

Photographers in horse picture rights row

By Chris Cheesman

The governing body for British horse trials has been forced onto the back foot after urging event organisers to ban unofficial photographers taking pictures they plan to sell.

Photographers have taken to Facebook to vent their anger, claiming the move will lead to unfair targeting of innocent spectators using professional-looking camera equipment, and will be impossible to police.

The rules were drawn up by British Eventing (BE), the national governing body for showjumping, dressage and cross-country which oversees more than 180 horse-related events. Its founders include Captain Mark Phillips, former husband of the Princess Royal. (British Eventing is not connected to British Showjumping, a separate body.)

On its website on 8 March, BE stated: 'To address the problem of amateur or unapproved photographers undercutting the businesses of approved or official photographers BE recommends the Event enforce a strict policy of preventing photography (except for private use) at the Event without authorisation.'

BE went on to say: 'The Event only permits authorised photographers at events and provides those authorised persons with identification as an official photographer which can be checked by stewards and other officials.'

The organisation said it drew up the notice after receiving reports of 'unsolicited' photography which it describes as people taking photos for commercial purposes, without the organiser's permission.

Gus Winterman, a semi-professional photographer, said he has been left disgusted.

On the BE Facebook page, he wrote: 'Amateur or semi-pro photographers will undoubtedly be quizzed and targeted purely because they have a big lens, which is quite ridiculous.'

'These people are not the threat to the official photographers... why? Because we all watermark our shots.'

'Everyone has a camera'

Amateur photographer Will Baxter has also blasted BE. An equestrian enthusiast for 30 years, Baxter believes the rules are unenforceable and will require extensive manning levels at events.

'Everyone has a camera in their pocket now, especially in the equestrian arena, so you pick on people with the big lens, like myself,' he claimed, adding that he uses professional-standard camera gear at horse shows.

Baxter has threatened to visit 'unaffiliated' horse events instead.

'It's not about the lens and camera size,' added Winterman.

'I took a photo of [Italian horse rider] Vittoria Panizzon at Greenwich using a £69 compact from Argos - that picture now hangs in the HQ of the Federazione Italiana Sport Equestri in Rome... If anyone fears undercut by non-official photography, surely the moral is "up your game".'

BE has since removed the rules from its website, fearing the move will 'mislead' people into thinking it was 'normal policy'.

But, despite being pulled from the site, the body has confirmed that it has advised organisers to enforce them.

It has urged any photographer planning to sell images at their events to contact organisers.

'People are allowed to take photos at our events,' stressed a BE spokeswoman.

'Recommendation'

The spokeswoman insisted that the photography guidelines are simply a 'recommendation' to organisers 'should they want to take action to restrict photography at their events'.

BE denies it will target legitimate amateurs and says spectators, riders and horse owners are free to take pictures for uploading onto social networking websites, and blogs, but are 'not at liberty to sell these, or actively promote them for use in publications'.

In a statement, BE told *Amateur Photographer*: 'Each British Eventing event is an independent business entity, affiliated to the governing body of the sport (British Eventing).'

'It is therefore the responsibility of the organiser to make the decision of whether or not they wish to monitor photographers at their event.

'BE has guidelines which are available to organisers should they wish to enforce them. We feel it is highly unlikely that an amateur photographer will be unfairly targeted. Organisers and volunteers would generally use a common-sense approach and are perfectly entitled to ask if someone attending the event is there officially or not.

'Should anyone experience anything other than a polite questioning then, by all means, contact British Eventing.'

BE adds: 'If you are a professional photographer wishing to take photos for commercial exploitation, and for editorial or advertising purposes, you are advised to seek permission from the event organiser before attending the event.'

The photography guidelines were originally attached to an online notice warning horse event visitors that grabbing photos from the websites of professional photographers constitutes a breach of copyright.

BE said it has become 'common practice' for people to reproduce these images on Facebook, or their own websites.

That decision was applauded by photographers, including Winterman, who claimed that the two issues have been 'loosely and cunningly wrapped up in one'.

Formerly known as the British Horse Trials Association, British Eventing is a member of the British Equestrian Federation, the umbrella body for horse sports in the UK.

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