



Dressage, one of eight equine disciplines that will be showcased during the World Equestrian Games at the Kentucky Horse Park, is a French term meaning "training" and is often described as horse ballet.

# More than just games

## Why the 2010 World Equestrian Games are a big deal

By **K.T. Donovan**

Every year for horse sales and race meetings, the world comes to Keeneland. In 2010, Keeneland will share this international draw with the Alltech FEI World Equestrian Games. A total of 700,000 tickets to the event will be sold and upwards of 400,000 people are expected to come to the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington over the course of 16 days for the most prestigious event in international equine sport.

Just as each of the Olympics sports have championships, the individual disciplines within equine competition hold championships. The World Equestrian Games

are held every four years—two years before the summer Olympics—and bring eight championships together at one place, at one time.

"It's a giant extravaganza," said Jack Kelly, the chief executive officer

U.S. Olympic Festival and the current chairman of the U.S. Baseball Federation, Kelly has run many world-class international sporting events and is impressed with the sheer magnitude of this one.

"There is nothing like it," Kelly said. "The Olympics only have three equine disciplines, whereas we'll have eight at one venue. The Olympics has nowhere near the number of athletes that will be here in Lexington for this competition. It's the first time the World Games have ever been held outside of Europe, and Lexington has the honor of hosting this important event."



of the World Equestrian Games. A veteran of two Goodwill Games and the

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## More than just games

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### Big eight

Many breeds of horses, including American Quarter Horses, Arabians, Morgans, Saddlebreds, Thoroughbreds and various breeds categorized as warmbloods, will compete in the Games. The eight disciplines are:

- Dressage, a riding competition that requires a horse to exhibit refined, precise movement;
- Driving, competition for teams of four horses that pull carriages;
- Endurance, a 100-mile race;
- Reining, a Western-style event in which horse and rider perform a specific pattern of moves to exhibit the horse's athleticism;
- Show jumping, in which a horse and rider must jump 10-13 obstacles in an allotted time;
- Vaulting, gymnastics performed on a moving horse much like in the circus;
- Eventing, in which a horse and rider compete in dressage, endurance and show jumping; and
- Para-equestrian, a dressage competition for disabled riders.

"There has been a movement over the last two decades in the world of international sport toward recognizing the level of fitness of physically challenged athletes, which is



Vaulting is most easily described as gymnastics performed on a moving horse. Participants are judged on a set of compulsory moves and in freestyle competition.

often greater than athletes who are not challenged," Kelly said. "This will be the first time in any sport, anywhere in the world, that challenged athletes are able to compete inside the same event as able-bodied athletes."

### Keeneland fits in

The 800 human participants and 900 equine athletes in the Games are expected to represent 60 nations. The Kentucky Horse Park is the first location in the history of the Games that is capable of hosting the entire event at one venue. Alltech, a global leader in the field of animal health based in Nicholasville, Kentucky, is title sponsor of the event. Lexington's Rood & Riddle Equine Hospital, which sponsors the Dowager Stakes at Keeneland, is the official equine hospital and veterinary partner for the Games.

Keeneland has supported the Games from the beginning, understanding that everyone whose business involves the horse will benefit from the international audience here to celebrate equine sport. Because the timing of the Games was crucial, Kelly and John Nicholson, chief executive of the Horse Park, spoke with Keeneland's President and Chief Executive Officer (and John's brother), Nick Nicholson, to ensure the Games would complement the track's major events.

"Officials at the World Games coordinated with Keeneland to place the event between our two major fall events: the September Yearling Sale, which draws an international

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clientele, and our fall race meeting,” said Keeneland Director of Communications Jim Williams. “The dates will be September 25-October 10, so it’s at the end of our sale and the beginning of the racing so people will have an opportunity to attend all events.”

### Area participation

Based on the economic impact of the 2006 Games in Germany, which totaled 250 million Euros (or about \$320 million), the economic impact of the Games on Kentucky is conservatively estimated to be \$150 million. Potential economic impact is expected to continue as more than 1,000 corporate CEOs attended Germany’s games and a similar number of world business leaders are expected to come to Lexington. The financial windfall also will include sales tax generated from a trade show at the Horse Park and multiple benefits to area hotels, rental car businesses, restaurants and shops.

This impact does not count the benefits the Horse Park will receive from the construction of a climate-controlled indoor arena that will seat 5,000 to 6,000 people. The arena will greatly increase the number of horse shows and special events at the

**Alltech FEI World  
Equestrian Games**

September 25-October 10, 2010  
Kentucky Horse Park  
[www.feigames2010.org](http://www.feigames2010.org)

Horse Park from the about 80 events currently held each year. The facility’s existing outdoor stadium will be rebuilt with state funds to seat 8,000 to 10,000 people, and the Games will provide an additional 20,000 temporary seats.



Photograph by Doug Prather, www.dougprather.com

Cross-country is one phase of eventing, a triathlon for horse and rider.



Photograph by Doug Prather, www.dougprather.com

Teams of four horses participate in driving competitions.

Neighboring horse farms also have joined in the effort to hold the Games. Their participation includes serving as sites of stages of the endurance event and hosting visiting teams.

“At this point, we have been very fortunate to have the early cooperation from the farms surrounding the Kentucky Horse Park, including Walnut Hall and Castleton Lyons, as planning is underway,” said Amy Walker, public relations coordinator for the Games. “The entire community has been supportive, from volunteers to Keeneland, to farms. They are all welcoming all the people who want to come to Kentucky, so they are rolling out the red carpet across the Bluegrass.” 🐾

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