

WORLD BITLESS ASSOCIATION





ABOUT WBA

The World Bitless Association (WBA) is a UK based registered charity that represents the bitless community, WBA believes in equality for bitted and bit-free horses and riders.

We are a global collaboration of riders, officials, equine competition organisers, trainers, behaviourists, equine professionals and bitless bridle designers.

WBA is the only registered equine welfare charity which promotes benign evidence-based training application with their affiliated trainers.

WBA has affiliate competent and qualified trainers & lobbies for rule changes with the Equestrian Federations around the world.

MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS

With the ever increasing spotlight on ethics and welfare in the equestrian world, the World Bitless Association aims to:

Ensure bitless riders can take part in all equestrian events using modern, humane bitless bridles, to compete on an equal basis to bitted riders.

Offer advice to governments, international bodies, industry and equine welfare organisations on behaviour, training, welfare and competition rules.

To educate the public on matters relating to ethical horse training and tack, particularly with regard to the use of bits and bitless bridles, so as to further the welfare of equines.

To promote benign evidence-based training that adheres to the principles of LIMA (Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive methods of training and tack use), learning theory principles, to reduce conflict in the trained horse and improve horse welfare.

WBA GLOBAL SURVEY 2020

OVERVIEW

The aim of our 2020 survey was to gain a snapshot of the current attitude to bitless riding. Participants of the survey came from around the globe and represent 5 continents.

01

AGE GROUP

The majority of participants were female aged over 21

02

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

There were 1636 participants in total

03

GEOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION

Africa, The Americas, Asia, Oceania and Europe

04

EQUINE BACKGROUND

Competition/leisure riders and equine professionals

OBJECTIVES AND PLANS

With the information collected from the WBA Global Survey 2020 we aim to highlight to National Federations and the FEI, the desire of riders and equine professionals to incorporate bitless bridles into mainstream equestrian disciplines to enable bitless and bitted horses to compete on equal terms.

In September 2019, WBA created the first ever **World Bitless Horse Day**, which is now run as an annual event due to the enormous support WBA has from the global bitless community.

Many bitless businesses join in by offering special promotions on that day.

There are also many activities across the globe to celebrate the WBA WBHD including our own online bitless photo competition open to all.

If you would like to join next year's event, please get in touch with us here at WBA.



BITLESS BRIDLES ARE USED IN MANY DISCIPLINES



"Our 2020 survey was publicised in equestrian media around the world including Horse & Hound, to reach the mainstream riders"

We asked if the survey participants competed and, if so, whether they competed bitless or bitted.

Dressage 35% bitless
Driving 31% bitless
Endurance 90% bitless
Eventing 38% bitless
Reining 61% bitless
Showjumping 58% bitless
Vaulting 50% bitless
Trec 80% bitless

Equifeel 100% bitless
Horseball 80% bitless
Hunter Trials 53% bitless
Polo 14% bitless
Pony Games 66% bitless
Showing (Ridden/ In-hand) 58% bitless
Western Equitation 68% bitless
Other disciplines 79% bitless

69% of the 651 non-competitive survey participants ride bitless

WELFARE

CONCERNS ABOUT WELFARE:

87%

We asked if participants had concerns about horse welfare concerning riding and training in competition. 61% had strong concerns, 26% had average concerns. This adds up to 87% of survey participants who have concerns about welfare at competitions.

HORSES SHOULD BE ABLE TO COMPETE BITLESS IN ALL DISCIPLINES:

93%

When asked if Horses should be able to compete Bitless in all disciplines, 84% of the 1636 participants agreed strongly, with an additional 9% who agreed. We were pleased and quite surprised by the strong number of participants who were in favour of bitless across the disciplines.

CONCERNS ABOUT EXCESSIVE PRESSURE/OVERTIGHT NOSEBANDS

95%

Just over 76% of participants were strongly concerned and 19% concerned about excessive use of pressure on the head particularly overtightened nosebands. This is an important issue for Officials to be aware of and correct at competitions



WELFARE

VARIETY OF BITLESS BRIDLES AVAILABLE:

86%

We asked if participants were aware there were over 5 types of bitless bridles on the market, not including hackamores. 86% did know there is a large variety of bitless bridles available.

WELFARE IMPROVED BY ALLOWING BITLESS IN COMPETITIONS:

88%

When asked if they felt that welfare would be IMPROVED by allowing bit-free horses to compete 88% of participants said yes, welfare would be improved by allowing bit-free horses to compete alongside bitted horses.

HORSE-FRIENDLY TRAINING IS CRUCIAL FOR WELFARE

88%

Just over 88% of participants agreed or agreed strongly that evidence-based, horse-friendly benign training is crucial for optimum horse welfare. One of WBA's aims is to raise the standards of horse training and welfare by promoting training methods based on sound science, compassion and adherence to the principles of LIMA.



THANK YOU FROM THE WBA TEAM

WBA would like to thank all of the riders, coaches, behaviourists, therapists, vets, farriers and other equine professionals who took part in this 2020 survey. Your views will help to shape our 2021 campaigns and the future of bitless.

"WBA is working towards a brighter and inclusive future for bitless horses to compete equally in mainstream competition."

Please see our website for the full survey results

Full results <https://worldbitlessassociation.org/resources/>

