**Guide for Media Liaison - Statements**

***NB: Do not assume that a media statement is required.***

***Check with the Chair of Eventing / Event Director before deciding to make any statements.***

**Holding statements** to be prepared and distributed as required as a quick and easy non-descript release. This acknowledges that an incident has occurred and more information will be provided as necessary, if necessary. All statements to contain the following information:

* *Name of athlete, (nationality)*
* *Name of horse*
* *“The organisers are investigating the facts surrounding the incident, Athlete or horse is undergoing medical attention. A full statement will be issued as soon as more information is available.”*

**Verbal statement:** Athlete or horse is undergoing medical attention and more information will be made available as soon as possible.

This is to manage as best as possible social media and public speculation.

**No statements** should be made to media by anyone unless authorised by the Head of the SIMT, TDs and OC. All statements must be signed-off by the aforementioned.

**Note**: No information on an athlete fatality is to be provided to media until there is absolute confirmation that the next of kin have been informed..

**Press Statement**

Once drafted:

* Read it extremely thoroughly, in particular to check that there is no inadvertent admission of liability or specifics about the incident.
* Approval must be obtained approval from senior internal personnel (e.g: sponsor, landowner, OC, vet etc.) IF they are mentioned. See last dot point.
* Resist the temptation to make extensive changes to the basic format. Keep it short and do not stray from script.
* Ensure all other essential contacts (see earlier) are aware of the statements contents
* Ensure spokesperson’s name and contact number appear at the bottom so communications can be directed to that one person
* Check with any sponsor whether they wish their name to be removed from the title of the event. It is probably best to issue the statement on plain paper, i.e., not on headed paper which could include sponsors’ logos.

**Press Conference if required**

If required and approved by Equestrian Australia, TDs, OC and Head of SIMT, organise a press conference at the end of the competition – allow time to gather necessary information. The media must be addressed by the Head of the SIMT (Spokesperson), but arrange for additional personnel to be at the front of the room to answer technical questions - e.g.: doctor, vet, course designer, technical delegate, steward. Make it as brief as possible.

* Prepare Press statement – see above
* In case of fatality: a factual statement will be read and only few questions to be authorized – Do NOT be drawn into answering specifics.
* If horse fatality, establish if athlete is willing/able to meet the press
* Secure relevant athlete/horse biography
* Personal interviews could be arranged depending on the situation

While the press conference is underway, note names of journalists attending

**NB**: Replies, written or verbal, should be:

* calm
* objective / non specific
* clear and factual
* brief
* responsible and concerned

**Distribution of press statement (to be decided on a case by case basis)**

In addition to its distribution to media attending the press conference, the statement should also be posted on the event website. In the event of an athlete fatality, EA and possibly the FEI will also post the statement on its website and the link will be posted on FEI social media (Facebook / Twitter etc).

The statement should also be sent to:

* local police and emergency services
* the event venue and sponsor
* local authorities

**PRESS CONFERENCE**:

**Media Statement examples –**

1. **Example Public or Athlete fatality statement**

**Holding statement:**

An athlete is being treated for injuries suffered in a fall. Further information will be released as soon as it becomes available.

If fatality is confirmed:

**Statement on fatal accident at name of event - level of event (country)**

It is with the deepest regret that we confirm that athlete (country) suffered a fatal accident today (date) while competing at the name of event (country).

Name of athlete and his/her horse add name fell at fence xx on the course – brief details of incident).

*On-site medical specialists provided (rapid/immediate) treatment at the scene before the athlete was (airlifted/transferred) to hospital, but sadly could not be saved.*

The horse was examined by an official veterinarian and was unhurt/treated for a minor injury to – information on the health status of the horse.

Brief biographical information on the athlete.

Quote from the event/National Federation

**A standard paragraph** should be included, along the lines of one of these:

* “*At every Australian Equestrian event, the maximum consideration is given to the safety and welfare or horses and competitors.*

*Mr/Mrs/Miss\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (President of the Ground Jury OR Event Director) said: On behalf of the whole sport, I would like to extend our deepest sympathy to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s (first name) family.”*

or:

* *“On the* *rare occasions an athlete suffers a fatal accident at an Eventing competition; it is a tragic loss. The thoughts and prayers of horse people all over the world are with her/his family at this sad time.”*
* Horse’s state should be mentioned (uninjured, injured…)

**2. Example Horse fatality statement**

A horse has suffered fatal injuries but no further information will be released until the owner has been informed.

*“It is with great sadness that we announce that the horse\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(horse’s name), ridden by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_(name of Athlete & Nationality) and owned by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_suffered a fatal injury/was humanely destroyed/put down as a result of a fatal accident while competing at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(name of event, city, country, level and category ) at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_am/pm ,\_\_\_\_on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(date). \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (horse’s name), a \_\_\_\_\_\_-year-old gelding/mare/stallion \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (description of incident and injury, e.g.: stumbled and fell over the rails at fence 15 and suffered a broken back.)”*

*In line with the EA (and FEI) Veterinary Regulations, a post mortem will be conducted and samples will be taken from the horse.*

If possible (and factually correct), it is good to include that *“the horse received immediate treatment at the fence and was taken by horse ambulance to the onsite veterinary clinic for further assessment.”*

*Or veterinarians immediately attended to the horse providing all veterinary care, and full medical attention was given to the rider (name), who was not seriously injured (only mention if he was not).*

*At every EA and FEI Event, the maximum consideration is given to the safety and welfare of horses and competitors.*

*The organising committee of the (event name) and Equestrian Australia are sending all our thoughts and prayers to those connected with this horse.*

*Do not be lead!*

The media may ask about the **dimensions of the fence** at which the accident happened. **This information should not be divulged**. A member of the media may measure ‘the’ fence incorrectly and dispute your measurements. A suggested reply to avoid this is:

* *“All fences on the course are within the dimensions specified in the rules and no details will be discussed before the Investigation Panel has reviewed all factors.”*

Try to avoid reporting how many horses had successfully jumped the fence before the accident, and be prepared for a leading question. Don’t be drawn in to specifics, it is Ok to say you are unsure and move on.