

Freizeitreiter und -fahrer

Vereinigung der Freizeitreiter und -fahrer in Deutschland e. V.

Association of Leisure Horse Riders and Horse Carriage Drivers in Germany (non profit organisation VFD)

What does VFD mean?

The VFD is a nationwide equestrians' association representing the interests of about 60 000 Leisure Riders and Carriage Drivers. It subdivides into state, provincial, district and local associations. Leisure Riders interchange ideas at regular VFD meetings, they organize topic evenings, they plan actions and events. The VFD's main concern is traditionally to defend the right to ride and drive horses in nature, that is: countryside and forests. Nature conserving leisure riding and driving as propagated by the VFD has been recognized in the meantime as a form of a natural kind of sport and is legally established thanks to the commitment of the VFD.

Riding law is a matter of the states

The interpretation of the legal regulations referring to outdoor riding has been transferred to the Federal States. Those actually applicable regulations differ a lot from each other: some of the states are liberal and allow horse riding on all passable paths. Others, however, allow horse riding only on public paths and on so called bridledways. This topic will remain a field of activity in the following years for the VFD (*the German Expert Union of Leisure Horse Riders and Horse Carriage Drivers*) as well as the subject of tolls for riding in forests, taxes on horses and limitations of building laws for horse keepers. The VFD representatives are devoted to build a public consciousness for liberal riding and sustainable horse keeping by working in networks and organizations.

Instruction

Further activities of the VFD are closely connected with the riders' claim for right of way. The VFD guarantees the correct conduct of the leisure riders and drivers by a solid basic instruction, horses must be ridden and driven carefully according to natural horsemanship and be kept according to their kind. The VFD is open to all horse races, riding styles and to a variety of ambitions of leisure riders and drivers, trekkers, trail riders, endurance riders or drivers and experts of the haute école.

Horsekeeping

The VFD stands up for a natural keeping of horses in a species appropriate environment. The horse is never a piece of sports equipment for the leisure riders, but a partner, to care for one is responsible completely. The more our knowledge about the horses' needs has enlarged the more we try to make living conditions as suitable as possible. That means for example horse keeping in an open stable, with paddock and grazing land, sufficient social contacts for the horse and reasonable feeding and health care.

Events

The members themselves can organize events. Training courses are held, as well as orienteering competitions, trail rides, horse treks and carriage drives. Trail riding and driving is a tradition of the VFD. But one can do much even without a horse. There are joint excursions to saddleries, horse museums or to big stud farms as well as veterinary workshops. Qualified coaches are often invited to the monthly meetings. Information about topics and events in your region can be found in the internet at www.vfdnet.de, in your members' magazine „Pferd und Freizeit“ or directly at your VFD state association.

What is offered by the VFD?

- legal support for right of way for horse riding and driving
- instruction and further training for leisure riders and drivers
- reasonable insurances and discounts from cooperating partners
- free coding of saddles as protection from robbing
- free magazine „Pferd und Freizeit“ four times a year
- daily newsletter and service in the internet
- expert's advice around the horse
- contact addresses and events for the exchange with other equestrians
- a strong community's commitment for the interests of riders and drivers

**The German Experts' Union for
Horse Trekking, Trail Riding and Driving**