

THE ABFP

UNDERSTANDING THE GENERAL APTITUDE & UTILITY TEST

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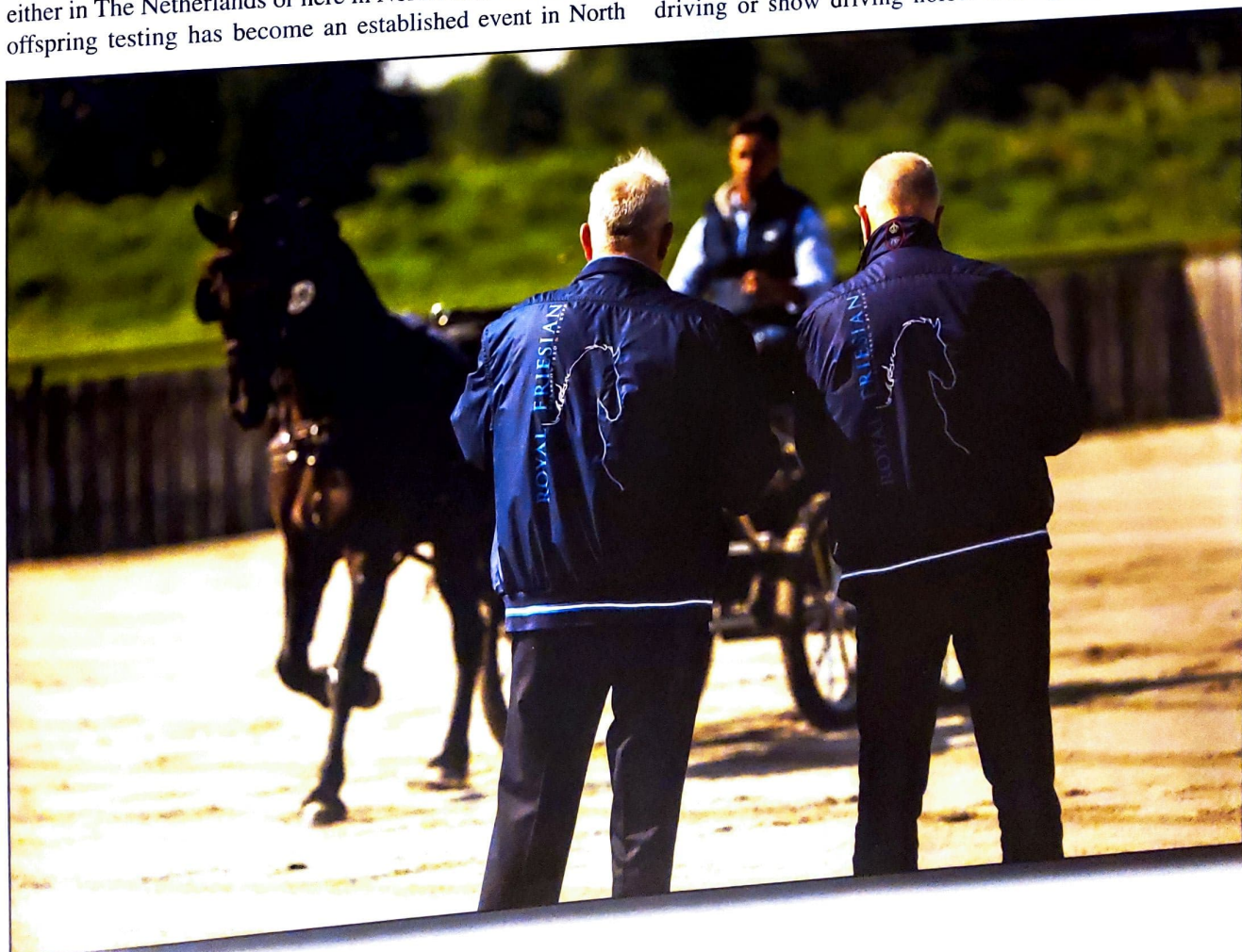
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL RODRIQUEZ

ABFP testing is underway once again in North America. Since 2014, FHANA has conducted the General Aptitude and Utility Test, more commonly referred to as the ABFP test, in order to facilitate the offspring testing of North American stallions provisionally approved for breeding. Each year, offspring of these stallions are eligible to participate in this process until the required number of offspring (20) have been evaluated either in The Netherlands or here in North America. Now that offspring testing has become an established event in North

