athlete will be permitted to use in competition. The aids are to be compensatory in nature, not providing any advantage to any athlete.

The aides and equipment listed on the certificate are approved by the USEF Adaptive Sports Committee. The committee will review each applicant's individual needs and aids requested and prepare a dispensation certificate permitting such aids and equipment if deemed necessary and safe.

Not all riders will need compensating aids or adaptations to compete. These riders should include a doctor's letter stating their permanent disability with their entries. This will inform the show secretary that a dispensation certificate is not needed and that they do not require compensating aids or adaptations.

### How can I find out where I can compete and competition information?

Currently the FEI Para Equestrian Classes are offered at national level dressage competitions. The United States Dressage Federation ([www.usdf.org](http://www.usdf.org)) web site hosts a page that lists all USDF Licensed shows by region. The show page includes a legend of codes that lists the classes and divisions that have been approved for each competition. Shows offering Para Equestrian classes will have a designation of "PE" next to the show name. Also, the USEF website, [www.usef.org](http://www.usef.org), allows an individual to search competitions by discipline. In addition, you may visit the FEI website, [www.fei.org](http://www.fei.org) to obtain information on international competitions. If there is a show in the area that does not currently offer these classes, consider asking show management to offer these classes. A useful document to provide organizers is "*Management Guide to Hosting Para Equestrian (PE) Dressage Classes*" which is posted on both the USDF and the USEF web sites.

### Will I be allowed to participate in regular classes at national level shows?

Yes, of course and you can use the compensating aides and adaptive equipment listed on your Dispensation Certificate. However, you need to follow the current equivalent levels and tack rules. They are:

FEI Para Equestrian Grades Ia and Ib are equivalent to USDF Intro Level.

FEI Para Equestrian Grade II is equivalent to USEF Training Level.

FEI Grade III is equivalent to USEF First Level.

FEI Grade IV is equivalent to USEF Third Level.

Horses are only allowed to perform at consecutive levels. For example, if you are performing in the FEI Grade II classes, then you could ride either Intro and Training, or Training and First, in addition to your Grade II tests.

If cross entering between the FEI Para Classes and the USEF National tests, only the bits permitted for the equivalent USEF level will be permitted for use in both the FEI Para Equestrian tests and the equivalent USEF level. If entered in only FEI Para Equestrian Tests at a competition, riders have the option of using either a plain snaffle or simple double bridle.

Many riders challenge themselves to ride above their grading level in national or FEI classes. By providing your dispensation certificates (if needed) with your entries, you may ride in any National/FEI level at which you are capable while using the compensating aides and adaptive equipment listed. You may not be able to participate in any of the FEI Para Tests due to the consecutive level rule if you are riding at a higher level. For instance, a Grade IV rider may show their horse at the FEI Prix St. Georges level in regular dressage shows, but since the FEI Grade IV tests are equivalent to USEF Third Level and more than one level below the Prix St. Georges level, this rider would not be able to show in both the PSG and Grade IV (or Third Level) tests at the same competition.

### Where can I find the FEI Para Equestrian Tests that are used in these classes?

These tests are currently posted on the FEI web site under the Para Equestrian Discipline area. These are free downloads at [www.FEI.org](http://www.FEI.org).

### What memberships and registrations with the USDF and USEF will be needed to participate in national level competitions that offer the FEI Para Equestrian classes?

When competing in ONLY the FEI Para Equestrian classes – the USDF exempts riders, horses, and owners of any memberships, registrations, and non-member fees.

The USEF requires the following information for participating in the FEI Para Equestrian Classes:

- Horse – Must have at least a USEF Horse ID (free if done on-line)
- Rider – membership (Senior must have also paid a discipline fee)
- Owner – membership (Senior must have also paid a discipline fee)

If entering any national tests, then all the current membership requirements are in effect. The link that lists both the USEF and USDF membership and registration requirements is <http://www.usdf.org/competitions/competitors/membership-checklist.asp>.

