

Commissioner's Letter to: **AHA Judges/Stewards/Exhibitors/Members**

On April 27th AHA received the results of a USEF Hearing Committee decision that will have a significant impact on rules interpretation for showing horses in hand. The entire notice may be read [HERE](https://www.usef.org/documents/rules/HearingCommittee/2016/HearingCommitteeRulings/AR116.6a3.pdf)
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EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY
(quote from USEF document dated April 27, 2016)
"... AR116.6a3 will allow shanking in Arabian Halter classes or competitions only in emergency situations where a horse becomes dangerously unruly and immediate shanking is required in order to regain control of the horse and prevent imminent harm to the horse or others.

In conjunction with AR115.1, with the exception of emergency circumstances where the horse is physically out of control and creating imminent danger to itself or others, from the date of the ruling forward, the threatening use of a whip (or potentially other objects) as a visual cue while preparing or presenting a horse in Arabian Halter classes or competitions must be recognized as intimidating behavior that is disallowed under AR115 and the general provisions of GR839".

The most significant parts of the ruling are as follows:

- USEF has determined that shanking [unprovoked aggressive force] "... must be recognized as intimidating behavior that is disallowed under AR115" and that it could also be considered abuse or inhumane treatment under rule GR839 except under the circumstance of a horse being out of control to the point that it is a danger to itself or others. This ruling supports our current Rule AR116.6a3 which states "only shanking allowed shall be limited to an unruly horse in order to regain control".
- The USEF Hearing Committee Panel stated that its references to shanking are defined as "... situations such as where a handler jerks hard on the lead, yanking the horse's head and causing the neck to twist or torque in another direction and the horse to abruptly shift its body posture to compensate."
- It is important to note that "The Panel is not referring to the use of appropriate lead contact, including short "bumps" on the lead, for correctional purposes.
- The lead may be used to position a horse, to make it stop, to have it come down from a canter to a trot, etc.
- In effect USEF has determined that if a horse is shanked (as defined above **and not a situation of regaining control of an unruly horse**) in the competition ring, the horse is either being intimidated and/or abused by the handler, or the handler believes it has become a danger to itself or others. Therefore, going forward, judges must excuse from the ring any horse that is shanked as defined by USEF.
- **Should shanking occur anywhere on the competitions grounds outside the competition ring, appropriate official warnings, eliminations or other sanctions will be applied. (See AR105.4)**
- The USEF panel also noted that the use of a whip in a threatening or intimidating fashion is prohibited and must be penalized under rule AR115.1. This is a reminder to all of our judges and exhibitors that any form

of intimidation MUST be penalized and this includes the use of a whip in such a manner as to intimidate the horse.

As Commissioner I felt it imperative that I immediately inform all of our exhibitors, judges and stewards of how AR116.6a3 and AR115.1 will be interpreted and the consequences of shanking a horse in the show ring or anywhere on the competition grounds. Please note that shanking, as defined by USEF, is only permitted *“where a horse has become dangerously unruly and immediate shanking is required in order to gain control of the horse and prevent imminent harm to the horse or others.”*

AHA and the Commissioner’s office will be working to develop additional guidelines for licensed officials and Show Committees on how to deal appropriately with shanking or intimidating use of a whip that occurs on the grounds but outside of the ring.

Stan Morey
Arabian Horse Association
Judges & Stewards Commissioner