

ABFP - The General Aptitude & Utility Test

By Jennifer McClelland
Photography by Lori Ann Thwing,
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In order to promote the retention of approved stallions in North America, FHANA has developed a program to facilitate the offspring testing of stallions provisionally approved for breeding after successfully completing the Stallion Approval process in North America. Offspring of these stallions will be eligible to participate in this process until 20 offspring have been evaluated either in the Netherlands or here in North America.

The purpose of the ABFP test is to provide an objective way to establish aptitude as a dressage and/or driving and/or show driving horse. Willingness to work and stable behavior will be assessed as well. The ABFP test is primarily intended to test three, four and five-year-old mares, geldings and stallions so that the best possible estimate of their aptitude for dressage and/or harness competition can be made at a young age. If the horse passes this test, the owner shall be issued a certificate. The total score is not recorded in the studbook papers. Participating in an ABFP test can be included as a prerequisite for obtaining the Star, Crown or Model predicate (see the KFPS registration regulations).

Testing reveals the horse's willingness to work, including instances when it is asked to make more of an effort. The assessment of willingness to work, which is in fact of key importance, is therefore well substantiated. The following characteristics will be assessed: riding test, driving test and suitability as a show driving horse. The suitability as a show driving horse will be expressed by means of a separate score that will not be included in the total for the headings. The training supervisor assesses willingness to work and ease of handling. The scores range from 0 to 10, with 10 being the maximum number of points that can be earned. A minimum score of 77 is needed to pass. * See scoring chart for calculations.

Athlete in the Making

For this article, I will assign a new acronym that I hope resonates well with the readers. ABFP = A Body (and Mind) For Performance. If we truly understand what needs to happen before this important testing begins, then surely the road to that magical number of 77 can be an exciting one!

As an athlete-in-the-making, your Friesian needs to be prepared to make this a successful, positive experience for all involved. There's a lot on the line for the Stallion and it is up to the offspring owner to ensure that his/her Friesian arrives ready, willing, and able to show their true potential throughout the 7-week program.

"A Body (and Mind) For Performance"

I witnessed the recent East Coast ABFP training held at Performa Dressage in Clarksville, MI. As an owner of young horses, I wanted to experience the training methods of Alfons van Proosdij and glean the techniques from this accomplished trainer. Knowing he was a highly regarded horseman from the Netherlands, I went to the barn several days a week and was present at both of the judges visits, all in an effort to better understand the ABFP testing. At this site, we saw a variety of horses all at different stages of training enter into the program. Some were green as grass and others were already going well under saddle. While the KFPS recommends that in order to

* Martie KCF (Tonjes 459 x Jasper 366) with Alfons van Proosdij



▲ Trainers Martinus Hoekstra and Alfons van Proosdij with Mieke K

have environmental factors as uniform as possible, the horses should all be delivered in a starting condition that is as uniform as possible. I quickly noticed that this was not the case. It was clear that the horses that were not well prepared (either physically or mentally) were the ones that struggled through the program. For varying reasons, 4 out of the 10 horses presented for training were dismissed at the midway point.

The ABFP - A Body (and mind) For Performance

While some owners know what to expect, there are others that relate this testing to sending a child off to kindergarten, for example. But in reality, this is far from the truth. Your beloved Friesian is going to a high performance school that is not for the weak minded, poorly muscled, and/or immature horse. This testing needs horses that truly possess A Body (and mind) For Performance (ABFP). The following prerequisites should be met for a successful outcome and the highest possible score.

Preparation is key! If your horse does not have the basics down, she will start the testing with an extreme disadvantage.

While some owners may see the benefit of hiring a professional trainer for the preparation work, you may also do this at home. If the goal is to complete the test with a score of 77 or greater, it is advantageous to send your horse to a professional trainer at least three months prior to starting the program.

Safety is the utmost concern when working with young horses. Please seek the help of a professional if the preparation is beyond your comfort zone.

3-6 Months Out:

Horses must be in great shape. This will make or break your horse, period. Stamina is very important to have, so horses don't get worn down and tire easily. Too skinny is as bad as too fat. The new barn atmosphere will place demands on their bodies, so have them fit to ward off illness and fatigue.

