

Rule changes to allow cross-under bitless bridles in competition must be initiated by you, the rider. Here's how to get started.

Many thanks for your interest in submitting a rule change proposal so that the crossunder bitless bridle could be listed as a permitted item of equipment for FEI sponsored competitions in your discipline. There was a time when I asked people to sign a petition for this purpose but I now recognize that this approach will not be effective. Specific proposals are needed by members of the relevant national federation. These need to come from horse owners. Any proposals from me would be rejected because of my perceived conflict of interest.

Nevertheless, for over two years I have been in correspondence with the Secretary General of the FEI over this matter. If the FEI were to show leadership over the issue, every national federation would follow. As it is, the FEI are insisting that this is a matter for each national federation. When the national federations are approached, they say they are following FEI guidelines. Both sides are dodging the issue. In my most recent letter to the Secretary General of the FEI, I have emphasized how much simpler and quicker it would be if they were to take the lead, instead of expecting every national federation in every country to spend time and energy considering this issue. I pointed out that Benjamin Disraeli's famously ironic comment applies, "I must follow the people. Am I not their leader?" I will continue to press for this initiative and you can be sure that I will announce it if I succeed. But, for the present, the national federation is the only possible route.

PETITIONING A NATIONAL FEDERATION FOR A RULE CHANGE

All petitions for a rule change to permit the cross-under bitless bridle (CBB) have to be submitted to your national federation. The steps are as follows:

Step #1: You need to discover which organization this is in your particular country. In the USA, for example, it would be the USEF. In the UK, it would be the British Horse Society. Some, if not all national federations will not accept proposals for rule changes from anyone other than paid-up members of the federation, so it may be necessary for you to join your national federation if you are not already a member.

Step # 2: Navigate through the organization's website to find the protocol for submitting a rule change. For the USEF, for example, you would want to download the Rule Change Brochure and Rule Change Form ([both available by clicking here](#)). You would then need to consult the [Rule Book](#) to determine the Chapter, Article and Section that you want to delete, alter or change (specific to the discipline in which you wish to compete bitless). Information relevant to the 2008 version of the USEF Rule Book is listed below:

For Dressage, you will want to refer to the [DR Chapter](#), Article "DR121 Saddlery & Equipment" (page DR15), sections 2-5 and 13c. You will also want to look at the diagrams on pages DR17 - DR20.

For Eventing, you will want to refer to the [EV Chapter](#), Article "EV114 Saddlery", sections 1 and 2 (page EV9). In addition, Appendix 4, (page EV41-42) has some more drawings. While browsing, look at 'Article EV110 Abuse of Horses', section 5 which states, "The bit must never be used to reprimand a horse. Any such use is always excessive."

Step # 3: While exploring the website, find out which of the various committees is responsible for reviewing rule change proposals. Try to discover who sits on this committee, and contact them directly. If you can persuade one or more members of the committee to support your proposal, it will have a better chance of being accepted.

Step # 4: Submit your proposal and persuade as many others as you can to do the same. Use the generic name for the bridle (i.e. cross-under bitless bridle) not the proprietary name (The Bitless Bridle). Please send me a copy of your proposal, so that I can keep track of who did what, for which discipline and on what date. A paper trail of this sort will provide 'ammunition' for future articles to draw attention to the resistance that is being encountered.

Step # 5: If your proposal is accepted, you will earn the thanks of thousands and you will have won a landmark achievement in the history of the horse. Tell me about it and we will inscribe your name in our website Roll of Honor.

Step # 6: If your proposal is rejected and all you receive is a brief note explaining that your national federation follows FEI guidelines, therefore they cannot grant the rule change, PROTEST! Please send me a copy of the rejection letter and any further correspondence (my email address is: drcook@bitlessbridle.com). Write back immediately and demand a full explanation of the reasons for the rejection, as '*following FEI guidelines*' is not an acceptable reason.

I am referencing below the titles of four relevant articles that are all available online...click on the url or copy and paste.

Let me know what responses you get. Even rejection letters provide ammunition for the next effort.

Good luck!

References:

1. "Taking the OW Out of WOW: Changing the Rules of Competition,"

by Suzanne Engler Case, 2005. www.bitlessbridle.com/WOW.pdf

2. "On the Bit & the F.E.I" by Robert Cook, 2005.

www.bitlessbridle.com/ON_THE_BIT_FEI_complete_UM.pdf

3. "Tradition & the *Status Quo* or Science and Advance; A welfare reform in horse sport, currently denied" by Robert Cook, 2006.

www.bitlessbridle.com/Tradition%20or%20Science.pdf

4. "The FEI and The Bitless Bridle: Correspondence about a Rule Change Proposal." By Robert Cook, 2007.

www.bitlessbridle.com/FEI%20Proposal.pdf