The Netherlands vs Sweden

In my daily work with horses in Sweden I often got surprised about the subjective way that young horses were being judged, sometimes by judges with very doubtful qualifications and often with very personal interpretated comments. When I heard that an objective system called linear scoring were being used in the Netherlands I got very interested in comparing the two systems and to investigate if the linear scoring would be a good choice even for Sweden.

When contacting the Swedish studbook, ASVH, I found out that also they were interested in taking a closer look at the Dutch linear scoring system which they had been thinking about using in Sweden in the future.

With the help of my thesis coach at Van Hall Larenstein, Hans van Tartwijk, who earlier has been working at the Dutch studbook, KWPN, I got in contact with a Dutch linear scoring judge, Jacques Verkerk. In order to compare the Dutch and the Swedish system Jacques visited Sweden to linear score 86 3-year old horse that were being presented at the Swedish 3-year old test in Flyinge in the beginning

of May. At the same time two Swedish judges scored the horses according to the Swedish system.

After implementing both the systems on the same set of horses my task were to find a way to compare the results. In the linear scoring system 36 traits in the horse are being judged objectively on a scale based on the standard population. These objective scores I have compared to the subjective comments of the Swedish judges. I have also compared the subjective scores from both systems and different rankings of the horses by using a SPSS Spearman test.

When comparing the two systems I found that there are differences between the two systems that would make it beneficially to start using the linear scoring system in Sweden. In general the Swedish and the Dutch judges agreed on witch horses they thought were the best, but when it comes to describing the horses the linear scoring gives a clearer and more fair picture of the horse to the reader. It also makes it easier for the judges to look at the same traits in all the horses and to judge them in the same way. Furthermore the linear scoring gives more information to the BLUP index, Best Linear Unbiased Prediction.

The BLUP index is being used to show the horse compared to the standard population and gives important information to potential breeders when matching their mare with the right stallion.

To develop the horse breeding further and to reach the breeding goals that have been set up for both the Dutch as well as the Swedish studbook it is important evaluate the breeding by testing the horses at a young age. By testing the horses at a young age the generation interval is kept short and the genetic progress will be faster.

Working with this thesis I have learned a lot and it have also brought along a lot of nice opportunities. As a part of the background research for my thesis I have participated in a Dutch competition for judging young horses were I scored an honorable third place in the national final.

It has also given me the opportunity to give a much appreciated reading for the Swedish studbook about the linear scoring system and the possibility to work for the studbook. And maybe the most important of it all, it have given me a lot of new contacts that I am sure will help me a lot in my future career.

Working with my thesis I feel like I have developed a lot, especially through setting up the field research in a professional way and by creating a lot of new contacts.

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