America, testing has become very appealing to members who wish to submit their horse for testing. Owners are seeing the value in this experience for their horse and recognize the value in receiving input regarding their horse's sport aptitude.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the ABFP test is to provide an objective way to establish the aptitude of the Friesian horse as a dressage, driving or show driving horse. Willingness to work and



stable behavior are also assessed. 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 natural aptitude for dressage and/or harness competition can be made at a young age. Upon completion of the test, the owner is issued a certificate and the results are published. The total score is not recorded on the studbook papers. Successful scores in an ABFP test can also be used to satisfy prerequisites for obtaining the Star, Crown or Model predicate (see the KFPS guidelines for specific information). By testing a sample of a young stallion's offspring, the KFPS can make a determination on how positively the stallion is influencing the breed. The test results also provide additional data points for mare owners to consider when selecting a stallion for their mare.

SELECTION OF ABFP HORSES

Members who own offspring that they would like to be considered by FHANA and the KFPS to participate in the testing have prerequisites. Horses must be healthy, fit and in good physical condition. Horses must have basic groundwork including lunging, ground work and stable manners. To be able to compare the mares, geldings and stallions, environmental factors and arrival condition of the horses must be as uniform as possible. If the condition of the horses to be tested varies too much it has the potential to negatively influence the data. The number of horses accepted for ABFP testing is determined first by the capacity of the testing site and training staff and then by which stallions have priority based on the number of offspring left to be tested. FHANA, the stallion owner, and the offspring owners incur a minimal cost to send their horses to ABFP testing.



If a horse has already been correctly trained to accept a saddle and rider or has already been put to the carriage it will allow the horse to correctly progress during the test.



When horses begin the ABFP test they must first be introduced to the basic equipment for riding and driving.

PREPARATION OF HORSES FOR TESTING

Adequate preparation of the horses is crucial- this cannot be overstated. The complete ABFP test is seven weeks long. A shorter test of five weeks is an option for horses that are older and well established under saddle and in front of the carriage. The test is rigorous by design but well suited for horses that come prepared. Owners are encouraged to ensure their horses have an adequate fitness condition to be able to complete the testing. This can be achieved by exercise, light work, and/or lunging. A horse that has been well conditioned to stimuli in the barn, such as regular grooming, haltering and bathing, will assimilate to his new training environment without undue stress. Horses that have been provided a basic work education are also well prepared. They will be experienced with walking in hand, working in the bridle, working on the lunge line and working under saddle.

Unfortunately, some owners do not take advantage of the opportunity to properly prepare their horses. When horses arrive for testing outside optimal condition it puts a great deal of strain on the horse and training staff. If the horse has had little to no preparation, several weeks of valuable training time must be devoted to basic desensitization to prepare the horse to learn how to accept the bridle, work on the lunge line and accept a saddle and rider. This is truly unfair to the horse and

will not yield positive results for the horse. If a horse gets so far behind in the training schedule that it will not be possible to complete the final examination, the jury will consult with the owner about referring the horse to a later test.

The weight of the horse must also be optimal if it is to perform at its best. If the horse is pulled from its summer pasture with no conditioning or preparation and arrives at the training facility overweight this is not to the horse's benefit. The horse will be asked to work very hard over the next seven weeks and carrying additional weight and poor muscling will negatively influence his ability to perform and cause him undue soreness.

ARRIVAL OF THE HORSES

Upon arrival, horses are given time to settle in but the impressions of the horse's temperament and stable manners by the training staff begins right away. The horse must first be evaluated for physical soundness so it is viewed in hand, on a straight line and in circle. A veterinarian also examines the horse and any defects, faults or irregular movements are recorded. Horses are required to be current on vaccinations for Influenza, Rhinopneumonitis, Tetanus, West Nile and Eastern and Western Encephalomyelitis and records of the vaccination must accompany the horse. All horses are required to be on a regular deworming program. Horses that arrive with health issues are not allowed to enter the training facility. At any time during testing thereafter, if a horse's health risks the health and well-being of the other horses, that horse will be excused for the remainder of the testing.

