



Historical Developments

1879-2004 Royal Friesian Horse Studbook - 125 Years Old More Than 350 Performance Tests in 125 Years

by Feline Minkema-de Jonge

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Reduzum (formerly called Roordahuizum, near Leeuwarden), the first of May 1879. A historic meeting is taking place in the inn of the Three Goblets ("De Trije Romers"). "The Friesian Horse Studbook" and "The Friesian Herd Book" are founded that day. The Herd Book doesn't exist anymore, but in 2004 the FPS is still alive and kicking, the guardian of the only native horse breed in the Netherlands. The founders of the Studbook wanted to save what could be save, no matter what. Little could they imagine that their initiative would lead to more than twelve thousand members worldwide, who together own about forty thousand Friesian horses. **This month: More than 350 performance tests in 125 years.**

When eleven young stallions were still going through the last weeks of the Performance Test 2004, the FPS archives released some interesting information about the very first test. The difference in training condition between the first and the current group is enormous. As far as we know, the first performance tests took place somewhere in the 1940's. In 1950, the PHRYSO (first issued in 1950 as well) reports about the first "farm performance test." A bigger difference with the current 70-day Central Examination is hard to imagine! At the age of 5, the first stallions were required to plow a deep ditch of about 9 kilometers long. They did not have to do it alone - Doede 178 and Gosse 185 were accompanied by a fine gelding in the middle who seems in pictures to have more eagerness to work than the two stallions.

Take Five After A Few Rounds

Different terminology has been used over the years: *performance inspection*, *farm performance test* or, simply, *performance test*. In the Performance Inspection the newly approved stallions were shown to the public in front of a farm wagon and/or Sjees. It took place at the Wilhelminabaan (Wilhelmina Lane) in Leeuwarden, or at local inspections. It was required for the Studbook stallions. The stallions were all in a very "rich" condition and the jury would allow them to take a breather after a few rounds. The heavy condition of the stallions didn't do them much good in the farm performance test of 1950 either, taken when they were about 5 years old. These tests were not nearly as popular as the performance inspections at the Wilhelminabaan in Leeuwarden. The test in plow or harrow was more a practical farm affair. Among others, the jury consisted of a government official and a veterinarian. The stallions were trained for this test, and around that time, J.W. ten Hoor from Bakkeveen was known as the man who

trained several studbook stallions for this examination.

Supervision Tells Us What We Need to Know

The following article was published in the PHRYSO, March 3rd, 1950.

...The 1950 Stallion Show catalog mentioned that three stallions were awarded with a premie after a farm performance test. A lot of breeders are probably unfamiliar with this, because this test is quite new for stallions of the Friesian breed. The purpose of these performance tests is to examine how the stallions perform under normal farm conditions.

Plowing for three hours, with the standard rest periods, is an often-required part of the test. The examination is conducted meticulously by a permanent committee, which includes a veterinarian. The test is for the premie stallions, and is required only once, when the stallion is about 4,5 years old. Since this test has only been held twice, only the three "B" stallions and the "D" stallion have taken the test. Because of a confluence of events, the stallion Binne 173 had to stop the test prematurely, and therefore couldn't be judged. The reports of the stallions Beint 175, Bouke 174 and Doede 178 follow below. We recommend a careful study of the reports of the inspection committee, because they give an impression of what the jury looks for in the test, and what strong and/or weak points of the stallion exist. For the Friesian breeders, it must be exciting to know that the stallions that participated in this test had such good results, because the requirements are the same as the requirements for NWP (Warmblood) and VLN stallions (Association to promote the Farm Show-Driving Horse in the Netherlands).

In August, the "E" stallions will be submitted to the farm performance test.....

This is the report of the farm test of the stallion Beint 175, born in 1943, owned by J.J. Hettinga from Huizum near Leeuwarden.

The test took place on September 15th, 1948.
Members of the committee: Le Heux, Bierema, Jhr. H. van Baerdt van Sminia and Wigersma, veterinarian.

