

Looking from the outside in, the selection process from foal book stallion to approved stallion often looks quite obscure. All the way through this process, the Stallion Inspection Jury uses a whole list of criteria that in most cases intentionally have no (lower) parameter. Furthermore, a great deal of the evaluation takes place "backstage," such as the various veterinary examinations. Through all that, the assessment of the stallion's pedigree also plays a role. What is the role of the pedigree in the selection? What are the factors that need to be taken into consideration?

## Stallion Selection: What is the Role of the Pedigree?

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### Spreading The Blood Pool

During the selection process, the pedigree normally gives information about two aspects. First, it gives information on the degree to which the stallion can contribute to the genetic variation within the Friesian horse population. A young stallion that doesn't offer a whole lot of perspective regarding blood spreading (large degree of mutual relations, must meet higher standards than a stallion with "outcross" - less mutual relations). This looks easier than it really is. To make a correct assessment, we must look beyond the five generations that are currently mentioned on the studbook certificate. Furthermore, it is not easy to make an assessment about which patriarchs have contributed to narrowing of spreading the blood pool.

In the Friesian horse population, horses without Tetman blood are generally considered to come from a so-called "free line." This is probably partly erroneously, because a stallion like Ritske is one of the most influential stallions within the Friesian horse breeding (through the female line). To get clarification in this matter, a method is being developed to convey the relation of a stallion (or a mare) with the population. This method will be an important help in the selection of young stallions. More information in one of the next PHRYSO's.

### Assessment of Genetic Potential of Young Stallions

The most important part in the stallion selection is the assessment of the genetic potential of a young stallion. Only 10 to 40% of the differences that we see between the stallions are hereditary (depending on the characteristic) and will be passed on to the descendants. The stallion selection goes beyond the selection of stallions with the best personal performance.

This brings us to the second aspect of the crucial information a pedigree gives us.

To assess the genetic potential of a young stallion, the following two major sources must be reviewed:

1. The presentation of the stallion
2. The quality of the pedigree of the stallion

In general, a second rate pedigree will not produce a good stallion. But if such a pedigree happens to produce a good stallion, the quality of his descendants will be disappointing in most cases. For such a stallion a "star" predicate will be the most he can obtain.

On the other hand, there are average stallions with good pedigrees. Obviously, these stallions didn't get the best genes from their parents and should be eliminated in the selection process. Potential studbook stallions should have a "strong paper" as well as an excellent personal quality regarding conformation and sport potential.

Both aspects are equally important. Of course, there can be some compensation from one aspect to the other. A stallion with an excellent pedigree may possibly meet a lower standard to go to the next round, and vice versa. Be it as it may, it is a fact that the pedigree has become more important in the selection of the studbook stallions.

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### Quality of the Bloodline

How do we evaluate the quality of a bloodline? Not so long ago a "full paper" played a crucial role. But now we look beyond that. Now it is important to assess the quality of the genes in a bloodline, or "the breeding power." The necessary criteria for this process are, in random order:

✧ *The quality of the mares in the female bloodline of the young stallion (exterior, sport information, life-span, fertility, etc.)*

✧ *The quality of the stallions that are at the foundation of this line (these stallions must belong to the best stallions of the population)*

✧ *The quality of the descendants of the mares in the mare line (the descendants of the mares must have a more than above-average quality. We look beyond "preferent." A preferent mare with only four star descendants in a total of 18 registered descendants, for instance, gets a lesser rating. And of course, the father of the descendants plays a role.*

How do these criteria work in real life? Below are a few examples:

- ✧ A studbook mare with good descendants will get a higher rating than a star mare with average descendants. We also review why the mare didn't become a star.
- ✧ An inferior stallion in the female line is more likely to be regarded as a "hole in the paper" than a mare that didn't get star.
- ✧ A mare line with good breeding results, but with stallions that had disappointing results with their offspring, is offered less chances. Some lines breed better in the female line than in the male line.

### Using the Expectation Value

Every stallion that has been approved on his offspring underwent an assessment of his breeding values for exterior and sport potential. Of course, we don't have that information about the young stallions yet. By taking the average of the breeding values of the mother and father of a young stallion, the expectation value can be estimated. This expectation value can be used as a first, coarse filter. After all, the scores are based on the above mentioned criteria. In the future the expectation value can also be used to select which colts, based on their lineage, should be marked for the first viewing of the stallion selection. The Stallion Inspection Jury uses the expectation value of the young stallions as an aid for the assessment of the quality of the pedigree, but will look at each of the above mentioned criteria/components separately. The quality of the pedigree starts to play a more important role after the first viewing. It is not a good idea to make a selection during the first viewing based on the pedigree within groups of half brothers, because the young stallions can still drop out of the race after the first viewing due to veterinary examinations.



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The quality of the pedigree plays a role after the Central Examination, when the final selection for approval as a studbook stallion is made. After all, the selection of the stallions, from start to finish, is based on the assessment of the genetic potential of the young stallion, and what his qualities can do for the breeding of the Friesian horse.

