Rule	Tracking	Draft	Proposal Type	Effective Date	Proponent	Status
DR 121.0	144-25	1	Standard	12/1/2026	Dressage	Approved (6/16/2026)

DR121 Tracking #144-25 Draft #1 Approved

Rule Change Type	Effective Date	Draft Received	Board Action
Standard	12/1/2026	1/28/2026	Approved 6/16/2026

Rule Change Intent

The intent of this proposal is to allow only the use of a snaffle bridle at Third Level and below, removing the option to compete in a double bridle until Fourth Level. Under current rules, there is no age limit for horses competing at Third Level, while horses competing at Fourth Level must be a minimum of six years of age. This rule change would prevent the use of the double bridle in competition on horses below the age of six. The change aligns with global equine welfare initiatives and best practices in training and competition.

Proponent Details

Dressage

Contact Information

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Linked Rules

Comments

Andalusian/Lusitano

Draft 1: Recommends Approval 03/18/2026

Arabian

Draft 1: Recommends Approval 03/16/2026

Connemara

Draft 1: Recommends Approval 04/14/2026

Council - Intl Discipline

Draft 1: Recommends Approval 05/26/2026

Council - Natl Breed & Discipline

Draft 1: Recommends Approval 05/26/2026

Draft 1: The Council approves of the rule change, however, there are specific breeds that refer to the DR rules that would like to add exceptions into their chapters so the language would remain the way the original rule reads. This would be for breed specific DR classes.

Friesian

Draft 1: Recommends Disapproval 03/18/2026

Draft 1: The committee is not in favor of this rule change as they wish for horses competing at third level to continue having the option to compete in a double bridle, especially since Friesians tend to be quite strong moving and powerful.

Morgan

Draft 1: Recommends Disapproval 04/16/2026

Draft 1: The committee feels that changing this rule, for the option to no longer be given for competing in a double bridle at Third Level, is not giving the due respect to our horsemen to know what is best for that particular horse and rider combination. The committee feels that this rule change is too limiting and riders should have the option at third level, as at this level, a rider should be confident enough to use such equipment and make the decision about which equipment is best for them to use.

USDF

Draft 1: Recommends Approval 04/09/2026

Draft 1: No additional comment

Member Comments

Paula Langan — Draft #1

disapprove. Double bridle should be optional at Third Level and above due to the wide range of horse types , training and rider ability.

Amy Jablonovsky — Draft #1

This rule should receive approval as far too many people are showing in full bridles before the horse's training is at a point where a full bridle compliments the rider's and horse's level of training rather than being a mere status symbol and a detriment to the welfare of the horse.

Natalie Doebele — Draft #1

I believe this rule change takes away the autonomy of riders and owners to make the best decision for their particular horse. There are some horses who prefer the double bridle, and riders and owners should be able to compete at Third level in a double if it is the preference of the horse. The intent of the rule change seem to be to protect horses who are "too young" for a double, which should be accomplished by proposing a minimum age for a horse to compete in a double, and not by removing the option for the double from an entire level. As written this will likely impact more "of age" horses than the young horses it's claiming to protect.

Susan Segerman — Draft #1

Use of a double or snaffle should be at the discretion of the rider and trainer. Let’s not further alienate our AA riderss!

Karen Rock — Draft #1

I think it up the the rider and the trainer to decide what is best for the horse. At 3rd level, the carriage and power should be displayed and the finesse of the double bridle should be shown.

Kristine Downs — Draft #1

This rule has been in place many years, and has in my 21 years of show experience, been a good rule. Adding the option to compete at PSG in a snaffle was wonderful, and I did so 2 years ago. However taking away this OPTION feels controlling and unnecessary, I have a 17.2 hh Danish Warmblood that I ride alternately in snaffle and double. But in the canter with changes and mediums he can get quite strong, and this is an EFFECTIVE training tool for that level of collection. Taking this away seems ridiculous to me.

Michelle Klasing — Draft #1

At this stage a horse is being asked for more uphill balance, straighteness and self carriage. The requirements have even been changed in 118.2 to expand the purpose of the third levels with consistent engagement and collection. A double bridle has long been a tool that helps encourage these requirements. I feel instead of making it a third level rule, because it’s mentioned as an age concern for younger horses, approaching this level, put out a blanket rule for an age limit on double bridles that doesn’t effect third level. This rule will effect a lot of amateurs in particular who are trying to achieve Bronze medal goals on maybe more schooled, older horse who will go better in double bridle. It will also be more advantageous to the horse in the long run bc they wont have bad riding prolonged in a snaffle bridle to reach these goals. Not all people ride third in a double but the people who do I believe it’s better for the horse as well as the rider.

Maggie Walker Mosman — Draft #1

Keep the double an option at third level. Encourage more rider education, bit/bridle fitting and rewarding correct riding/training regardless of the bridle.
Penalize tension, overbending and forceful riding regardless of equipment. A well ridden double should should reduce pressure of aids and hand activity, not increase it.

Diane Owen — Draft #1

Please continue with the double bridle optional at third level. I am not in favor of removing the option of a double bridle at third level.

Jessica Pescatrice — Draft #1

I respectfully disagree with the proposed rule change to disallow the double (Weymouth) bridle at Third Level. The decision of when a horse is ready for this tool should remain the responsibility of the trainer and rider, based on the horse’s education, balance, strength, and individual needs. Like any piece of tack, the double bridle itself is not inherently problematic when used correctly and thoughtfully.

