

# PREPARING YOUR FRIESIAN

**I**BOP testing is conducted by the Koninklijke Vereniging "Het Friesch Paarden-Stamboek" (KFPS) and the purpose of this examination is to establish a horse's suitability for various uses, doing so with the greatest degree of objectivity. There are several reasons to enter your Friesian in an IBOP. The most prevalent reason is to accurately assess breeding stock on type, athleticism, and movement for achieving KFPS breeding goals. That, of course, makes stallions and mares the most common candidates for these tests. Since Crown and Model predicates are based on sport aptitude and performance, an IBOP score of 77 or greater is required for those preliminary titles to become permanent titles. Friesian horses are assessed by qualified KFPS professionals; therefore, there are also benefits of entering a gelding in an IBOP. For instance, a good score on record can also bring more in sale value, not to mention personal pride and accomplishment.

The driving IBOP test has evolved over time, from two parts (a driving test and a sled test) to the addition of canter movements in 2013. These changes have been a direct link to a more realistic test of what the registry is looking for in a modern Friesian.

The key to success in the actual IBOP test is an adequate training program that includes a detailed plan, working back from the inspection date. That plan should cover a variety of bases. Training the test itself is the most obvious component, but you should also take time to properly condition as well as expose your Friesian to environments similar to the test's atmosphere, footing, and arena size.

The first step towards preparing a horse for the driven IBOP is to understand the general rules: the horse must be at least 4 years old; both the driving and the show driving IBOP driving arenas are at least 25 meters x 50 meters, with letters AFBMCHEK; and will have minimal fencing behind the ring letters and at the corners. A 4-wheeled carriage must be used; harness should be lightweight with a breast collar, and the breeching may be removed. Pneumatic tires are preferred as they roll easily on top of the footing, reducing forward movement resistance. Regardless of discipline, a horse may not participate in an IBOP more than twice a year, and if done on the same day must be in two different disciplines. A passing score for all IBOP disciplines is 77 points.

The next step is to decide what test is appropriate for your Friesian. Assessment differs between Driving (Driven Dressage) and Show Driving (Harness Horse). Dressage assessment areas include the walk, trot, canter, self-carriage and balance (all being a multiple of 2), as well as agility, transitions, and impulsion (each being a single multiple). For Show Driving the walk, moment

of trot suspension, front, agility, and impulsion are single scores, with the trot use of forelegs, use of hind legs, self-carriage, and balance all double scores. The trainer should not only be thoroughly familiar with the IBOP test, but also the "Explanation of Evaluation Criteria" available on the FHANA website under Sport – ABFP and IBOP Tests – IBOP Tests and Explanation of Scores – IBOP Driving.

The amount of training time needed for that 77 passing score depends on the knowledge the horse has when arriving at the training barn. Each Friesian's needs should be considered on an individual basis. For an extremely general guideline you should expect at least 3 to 12 months of training and preparation for the test, and circumstances could require additional time. This timeline will be based on the individual horse's strength/weaknesses and starting point of knowledge and fitness coming into the training barn.

To make the most of your Friesian's time with your professional of choice it is best to have the horse "ready" to train when it arrives. To prepare your horse for the trainer here are a few things to have completed prior to its arrival.

Be sure your Friesian is up to date on all vaccinations, including a current Coggins®. Have an equine dentist check your horse's mouth 1 - 2 months prior to departure. Young horses' mouths change very quickly from 2 - 6 years of age. They are shedding baby teeth and new teeth are erupting. This will ensure a happy mouth as the trainer is preparing them for

Driving a custom Bird-in-Hand carriage that replicates the Dutch IBOP vehicle, Stafford drives Iron Spring Farm's Toltje fan't Boekhof to an 83 score in 2008. Stacy Lynne Photography®





# FOR THE DRIVING IBOP

BY SUZY STAFFORD, TRAINER, & GAIL AUMILLER, SPORT COMMITTEE CHAIR



Stafford using a fine harness buggy in 2011. Jim Craig©.

biting and more intricate rein aids. Expect to have your horse's feet in good order, with a set of front and rear shoes, dependent on trainer preference. Some trainers like traction on the shoes depending on where and what type of footing they will be working on. Your Friesian should also be in healthy working weight. To help ease the horse into the move to a training facility it is beneficial to start handling the horse with some very basic groundwork. Comfortably leading, and standing in cross ties to be groomed, is a good start. If you are not capable or comfortable doing that, no worries - leave it to the trainer.

The equipment needed for preparation and performing the driven IBOP includes a 4-wheel carriage (fine harness buggy, presentation carriage, marathon carriage), with preference on a lightweight type vehicle to allow the horse to show off its natural movement without exerting more effort. That being said, it is useful to have a heavier (within reason) vehicle during the training months to help build muscle. The harness used is ideally a lightweight type harness in good, safe condition. Some trainers will supply proper equipment and some will not, so be sure to check into this prior to choosing a professional.

