

## **Youth Committee**

Hi everyone! Thank you for letting me come by your meeting. I would like to spend a few minutes to provide some further details about the rule change proposal that I have submitted, and that you will be discussing today.

My name is Sofie Lindholm, I am the President of the Danish Quarter Horse Association and a member of the International Committee. And of course, I am also an AQHYA Young Alumni.

My rule change proposal is the following: To allow international only Youth members to compete in L3 Youth events without owning or leasing the horse.

The international affiliates are facing great challenges regarding recruiting new youth members to our affiliates. I hope and believe that this rule change could make a great impact in this area.

First, I would like to explain the show industry in most international affiliates, including Europe. The medium size and big AQHA approved horse shows offers only L1 and L3 classes. We do not have L2 classes Internationally, as the shows are simply not big enough. The small AQHA approved horse shows often only offers the L3 division, as there are not enough young riders to offer both L1 and L3. That means that to compete at the smallest AQHA shows, you must own or lease a Quarter Horse to be able to compete in the youth classes. We don't have the 4H or something similar to that. Most people go directly into showing at the AQHA.

The ones of you that have had the opportunity to visit Europe will know, that we do not have a big ranch tradition. It is not very common to be able to have your horses at home: instead, most horse owners have their horse boarded at a nearby stable. Most young people with an interest in horses starts out by taking lessons for 2-5 years before buying their own horse. We have a very strong tradition for borrowing our horses to newcomers in the sport. Loosely translated, we call that "half sharing" the horse. That basically means that the horse owner let another rider take care of the horse and ride the horse 2-3 times a week for a very reasonable price, sometimes even for free. It's the perfect way for newcomers to gain some basic skills and knowledge before making the big investment of buying their own American Quarter Horse. The leasing opportunity is often not a good solution: newcomers find it to be a complicated process to lease, and you commit yourself for

an entire year. Furthermore, the leasing contract is suitable for people leasing the horse full time, it is not suitable for newcomers who is just borrowing a horse a few times a week. This means that the newcomers are unable to show at the small AQHA shows, where only L3 is offered.

The Australian Quarter Horse Association has their own rulebook, and they have allowed youths to compete on borrowed horses without leasing for many years, with great success. I had the opportunity to live in Australia for 6 months in 2017 and experienced how more accessible to sport became to kids with this rule.

There are challenges related to this rule change proposal, and I just shortly want to address them as well. The fear of many is that this rule change would make it possible for youth riders to jump on their trainers' horses and ride at the major shows and create unfair competition. Therefore, I suggest that the rule change is only implemented internationally, except for Canada. I furthermore suggest that you still must own or lease the horse to be able to compete at the European Championships. And at last, I suggest that points won with a non-leased non-owned horse in the L3 youth classes do not count towards world show qualifications and year end awards. I hope that this rule change proposal will make our wonderful sport more accessible for new youth riders around the globe!

Thank you very much for your time! I must go back to the international committee meeting but will be around for the rest of the convention, so please feel free to reach out to me, if you have any questions or would like to make further discussions with me.

## **International committee**

My rule change proposal is the following: To allow international only Youth members to compete in L3 Youth events without owning or leasing the horse.

Many of us in the international affiliates are facing great challenges regarding recruiting new youth members to our affiliates. I hope and believe that this rule change could make a great impact in this area.

As I have stated in the rule change proposal document, many newcomers in the sport do not own their own American Quarter Horse the first couple of years. Many newcomers will spend 2-5 years taking lessons before making that big investment of buying a horse. In Europe we have a very strong tradition of borrowing horses to each other, especially borrowing horses to newcomers and kids. This gives the newcomers an opportunity to gain basic skills and knowledge before buying their first American Quarter Horse. These people will most likely be heading to the smaller AQHA shows, and those shows often only offer L3 classes, as the shows are simply not big enough to include both L1 and L3. There is the leasing contract opportunity, but often it doesn't suit these people who are borrowing horses and maybe riding on a borrowed horse 2-3 times a week. Newcomers find it to be a complicated process to lease, and you commit yourself for an entire year. Furthermore, the leasing contract is suitable for people leasing the horse full time, it is not suitable for newcomers who are just borrowing a horse a few times a week. This means that the newcomers are unable to show at the small AQHA shows, where only L3 is offered.

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