



## **Feature Article March 2016**

### **Positive Horse ID Arrives in the Hunter/Jumper World**

The pressing question regarding microchipping and positive horse ID in the Hunter/Jumper industry has finally been answered after several years of research, data compilation and discussion.

Three Rule Change Proposals were passed in each of the Hunter, Jumper and Equitation sections of the *USEF Rulebook* under “Eligibility to Compete” to create a system to ID horses registered in the United States Hunter Jumper Association and competing in United States Equestrian Federation-recognized competitions.

USHJA President Bill Moroney offered his thanks. “Congratulations on passing a milestone rule that will push the sport forward in a positive

manner. I thank you all for your hard work,” he said during the final USHJA Board of Directors meeting, held last December in Florida.

The move to positive horse ID was seen as a way to improve the transparency of horses that are bought and sold within the sport as well as a way to better track sport horses bred in North America.

It’s believed that breeders will be able to produce better athletes if they’re able to follow the performances of their stock over the long term. Positive ID also opens the door for young horse development classes based on a horse’s verified age.

Microchipping, at its most basic level, also offers protection for horses that are lost or stolen.

A transition period was built into the process so that microchipping will not be mandatory for all USHJA competition horses until December 1, 2018. Beginning December 1, 2017, owners seeking USEF and USHJA National or Zone Horse of the Year honors must have their horses microchipped for points to count. Microchipping is estimated to cost between \$35-\$60 per horse.

Through the years, opponents to the requirement addressed the added costs of microchipping horses, especially lower-level or older animals used in colleges and lesson programs, and questioned the procedures needed to oversee the identification process as well as the challenge of attracting new people to the sport due to the increased costs.

In the end, even those who had hesitated to support the program in previous years acquiesced to the polished language and the recent myth-busting articles in *USHJA In Stride* (by Nancy Jaffer) and *The Chronicle of the Horse* (by Summer Stoffel) that helped to quell fears.

Jill Hamilton of Zone 10 supported microchipping and offered an example of a horse one of her clients purchased that turned out to be 20 rather than 14 as it was claimed to be. “It was a huge mess,” she said. “It was a situation where microchipping would have prevented this. The more we protect people, the happier they will be.”

USHJA Vice President David Distler expressed his support. “There’s a large group out there that is against it, and I don’t understand why,” he said. “It’s not expensive. Danny Robertshaw and Ron Danta have their dog rescue, and they microchip all the dogs, now close to 10,000. If it were prohibitively expensive, they’d be out of business. Microchipping is used to identify horses in Europe and all around the world. We’re among the last ones that aren’t microchipping. It’s time. It was going to happen sometime. If not next year then the year after or in five years, but it was going to happen.”

To read more about microchipping horses, please see the article “Microchipping a Horse: Fact vs. Fiction” in the March 2014 issue of USHJA In Stride magazine.

<https://www.ushja.org/content/documents/Microchipping-March2014.pdf>

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