Once the horse is settled at the training stable or if you have chosen to tackle this goal, here are a few steps to reach the IBOP goal. The horse should be brought along as its body and mind allows, and your starting point should be based on the equine's current mental and physical development. The basics must be in place early in the training stages, so you have ample time to build on those as you get closer to the test. A quick example of needed basics: the horse is physically and mentally comfortable

in the carriage at all three gaits with an understanding of each cue, and the horse happily accepts contact and is straight to both reins. From this you are able to start building on the fitness goals in a variety of ways.

A fitness plan should be based on each horse's individual needs. For example, if a Friesian comes in with an unbalanced or weak canter, spend more time at that gait to help develop it fully. If the horse is a forward/hot/over-achiever type, utilize very long (1/2 - 1 hour) walk sessions for fitness to keep the mind calm and for less impact on the joints while achieving the same fitness goals. Hill work, cavelletti exercises, and riding may also be incorporated if necessary. The goal is to peak in fitness the week prior to the IBOP.



Stafford's 2013 victory lap in her presentation carriage with Aumiller's Sjaantje after scoring an 81.5. Jessica Mendoza©.

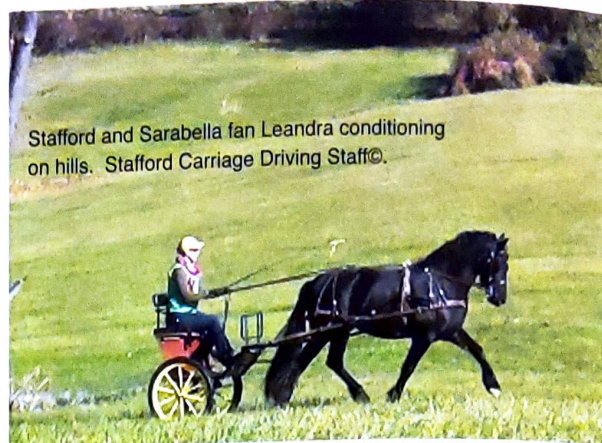


Stafford, using a presentation carriage, drove Aumiller's Isobel Ypkje van het Kasteel to a 78.5 score in 2015. Stacy Lynne Photograph©.



The next issue to tackle is to make sure you have a supple horse in all three gaits, meaning your horse goes straight, and bends left and right. Now you are ready to start working on the IBOP test movements. Break the test up into sections and work on a few pieces at a time. Once you are successful with the parts, then, and only then, put the test together. Try to practice the test in the same size arena with the same footing that you will encounter at your inspection site. It is easy to make a quick phone call to find out this information. At this stage you should be very familiar with the pattern and have confidence in driving the entire test. After you have driven the test a few times, take a day to figure out exactly what warm up your Friesian will need the day of the inspection. This will be important, because you will be given a scheduled time to perform. It is helpful to know how much warm-up time the horse will need so you don't jeopardize its performance.

During training, it is extremely beneficial to get your Friesian off the farm to develop confidence and prepare the horse to handle a show type atmosphere. There is nothing more disappointing than spending months on training, and behold, when you ship off the farm, the horse is so nervous, excited, and uncomfortable that it seems as though you just pulled it out



Stafford and Sarabella fan Leandra conditioning on hills. Stafford Carriage Driving Staff©.

each direction as a warm-up. This is a courtesy, so take care you don't take advantage, and keep it short and sweet so you don't negatively impact the day's time schedule. When you are ready to start, be sure to let the judges know. Remember, it is all about the horse. The IBOP is not a competition. It is a breed standard evaluation of the horse's performance potential. All the preparation that was done over the last few months should carry you easily through the test. ♡



Some trainers prefer a 2-wheel vehicle in the breaking stage of training; here Stafford and Ytsje P school the test. Stafford Carriage Driving Staff©.

of the field, and all its education has been forgotten. Trailering to "off farm" adventures and driving shows (carriage, breed, or combined driving events) is an invaluable part of the IBOP preparation process.

Prior to your arrival be sure to double check that all your paperwork is in order. Remember to look over the inspection rules once more, and note the site requirements. With proper training and conditioning you will arrive at the site with a Friesian looking great and feeling good! Take the time to go and check out the arena. Ask your site organizer if you may school in the arena the day before to get your horse comfortable in it.

The day of your IBOP, when the steward sends you into the arena drive up to the judges and acknowledge them. If you feel the horse needs to "see" the arena you may ask for a trot around



Stafford's 2014 Iron Spring Farm victory lap in her presentation carriage with Crystal Burr's Ivanka Nicole. Crystal Burr©.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

World Champion Suzy Stafford first stepped into the IBOP driving arena in 2008, when she trained and drove Iron Spring Farm's Toltsje fan 't Boekhof to a driven IBOP of 83 points. Stafford has driven six Friesian mares to passing IBOP scores and is the only person to successfully achieve a KPFS/FHANA driving sport predicate, an honor achieved with three different mares. To learn more, visit [www.staffordcarriagedriving.com](http://www.staffordcarriagedriving.com).

Gail Aumiller purchased her first Friesian in 2002, when she retired from teaching. She then started her successful breeding program at Dreams Come True Farm in Carlisle, PA, and focused her competition goals on Carriage Pleasure Driving and Driven Dressage. Aumiller is the current chair of the Sport Committee and has served on several AGM Committees. To learn more visit [www.dreamscometruefarm.com](http://www.dreamscometruefarm.com).