

World Class Veterinary Care for Equine Olympic Athletes

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Dr. Thomas Wolff, president of the Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Veterinary Commission, leads a 130-strong world-class team of veterinary experts, including leading surgeon Dr. Carlos Eduardo Veiga

Photo: Arnd Bronkhorst/FEI

The world's best equine athletes at the Olympic Equestrian Centre in Deodoro are now poised to help their human companions win medals for eventing, dressage, and show jumping, and as they focus on the prize they have access to a high-tech veterinary facility like no other.

Located at the Deodoro stables, the nearly 11,000-square-foot horse clinic features everything

needed to keep more than 200 horses from 43 countries fit and healthy throughout the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, with specialists ready to care for every need around the clock. The clinic will also be fully operational for the Paralympic horses that will come to Deodoro next month.

Manned by a 130-strong team of veterinary surgeons, anesthetists, imaging specialists, and medical professionals from Brazil and around the world, the clinic includes the latest pathology, endoscopy, radiography, and ultrasonography technology, as well as a dispensary, emergency surgery facility with padded recovery boxes, and specialist treatment stables.

The clinic offers routine supportive veterinary care and, should any emergency first-aid be required, specialists are on-site to treat the horses. Nine specially equipped horse ambulances will also be on the venue if any horses need to be transported to the clinic.

In addition to the clinic, a network of physiotherapists is on hand to keep the horses in top form, while grooms and veterinarians monitor the horses' temperatures, food and water intake, and weight.

Chilled Out

The Games are taking place in Brazil's winter season, when the weather can fluctuate, so keeping horses cool is a major focus.

Horses cope with heat very differently than human athletes because of their size, but, just like humans, getting their core temperature down after exercise is key.

Every day, caretakers across the Olympic Equestrian Center are using more than 12,000 gallons of water and nearly 900 pounds of ice to wash down horses after training and competition.

Tents housing banks of cooling fans, used for both the equine and human athletes, are available at the finish of the eventing cross-country course and next to the jumping and dressage training and warm-up arenas to keep Rio 2016's most-muscle athletes comfortable.

"The health and well-being of our horses is *the* top priority during these Games," said Brazil's Thomas Wolff, DVM, president of the Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Veterinary Commission.

"Many of our horses on site have their own team veterinarians, and it's great to see how impressed they are with our facilities," he said

Wolff, who will work directly with Olympic veterinary services manager Juliana de Freitas, of Brazil, has been the Brazilian Equestrian Federation's head veterinarian for the last 15 years. He was Brazilian team veterinarian at the Seoul and Beijing Olympic Games, and he runs his own practice in Sao Paulo specializing in jumping, eventing, dressage, and racehorses.

"Our horses always deserve the very best, and at these first games in South America, they're getting just that," he said. "We know everything about every horse on site every second of the day, thanks to our monitoring system, and with the world's best veterinary care on offer for our horses we're now very much looking forward to seeing medals won and new Olympic records set in Rio."

Equine Veterinary Care at Rio 2016 Olympic Games



Photo: Arnd Bronkhorst/FEI

Orthopedic Specialist

Dr. Erik Bergman of The Netherlands specializes in equine orthopedics and is part of the Rio Olympic Games veterinary team.

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