

The Case for Keeping the B-Book II Closed in North America

"Our opinion is that if a KFPS-daughter (outside the EU) wishes to set stricter rules regarding the registration policy that this would be acceptable. It's to the FHANA board's judgment whether this would be in the interest of the breed in North America".

Ids Hellinga, Executive Director, KFPS February, 2008.

With that statement the Friesian Horse Association of North America is presented with a very unique opportunity. FHANA members have an opportunity, unencumbered by European Union edicts, to make decisions not based on international relationships or pressures, not based on the need to accommodate those who intentionally started their own breeding registries and associations, to make a decision that would *"be in the interest of the breed in North America."*

"The interest of the breed in North America." What is in the best interest of the KFPS Friesian Horse Breed in North America? As KFPS Friesian owners we, by our ownership of these magnificent horses, have entered into a trust to responsibly breed the KFPS mares under our care. Responsible breeding, checking inbreed coefficients, checking kinship rankings, critically comparing your mare's strengths and weaknesses and breeding with the KFPS Approved Stallions that will produce the "best" possible, healthy offspring; these are all actions that are a part of ethical breeding and in *"the interest of the breed in North America."*

The vast majority of FHANA members undertake responsible breeding practices, but over time the question of B-Book II breeding has continued to be an issue for Friesian enthusiasts, worldwide. The B-Book II was originally put in place to capture "accidental breedings", breedings where an unapproved stallion gained access of a KFPS mare and resulted in impregnation of the mare. Unfortunately, individuals have "re-interpreted" this category and have begun to indiscriminately breed unqualified stallions to KFPS mares. While no one can sit in judgment of the logic or wisdom of this practice, we adamantly believe that this practice is not to *"be in the interest of the breed in North America."* This practice ignores all of the responsible breeding practices that reputable breeders have promoted for the past one-hundred and thirty years. Now B-Book II breeders are requesting that FHANA facilitate the registration and allow B-Book II horses to be judged at FHANA administered and financed keurings. We again, adamantly believe that FHANA condones/encourages this irresponsible breeding practice if the Association begins facilitating registration and allowing B-Book II horses to attend FHANA administered and financed keurings. This practice, if condoned by the Association, diminishes the prestige of FHANA as the premier guardian of the KFPS Friesian horse in North America; a reputation that FHANA members have worked to create and maintain for twenty-five years.

There are many perspectives to consider when deciding this complex issue. Following are just a few to consider.

The Economics of B-Book II Breeding

There are a variety of perspectives to consider when discussing B-Book II Breeding. The economic perspectives range from that of the FHANA, Breeders, Sellers and Buyers. Each group has a unique view to this practice. Let's break down this question and try to look at the issue from these varied perspectives.

FHANA

FHANA, since it is not under the jurisdiction of the European Union, has the luxury of not being bound to the same regulations that have been forced upon the KFPS. FHANA has the authority *"to set stricter rules regarding the registration policy"* and not facilitate the registration or judging of B-Book II Horses in North America. Some believe that by not registering or judging B-Book II foals that FHANA is missing an economic opportunity to collect both registration and judging fees. While this may be true, questions must be raised regarding FHANA's priorities by encouraging this questionable breeding practice.

If FHANA does facilitate the registration and judging, does FHANA betray its primary responsibility of preserving and protecting the KFPS Friesian horse? By facilitating the registration and judging does FHANA give credibility to those who intentionally chose to not abide to a major KFPS tenant, to protect our unfortunately small gene pool, by wisely breeding to KFPS Approved Stallions? What is the message sent to members that carefully consider their stallion choices, check inbreed coefficients, check kinship ratings and make every effort to improve the breed by carefully selecting a KFPS Approved stallion for their mare? And, again, by giving credibility to those who intentionally breed outside the accepted breeding practice, is FHANA damaging its credibility as the original and primary guardian of the Friesian horse in North America? With all of the Friesian Associations available in North

America, should FHANA accommodate B-Book II Breeders by lowering its standards for those who intentionally ignore intelligent, conscientious, ethical and long term breeding practices?