Sandy soil, mowed rye field, cool fall weather, rotating plow.

Distance: 9075 meters (9925 yards); time: 3 hours;
length of stride: 72 centimeters (2.36 feet).

	Pulse	Temperature Celcius - Fahrenheit	Respiration
before test	40	38.1 - 100.6	20
right after test	98	39.2 - 102.6	120
15 minutes after	60	38.8 - 101.8	80
30 minutes after	48	38.7 - 101.7	48
45 minutes after	40	38.4 - 101.1	30

The FPS Declines

We all know that the Studbook and the breed experienced a big crisis in the 1960's and early 1970's. The number of breedings declined dramatically, and the number of approved stallions in that period was a far cry from the numbers in the decades before and after. The late 1960's was a period of great decline, and the survival of the Friesian horse was in jeopardy.

Because of this malaise the required performance inspection was cancelled somewhere in the 1960's. The PHRYSO makes no mention of the farm performance tests in those years. They were also put on the backburner. It took until 1980 before a new 50-day test was set up in the Federation Center in Ermelo for the three stallions of that year: Oepke 266, Oege 267 and Peke 268, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture.

Central Examination

This new test was named Central Examination (Centraal Onderzoek or CO), and initially consisted of 6 segments: riding test, driving test, pulling test, show test, character and training report. The stallions were evaluated and scored by the performance jury, and the examination would be concluded with a final exam. After the first successful test with the three stallions approved in 1980, a few adjustments were made in the test and the next group was ready to go. Since that time the Central Examination went through a little fine-tuning here and there, but broadly speaking, these original 6 segments have been practically the same for all the participating stallions from 1980 until now. In 1982 the Central Examination added walk - trot-canter (the basic gaits) and stall behavior to the 6 original segments of the exam. In 2000 this changed again to 8 segments. The basic gaits count double for the end score. The pulling test becomes the sleigh test and character; stall behavior and training report are no longer scored. A new segment is "willingness to work." From 2000, the results of the Central Examination can

be compared to the results of the ABFP tests.

Breeding Comes First, Then the Performance Test

From Oepke 226 through Doeke 287 (1980-1985), the stallions that were approved in Leeuwarden would offer their services throughout that year's breeding season before they went to Ermelo to do their performance test. There are still descendants of stallions that were rejected after the Central Examination after only *one* breeding season. Most of the time, the walk was judged insufficient, but trot, canter and health problems were also grounds for their rejection.

The short career as stud applied to (with the number of breedings between parentheses): Rinke 271 (22), Tys 274(50), Aiso 279 (41), Bertus 280 (15), Walter 282 (50), Arent 283 (18) and Dimer 285 (25). Since 1986 stallions are not permitted into the breeding until the FPS board issues the approval after the stallions pass the final exam of the performance test.

1991 Pulling Test: No

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In 1991 the FPS board decided to cancel the pulling test in the Central Examination, as we can see in the score-bars of Nikolaas 310, Melle 311, Piter 312, Ouke 313, Obe 314, Olaf 315 and Pike 316. But the pulling test gave too much valuable information, especially about the walk, and was reinstated in 1992. At the present time, the stallions take the riding test and the sleigh test at the midterm exam. The riding test is repeated at the final exam, when the driving test and show test are taken, as well. The importance of the pulling test may have been disputed, but there has never been a discussion about jumping in the Central Examination for the Friesian stallions. Although, one or two may have jumped for joy in Ermelo and later in Drachten, obstacles have never been a matter of discussion. However, a few jumps were required in the initial period of the IBOP test (Suitability Test for Friesian Horses), because the IBOP test was originally set up for the KWPN (The Warmblood Horse Studbook). Ultimately, the Central Examination is an ability test. The young stallions must show their potential first. Later, their owner can start them in a discipline of the sport that will showcase their best qualities.

