



MEMORANDUM

TO: USHJA Leadership
FROM: Emily Martinez (USHJA Sport Program Coordinator III - Zones)
DATE: April 23, 2026
RE: USHJA Town Hall Recap – National Zone Specifications

The town hall focused on:

- Presenting a draft proposal to standardize National Zone Specifications
- Collecting member feedback before May 1

Background

Currently, the 12 zones operate under different specifications for:

- Eligibility rules
- Cross-entry restrictions
- Fence heights & age break-outs

This lack of uniformity creates:

- Confusion for riders competing across zones
- Inconsistency in competition standards
- Administrative complexity

Objective of the Proposal

The draft aims to:

- Standardize rules nationally across all zones
- Improve clarity, fairness, and consistency
- Maintain accessibility and participation opportunities
- Support horse and rider welfare

Development Process

- Initiated due to strong member demand for consistency
- Built by a national ad hoc committee with all zones represented

Reviewed through:

- Zone Council (unanimous approval)
- Hunter Working Group (approved)
- Jumper Working Group (feedback provided, not approved)

The draft reflects compromise across regions, not a final decision.

Key Themes in the Proposal

- Simplification & clarity of rules
- Consistency across zones for traveling competitors
- Flexibility for smaller zones (e.g., combining divisions)
- Balancing national standards with regional needs

Major Concerns Raised

1. Communication gaps
 - Limited awareness of the draft
 - Short feedback window
2. Protection of lower divisions
 - Risk of experienced riders dropping down
 - Potential negative impact on novice participation
3. National vs. zone awards imbalance
 - High-frequency competitors may dominate both
4. Cross-entry & eligibility clarity
 - Need clearer, more consistent definitions
5. Combining divisions
 - Unclear guidelines, especially pony vs. horse
6. Regional differences
 - Smaller or less dense zones need flexibility to sustain competition

Action Items

For Members:

Review the draft proposal

- Submit feedback by May 1 to zones@ushja.org **now extended to May 15**
- Provide specific, constructive input

For Leadership:

- Improve communication and accessibility of materials
- Clarify key rules (eligibility, cross-entry, combining divisions)
- Incorporate feedback into a revised draft
- Continue stakeholder engagement before finalizing

Bottom Line

This proposal is an early-stage effort to standardize zone rules nationwide. While broadly supported in concept, significant refinement is needed to address regional differences and member concerns. Member feedback will directly shape the final outcome.

If any further information is needed, please do not hesitate to contact me at (859) 225-6713 or emartinez@ushja.org

Respectfully Submitted,

Emily Martinez - USHJA Sport Program Coordinator III - Zones