**What do I need to include with my entry to participate in classes at national level shows?**

The current dispensation guidelines state that four copies of your dispensation certificate must be included with your entry. This is for the judge's review, the technical delegates, and show management. Copies of your certificate are attached to your test copy so the judge may have it during your performance. It will help the show office, if you do not need a dispensation aide, to include a copy of a doctor's letter stating your permanent disability and that you do not need a dispensation. It is recommended that you include a copy of the tests you wish to perform with your entry. This ensures that show management will be aware of the exact tests you want to ride and will help avoid any last minute confusion.

**Are there any "all Para Equestrian" events?**

At this time, most Para Equestrian competitions are held abroad. But in 2010, the USA is hosting the World Equestrian Games in which Para Equestrian Dressage will be held. This will be the first time that the Para athletes will compete in an international game. More information on this event can be found at [www.feigames2010.org](http://www.feigames2010.org).

**What is "classification" and what events require classification?**

Equestrians with permanent, measurable disabilities are encouraged to become classified. Currently, for athletes wishing to participate in national level shows, only a dispensation certificate is required. To compete in national championships, selections trials, or international events, classification is mandatory.

National or International Classification must be performed by one or more FEI approved Classifiers in order to participate in an all Para Equestrian events, national championships, selection trials for international championships, or the Paralympic program as an athlete on a National/Elite team or the Paralympic team. Classification is an attempt to ensure fair equestrian competition. All riders with a disability who intend to enter national championships, selection trials or international competitions must produce an FEI or USEF classification card that states their grade, profile and approved compensation aids. The assessed impairment and the resulting functional profile is compared with other profiles that should have similar ability when mounted. There are five grades of competition within each competition grade. Grade Ia and Ib is for the riders with a severe impairment, Grade IV is for the riders with least impairment. The competition within each Grade can then be judged on the functional skill of the rider regardless of impairment. Impairments are issues in body function or structure, such as a significant deviation or loss. Impairments may be broadly classified as physical (including locomotor), intellectual, and/or sensory.

**Do I have to compete at my classification grade?**

No, as with everything in life, people have are at different levels of competency. Some people are just beginning their equestrian affair and need the chance to learn to ride. Starting competing in a lower grade class is permitted.

**How do I get classified for my sport?**

If you are interested in being classified, please contact the USEF Director of Para Equestrian Activities at (908) 326-1153. The director will coordinate an approved Classifier from your area.

**How do I get on the USEF Dressage Para Equestrian Ranking List?**

Please visit the USEF website at [www.usef.org](http://www.usef.org), breeds/disciplines, disciplines, Para Equestrian, High Performance Para Equestrian. The Dressage Para Equestrian Ranking List Specifications will be posted along with the Ranking List. The criteria may change annually, so stay informed by regularly checking the website.

**How do I qualify for the Paralympic Team?**

Please visit the USEF website at [www.usef.org](http://www.usef.org), breeds/disciplines, disciplines, Para Equestrian, High Performance Para Equestrian. The current Paralympic Selection Procedures will be posted.

**What other source of information can help me in participating as a Para Equestrian?**

Always reference the USEF rule book for the most current rules and information.

**What are other websites I can visit to obtain more information?**

In addition to the previously mentioned web sites, you can also visit [www.paralympics.com](http://www.paralympics.com) for a complete list of sports included in the Paralympics. You can also find information regarding disabled sports at the following websites: Disabled Sports USA, [www.dsusa.org](http://www.dsusa.org), National Disability Sports Alliance, [www.ndsaonline.org](http://www.ndsaonline.org).

**Who can I contact to help me get started?**

The USEF Director of Para Equestrian Activities at (908) 326-1153, or by contacting the USDF at [paraequestrian@usdf.org](mailto:paraequestrian@usdf.org) or (859)-971-2277 can help answer your questions or direct you to the right person.