If the concern is specifically related to young horses competing in a double bridle before they are physically or mentally mature enough, then it would make more sense to address that concern through an age-based rule rather than a blanket restriction tied to training level. A horse’s readiness is not always defined solely by the level at which it competes.

Additionally, at a time when dressage is already facing declining participation and accessibility concerns, this change could unintentionally create further barriers. Some riders rely on the refinement and communication offered by a double bridle to effectively and humanely manage larger-moving or more powerful horses. Removing that option may discourage participation rather than support it.

I believe education, correct training, and horsemanship are better solutions than broad restrictions that remove rider and trainer discretion.

Meghan Rees — Draft #1

I disagree with this proposal. If the USEF does not want 6-year-old in doubles change the age required for 3rd level. Don't punish the majority of horses and riders doing third level that are well above 6-years-old or change it to specify horses 6 and under must use a snaffle bit only.

Jill Vonderhaar — Draft #1

Third level is considered an intermediate level and at that level both the horse and rider should be skilled enough to use a double bridle appropriately. Equipment should not be based on the horse's age but on when the horse is ready. You can have a horse that has a late start or is out of work and not ready for the level he is showing even if age eligible. (6 yo showing 4th but development is more like a 2nd/3rd level horse). Also introducing double bridle and flying changes at third level seem to go hand in hand as the horse needs more sit and collection for this level- for certain horse types a double may be an appropriate equipment option.

Susan Collins — Draft #1

If the goal is to prevent horses aged 6 or below from being shown in double bridles, then make a rule addressing that. A rule prohibiting riders at third level from using double bridles as a blanket prohibition does not protect or improve welfare; there are many horses who would be better off with the subtle aids possible in a double that would be much stronger in a snaffle and who would be subject to a less enjoyable experience if that were mandated. Riders should be able to show in equipment that best suits their horses and levels of training, and if they err in those decisions, their scores should reflect that. Inappropriate contact (in ANY bridle) should be scored accordingly.

Heather Spence — Draft #1

I would like to allow the double bridle at third level. It helps my horse in his transition to the upper levels by encouraging him to flex and therefore work more from behind and sit down in more collection. If people are not using the double bridle correctly, they should be addressed and others who train very carefully should be able to stay the course. An alternative could be to limit the severity of the bits as I feel those can be a real issue. Only allow a certain length shank, for example.

Joanna Grant — Draft #1

At a time when dressage participation is already declining, any rule changes that make the sport more restrictive—particularly for adult amateurs—should be carefully considered for their broader impact on participation and accessibility. The proposed change removes rider choice without clear evidence that the current option negatively impacts welfare and may unintentionally discourage participation among the very riders who make up a significant portion of the dressage community. For adult amateurs like myself, riding large, powerful young warmbloods, the option to use a double bridle at Third Level can provide additional confidence, communication, and control while introducing more demanding movements and increased collection. Removing that option would make competition less accessible and, in some cases, may discourage riders from competing altogether. Many adult amateurs have the knowledge and ability to use a double bridle correctly and responsibly, and maintaining the current rule respects individual horse and rider needs while preserving flexibility, inclusivity, and continued engagement in the sport.

Darbie Cummings-Hurst — Draft #1

Third level contains movements that require an increased education and feel from the rider. A rider at this level should be expected to use a double bridle well and with finesse, and some horses really like the stability of the double bridle especially for these movements. Perhaps there could be an age limit for double bridle usage (6 years of age or older), rather than it being based on the level.

Jennifer Grant — Draft #1

Double bridle should be allowed at 3rd level.

DR121 Saddlery and Equipment. Change to read:

Figure 121.3: Permitted bridoon bits. Bridoon bits are used in combination with a curb bit to form a double bridle which is permitted only at ~~Third~~ ***Fourth*** Level and above. See also Annex A posted on the Federation website for additional information on permitted and prohibited bits.

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Figure 121.4: Permitted curb bits. Curb bits are used in combination with a bridoon bit to form a double bridle which is permitted only at ~~Third~~ ***Fourth*** Level and above. See also Annex A posted on the Federation website for additional information on permitted and prohibited bits.

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j. Bridles allowed in Federation (national) competitions:

1. For Tests at ~~Second~~ ***Third*** Level and below, FEI Tests for Children, and FEI Pony tests, a plain snaffle bridle is required in warm up and in competition.

2. For ~~Third and~~ Fourth Level tests a snaffle bridle or double bridle ~~are~~ ***is*** permitted in the warm up and in competition.

6. Para Dressage athletes. Riders competing only in FEI Para Dressage tests ***or Fourth Level and above*** may use either a snaffle bridle or double bridle. Riders competing in both FEI Para Dressage tests and USDF or USEF tests at the same competition at ~~second~~ ***Third*** level and below, must use a plain snaffle bridle in all tests and warmup for those tests. ~~When competing only at third level or above, a snaffle bridle or double bridle may be used in warm-up and in competition.~~

DR121 Saddlery and Equipment. Change to read:

Figure 121.11. Bridles Allowed in Competitions Under Federation Rules

Competition	Snaffle Bridle	Double Bridle
USEF training, first, ~~and~~ second ***and third*** levels	✓	✗
USEF ~~third and~~ fourth level~~s~~	✓	✓