Many of our members respect and support FHANA's current position to not facilitate registration or judge B-Book II horses. Many of these same members support FHANA and its mission both with their dues and financial support, with event participation and sponsorships. One unintended consequence of the reversal of this ruling may be for some to reconsider their generosity to an Association who would betray their beliefs, responsibilities and standards for the short term monetary gain of additional registration and judging fees and reward those who would breed irresponsibly.

Breeders, Buyers and Sellers

For knowledgeable and experienced breeders, the selection of an unapproved stallion to breed to a KFPS mare seldom happens. Unfortunately, as the popularity of the Friesian horse has grown, many new Friesian enthusiasts ignorantly breed with unapproved stallions only to find out the value of their offspring is a fraction of one bred to a KFPS Approved stallion. This event creates three losers. First loser is the breeder who may have used the proceeds of the foal sale to reinvest in additional KFPS Friesian stock. Since the foal is not valued at the same level, the return to the breeder is nowhere near expectations. The second loser is the KFPS Friesian Marketplace. As responsible FHANA breeders begin to market their annual foal crop, they are met with, "I can get a Friesian for X-thousand dollars less than what you are asking!" The responsible FHANA breeder then has two choices, (1) educate the prospective buyer on the advantages of the KFPS Foal book qualified colt or filly and hope they understand the quality differences or (2) reduce their price to make the sale. Hopefully choice one is successful as this response educates the general marketplace and maintains a reasonable floor for the price of foals. If choice two is agreed upon, then the entire marketplace looses when a lower price alternative is developed to compete with the premium KFPS Friesian horse. By FHANA facilitating registration and judging B-Book II horses, the Association is encouraging the development of an unacceptable alternative that will erode market prices. This irresponsible action by the Association will damage the breeder to a far greater extent than the additional registration and judging fees will support FHANA. The third loser is the foal. We all know of the genetic flaws that are a part of the Friesian horse. The KFPS, by having extremely strict breeding guidelines, is continually working to minimize and hopefully eliminate these flaws. An important part of the approval process is the thorough inspection of the pedigree and history of the Stallion candidate and over time, their offspring. In approving Stallions that have minimal risk in passing on these flaws, the ultimate beneficiary is the foal born free of OCD, club feet, that don't reabsorb or expire during gestation or delivery due to hydrocephalous, dwarfism or megaesophagus. Unfortunately no such promises can be made for stallions that have not been approved by the KFPS. In-breed coefficients, kinship ratings and genetic flaws are not considered when individuals breed unapproved stallions. Ultimately, the loser in all of the above examples is the reputation of both the Association and the KFPS Friesian Breed.

The Exclusivity of Being a KFPS Friesian Owner and Breeder

As members of the FHANA and KFPS, Friesian owners have, at their fingertips more breeding information than any other breed in the world. The KFPS has, over decades, painstakingly accrued breeding information from stallions and their offspring. We, as a very exclusive group, can make very complex comparisons on the expectations of the stallion-mare pairing. Breeding KFPS mares is a very complicated undertaking. This complex process is, for all intents and purposes, a good thing. In a breed that was nearly extinct and with a very small gene pool, the breeding decision should not be taken lightly. We, as owners of these horses, must practice what is "*in the interest of the breed in North America*". This statement requires that we exercise discipline; discipline to do our best for the breed. Does this make us somewhat exclusionary? I suppose it does, as a part of our responsibility to the breed we must exercise our authority to exclude the horses that have not been granted the exclusive status as approved stallions and must also exclude the offspring of unqualified stallions. Some may describe this behavior in a variety of derogatory ways. We, as an Association should be comfortable in enduring these accusations, knowing in our collective hearts that we are continuing to make a positive impact on the breed. We should not be making decisions based on egos, economics or political pressures; we should be making decisions for what we adamantly believe are "*in the interest of the breed in North America*".

I urge all FHANA members to support the continued non-facilitation of registration and non-judging of B-Book-II horses in North America. We have an opportunity to send a strong message to those who choose to consciously deviate from the prescribed breeding goals of the KFPS. As I stated earlier, we have a unique opportunity to take a stand for these incredible horses that we have been blessed with; to discourage unsound breeding practices and maintain the highest standard of integrity and commitment to the KFPS Friesian Breed, quite literally, a level of

commitment unmatched anywhere by anyone else on earth. Don't waste this chance to make your contribution to the protection and preservation of these magnificent horses.