Every horse should have manners. Brushing, wrapping legs, tacking, and picking feet should all be taught before entering the program. Horses should be able to tie, cross-tie, and be hosed down with ease. Blanketing should be accepted without any drama. The ABFP trainers are not there to teach basic handling.

Have your horse comfortable with the lunging process wearing a correctly fitted bridle with a loose ring snaffle bit. Use a surcingle with a crupper to further the training along.

Lightly ridden horses are preferred. Again, seek a professional for help if needed.

Start stabling them to get the horse acquainted with being in a stall for extended periods of time. Typically the testing horses will not go outside or only go out on a limited basis in order to keep them fresh and injury-free. Horses that come to the test without being acclimated to the stall will be anxious and uptight, thus burning calories that are needed to perform and not having their focus on learning.

4-6 Weeks Out:

A complete dental exam with the appropriate floating, cap removal, removal of wolf teeth, etc., needs to be completed.

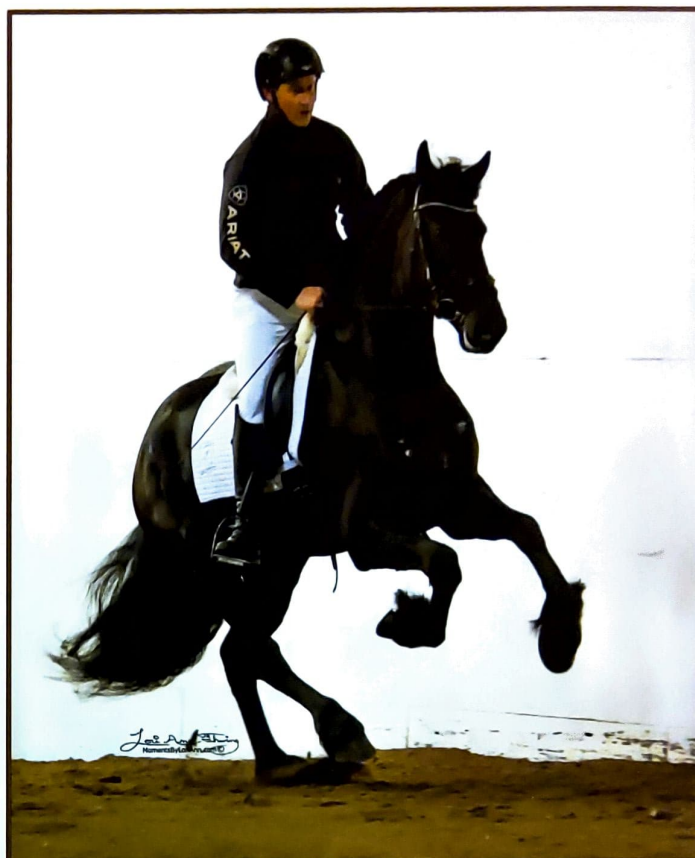
Immunizations need to be up to date and do have a current Coggins Test. Deworming should be done prior to the test.

Horses must be shod all around at least 1 to 2 weeks prior to the start date.

Items to bring with the horse, that are all clearly marked with the name on each item, are listed below:

- ✓ Each horse needs a fitted bridle with the correct size loose ring snaffle bit, along with reins.
- ✓ Depending on the climate, send at least a cooler and a stall blanket. Blankets and coolers should have leg straps. Contact the hosting barn to see what other type of blanket is needed at the time of testing.
- ✓ Halter and lead rope.

Keep in mind that you are working with a young horse. Even the best intentions can have a negative consequence. If



▲ Marije Zarina (Tonjes 459 x Doaitsen 420) ridden by Alfons

something happens, no matter how insignificant, your horse will bring that past experience with him. It is up to you to bring the story to light and discuss with the trainer ahead of time what happened and what effects may still be lingering. To maintain a safe environment for horse, handler and trainer, honesty is crucial for all parties involved.





