



## WEG Brings the Best to the Bluegrass

Calling all horse enthusiasts! You're invited to attend an event that will feature the very best horses, riders, and drivers from all over the world competing at the highest levels in disciplines ranging from dressage and jumping to reining and vaulting. And best of all, you can have a shaded front-row seat for the whole thing!

If you don't mind waiting a few years, this experience can be yours when the World Equestrian Games (WEG) come to the Kentucky Horse Park in the fall of 2010. This two-week-long international championship competition is scheduled to take place near Lexington in central Kentucky. A unique opportunity not to be missed, WEG will offer Olympic-caliber performances in the seven disciplines governed by the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI).

World championship competitions were organized for several equine sports in the past, but it was not until 1990 that dressage, eventing, vaulting, endurance, driving, and show jumping combined their efforts for the first time in Stockholm, Sweden. Since then, the WEG has been scheduled every four years. Set to take place in the middle of the Olympic cycle, the competition has been hosted by various cities including The Hague, Netherlands and Rome, Italy. The 2002 event in Jerez, Spain was the first to showcase a Western discipline, reining, as an FEI-governed sport. The 2006 WEG will take place in late August and early September in Aachen, Germany. Kentucky Equine Research will supply feed to this year's individual and team competi-

tors from the United States, building on experience it gained in this role at several recent Olympic Games and WEG competitions.

Those who attend the event in Kentucky from September 20 to October 3, 2010 will enjoy watching their favorite competitions, and will also have a chance to view disciplines that may be unfamiliar to them. The FEI regulates seven equine sports:

- Dressage shows a horse's agility, strength, and ability to perform a series of precise movements in both an extended and collected frame at a walk, trot, and canter. Each element of the test is scored against the ideal, and the horse is also rated as to impulsion and submission.
- In show jumping, the horse is faced with an arena full of bright-colored jumps placed at awkward intervals along a twisting course. Obstacles may be up to five feet high and six feet wide. Penalties are given for refusing a jump, knocking down a rail, and going over the allotted time.
- Eventing takes place over three days, with dressage scheduled for the first day. On the second day, speed and endurance tests fitness and jumping ability as horse and rider negotiate miles of a slow-paced warm-up and a demanding cross-country course of imposing fences, banks, water jumps, and other obstacles. After show jumping on the third day, the horse and rider finishing with the fewest accumulated penalty points are declared the winners.



- Driving, another multi-day contest, involves a driver and one or more horses or ponies in a competition designed to test precision, obedience, strength, and fitness. Each entry performs a dressage test; a cross-country route complete with bridges, water crossings, and other tricky obstacles; and a final course that requires quick but careful maneuvering through narrow spaces. The winner is the driver who finishes with the fewest penalties.
- Reining, the newest FEI discipline and the only one ridden in Western tack, demonstrates the athleticism and strength of a stock-type horse. Riders ask their mounts to perform a pattern of circles, spins, lead changes, and spectacular sliding stops. A score is given based on how closely the rider duplicates the ideal pattern.
- In the sport of vaulting, a horse is longed at a steady canter while one or more riders vault onto his back and then sit or stand in an array of positions and combinations. While a strong, steady horse is a necessity, this discipline highlights the gymnastic skill of the vaulters more than any particular aspect of the horse's performance.
- Endurance is a test of fitness, conditioning, and communication between horse and rider. The long course is to be ridden in an optimum time, with veterinary checkpoints before, during, and after the ride to determine the horse's recovery time and fitness to continue. This event rewards a rider whose strategy and skills can calmly restrain an eager horse at the start of the ride, preserving energy for the last miles.

Kentucky's winning bid for the 2010 competition made history as the first time the WEG will be held outside of Europe, a move that is appropriate for an event that includes participants from all over the world. The games are predicted to bring more than 300,000 spectators to the Kentucky Horse Park. Other projections include the following:

- 1000 horses are expected to compete.
- 800 riders and drivers from 50 countries will take part in the various events.
- 1000 media outlets will write about, broadcast, or photograph the action.
- 180 countries may see television broadcasts of WEG action, with live coverage in over 40 countries.

With its range of existing and planned facilities, the Kentucky Horse Park is an ideal site for the event, and will

be able to accommodate all phases of the competition on one property, an advantage that few venues can offer. Encompassing more than 1,200 acres, the park boasts 1,100 permanent stalls, an indoor arena, and a wealth of outdoor rings for dressage and show jumping. Location of the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event for more than twenty-five years, the park also offers two steeplechase courses and a challenging four-star cross-country track with every type of obstacle to test horse and rider.

Even with these facilities in place, new buildings and arenas will be needed to accommodate the events of the WEG, and a plan is in place to develop the necessary venues. Chief among the improvements is a climate-controlled indoor arena with a 340-foot by 190-foot competition surface. Reining and vaulting will be held in this arena.

The arena will feature a club level and group suites, with common seating for 6000 spectators in a 200,000-square-foot structure. Adjoining areas will hold warm-up and staging areas, a large exhibition space, and specialty meeting facilities.

An outdoor performance complex with 17,000 stadium seats and another 8000 bleacher seats will be prepared to accommodate the opening and closing ceremonies as well as dressage and show jumping. World-class event and trade show consultants will work out the design, decoration, and footing for this space, which will include covered seating for the Royal Box, Stand of Honor, VIP boxes, and television commentator areas.

A new hotel on park property is also being considered, offering attendees an alternative to the only current overnight facility, a campground with 261 sites.

So, what about those shaded front-row seats for all the action? While all phases of planning are still in the earliest stages, the World Equestrian Games 2010 Foundation is already compiling lists of volunteers who want to assist with some phase of the competition. In the years leading up to the events as well as during the games themselves, literally thousands of tasks will be carried out by unpaid individuals, including those who may not be sure what skills they have to offer. Folks in this last category may want to attend some events in their own region, contacting local officials and gaining some knowledge and experience before finding a niche on the world-class scene. Regardless of experience, those interested in volunteering to help at the WEG are invited to outline their skills in a brief letter addressed to the World Equestrian Games, 2010 Foundation, c/o The Kentucky Horse Park, 4089 Iron Works Parkway, Lexington, Kentucky 40511 USA. From dashing mounted messengers to lowly ring-rakers, there will be plenty of opportunities to lend a hand and see horses and riders at close range. And yes, a very few of those jobs may even be in the shade at ring-side! ☺☺



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