Owners are advised to have the horse delivered with shoes on. Owners are encouraged to have their horses shod well prior to their arrival at the training facility so that the horse has the opportunity to get used to working in shoes. The shoes must be normal and be 8 mm thick and 22 to 25 mm wide on both the front and back shoes. If by arrival the shoes are not in good condition, the training staff will coordinate for the repair of the shoes at the owner's cost. During testing the shoes and trimming will be done by a farrier selected by the training staff and those costs will be charged to the owner of the horse. Owners must supply an English bridle with flash-noseband, a snaffle bit, and reins that fits the horse well. The owner must also supply a good halter and blanket.

During testing, horses are fed a balanced ration suitable for horses in training with adjustments to the rations of individual horses as necessary. No supplements of any kind are allowed during the ABFP Training. The training facility will keep a daily log of each horse, noting anything out of the ordinary, and logging the horse's temperature at the same time once each day.

TRAINING PROGRAM

Horses are trained five times per week. Targeted work is done five times a week, becoming progressively more intensive over the course of the test. The horses receive turn out once a week. There is also one rest day each week. Horses receive varied training, which is adapted to the needs of the individual horse. Training is made up of the following core components:



The test is specifically designed to assess young horses. The horses are not asked to perform above their ability for their age. The judging is more to evaluate the horses' natural ability.

- Dressage under the saddle
- Driving work
- Lunging

The test is about talent as a utility or sport horse but the test also reveals the horse's willingness to work, including instances when the horse 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 by the training staff over the course of the test. Willingness to work can be defined in basic terms as the horse's behavior towards people with regard to its temperament, manners and reliability. Training staff is asked for their impressions of the horse both in the stable and at work. Here, the following definitions apply:

Disposition: The horse's way of being (attentive, calm, playful or nervous).

Temperament: Extent and speed to which the horse reacts to stimuli.

Manners/Reliability: Reacting to the same stimulus in the same positive manner and responding in a trustworthy fashion to people and to other horses.

Ease of Handling: Behavior in the stable while being fed and groomed. Any sign of stable vices (e.g. weaving or cribbing) will automatically lead to a rating of "unsatisfactory" for this component.

ASSESSMENT

Horses are assessed a maximum of four times over the course of testing. The progress made in performance is considered when arriving at the final score. These scores are then the final scores for the assessment of aptitude as a driving horse and/or riding mount. The scoring of each element is expressed in half and whole points. In the assessment, attention is devoted explicitly to the aptitude of the horse. For each horse, two series of assessment scores will be determined - one for suitability as a riding mount, one for suitability as a driving horse. A separate score is given for suitability as a show driving horse. The following components are assessed:

Riding Test

- Walk
- Trot
- Canter
- Carriage & Balance
- Agility
- Transitions
- Impulsions

Driving Test

- Walk
- Trot
- Carriage & Balance
- Agility
- Transitions
- Impulsions

Walk	Trot	Canter	Carriage & Balance	Agility	Transitions	Implusion	Total
2x	2x	2x	2x	1x	1x	1x	

Riding Test

Driving Test

Walk	Trot	Canter	Carriage & Balance	Agility	Transitions	Implusion	Total
2x	2x	2x	2x	2x	1x	2x	



As horses progress during the ABFP test, they will be asked to work harder on occasion. Horses that begin the test in good physical condition will have the most opportunity to perform at their full potential.

The suitability as a show driving horse is recorded as a separate score that will not be included in the total for the headings.

The ABFP test is a wonderful opportunity for owners to explore their young horse's natural talent for sport. This impression is developed through seven weeks of very structured training in a controlled environment. If the horse achieves positive ABFP scores these can also be used as qualifying performance scores for the Star, Crown or Model predicate. While ABFP testing is a benefit to the horse owner, it is essential for the stallion. The

data from the ABFP testing of a young stallion's offspring is used by the KFPS to develop an impression of how the stallion is influencing his offspring. This data is then made available to the public and mare owners can use this information to determine how a stallion may influence their mare. While many positive things can be gained from ABFP testing, they are all reliant to a large degree on how suitably prepared a horse is to participate in testing. Horse owners that take the opportunity to deliver a well conditioned, well prepared horse will most certainly be able to take full advantage of what the ABFP has to offer.



The horse's willingness to work is assessed during the test. Willingness to work includes factors such as the horse's behavior towards people with regard to its temperament and reliability.

Photos by Michael Rodriguez featuring Wendy f/t Friesian Connection, Star (Date x Jorrit), owned by Michael Rodriguez and David Sylvan.