▲ Oliver KCF (Tonjes 459 x Sibald 380)



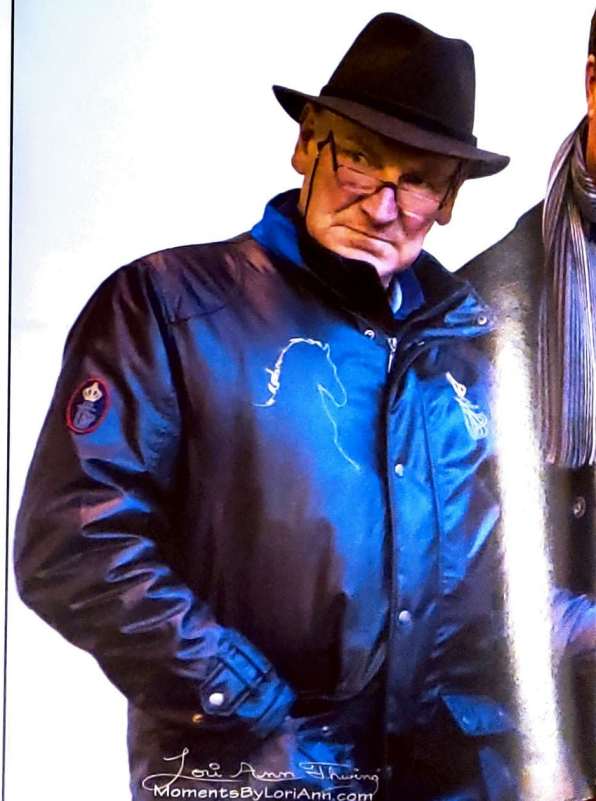
▲ Mieke KCF (Tonjes 459 x Fetse 349)

For Friesian horse/offspring owners, the ABFP is a unique opportunity to have their horse expertly trained in multiple disciplines and at a very affordable price. Each horse will leave with a score that stays with the horse throughout its lifetime. Though the score is not printed on the papers, it will be published. As an added benefit, each horse can participate in the keuring held onsite, directly after the testing. This is extremely beneficial since the horse will be in optimal shape and has its mind on working and is already acclimated to its environment.



▼ Merel RS (Tonjes 459 x Jorrit 363)

Judges: Bouke DeBoer & Reitse Faber





▲ Olivia Stonecreek (Tonjes 459 x Erik 351)

Please keep in mind that a horse may only be presented at one keuring per calendar year, so you will have to decide which keuring to register for. A separate keuring fee will be incurred in addition to the ABFP fee. All registration information plus fee schedule will be sent out to the participating offspring owners prior to testing.

As always, stay connected with FHANA's programs via their website, social media, and newsletters. The ABFP committee members are happy to address any questions or concerns. It's an exciting time to be involved with FHANA and watch our Friesians grow and prosper. Best wishes for a successful ABFP!



*The ABFP Guidelines and scoring can be found on the FHANA website at: <http://www.fhana.com/fhana-info/rules-and-regs/appendices/requirements-regulations-general>

ABFP Testing Results

March 1, 2016

FHANA recently completed ABFP testing for both Tonjes 459 and Wybren 464. While more offspring are needed to complete their offspring testing, here are the results of those that were tested:

Tonjes 459 Results

Olivia Stonecreek

Riding 78.5

Driving 75.5

Inspection Results 3rd premium

Oliver KCF

Riding 69

Driving 69

Inspection Results Studbook

Martie KCF

Riding 77

Driving 79

Inspection Results Crown

Mieke KCF

Riding 68.5

Driving 66

Inspection Results 3rd Premium

Merel R.S.

Riding 70

Driving 70

Inspection Results 3rd Premium

Marije Zarina

Riding 75.5

Driving 77..5

Inspection Results 2nd Premium

Sietske

Riding 65

Driving 68

Inspection Results 3rd Premium

Opal

Riding 67.5

Driving 71.5

Inspection Results Studbook

Wybren 464 Results

Marije

Riding 77

Driving 74

Inspection Results 2nd Premium Ster

Nakoda

Riding 71

Driving 75.5

Stallion stays Foalbook