Breeding And Sport

The required participation of approved stallions in the sport at the moment is actually the result of what happened in the 1950's. Wilhelmina Lane and Breeding Days were replaced by the National and/or Regional Competitions for the Friesian show horses. Dressage, both under saddle and driving, could be shown at the official competitions of the KNHS (Royal Dutch Equine Sport Association). At the end of the 1980's and the beginning of the 1990's, the required performances took place in St. Nicolaasga or Drachten. The owners could choose between ridden or driven dressage, or a performance in the show vehicle.

continued...



More Than 350 Performance Tests, cont.

In 1991, for instance, Reitse 272 was first in L1 dressage with 253 points; Diedert 288 won the M1 with 250 points; Gaye 295 won Z1 with 345 points. Hannes 296 won in L1 driven dressage with 258 points and Gerlof 294 won in M1 driven dressage with 251 points. Dirk 298 became first in the show test with a score of 8.5.

In 1994 this one day obligatory performance test was cancelled. From that year on, the stallions must be entered in the sport from the first year after their Central Examination, through the year of approval on their offspring. At least 4 times a year, a Studbook stallion must enter an official competition in one of the categories mentioned above. The results are published in the PHRYSO and are also mentioned in the Stallion Show catalog. After the stallion has been approved on his offspring, it is no longer required that he take part in competitions. The public can still see the stallions at the Stallion Show in Leeuwarden, where their sport condition is often changed to a richer one.

Performance Test Abroad

In a period of great success, nothing seems impossible. In 1983, Laes 278 became the first approved Friesian stallion in North America. His movements were sufficient and he improved on his offspring (11 at that time) at the same inspection. The approved stallions in North America have all done their performance tests. In the beginning, these were quite simple, but later, they were quite comparable to the requirements that were asked in the Netherlands during their testing. Barteld 292 had to show a performance with the same segments as the stallions in the Netherlands. However, a note was made that he had to take part in a Central Examination if he was ever to be exported to the Netherlands within a period of 3 years. In 2001 the stallion Tonis 393, born and raised in the U.S.A was registered in the Studbook after a successful final exam at the Central Examination in Drachten. Throughout 125 years of the FPS about 350 stallions have participated in the performance tests.

Semen and OCD, a Setback for the FPS

Wybren 236 is still remembered as a great show horse, but in 1971 he was rejected due to infertility. From then on, up to and including 1978, the lesser known stallions - Bart 243, Detmer 245, Frisso Jelle 253 and Ige 257 - were marked infertile. From 1978, stallions with insufficient semen could no longer take part in the Stallion Show and/or performance test. The FPS was ahead of the KWPN in that regard. In 1980, the X-ray examination for OCD became a requirement. At first, the stallions were examined after the Stallion Show, but when quite a few stallions were rejected almost every year, the FPS moved the exam to before the show. In 1997 the Central Examination was extended from 50 to 70 days; the first 3 weeks being an adjustment for the stallions. Since 2001 the stallions are also tested for the red gene.

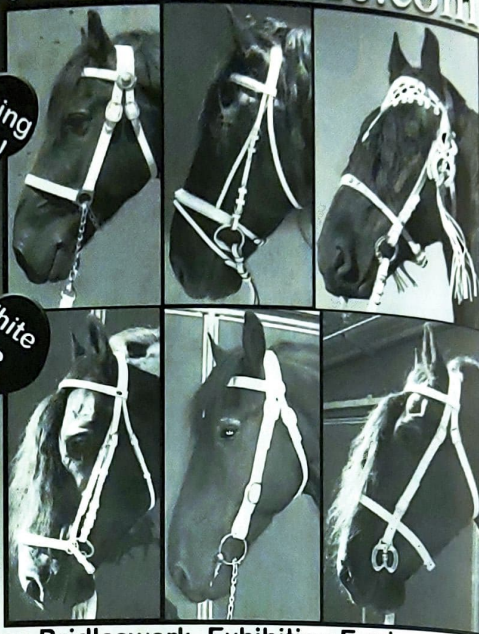


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