

Once a stallion has passed the first round, the owner is required to bring the stallion in for a veterinarian examination. This happens virtually immediately after leaving the cage which they now use for the first round. What happens during this exam?

## Veterinarian Exams During the Friesian Stallion Judging

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*Translated for THE FRIESIAN by Arlene DeBoer*

*Photography by Hermien Wierdsma (not part of original article)*

The exam takes place by a set group of veterinarians. Usually this is in an isolated place near the area of the judging ring. The exam follows a set protocol. The first order of business is the horse identification through the reading of the microchip by the veterinarians. Secondly, the farrier will check for white in the hoof soles. This consists of scraping the hooves and checking them very thoroughly. The next step is a complete clinical inspection of the outside of the stallion.

The first clinical inspection is the condition of the horse, including any deviations in the air ways (nose and nose fluids). Then the skin is examined for defects, scars and white hairs. The eyes are checked very carefully for types of blindness and other defects. Negative character traits are also mentioned. The next test is the condition of the teeth. They check for overbite or underbite symptoms. It is required that the edges of the incisor teeth touch each other minimally. When the incisor teeth are outside the accepted norm, it is unacceptable. During this exam, the veterinarians are required to hold the head in a normal height - when the head is not held correctly, a proper exam is not possible. After this comes the test for the sex organs. The size, form and hardness of the testicles are judged. An uneven size in the testicles is not desirable. With respect to movement in the stallion, the form of the hooves are checked. They check to see if the nerves are in the normal place and are in the right condition. Two different hooves are seen as a negative. It is possible that the horse was born with the condition, but different hooves can also develop later in life. Sometimes this happens because one hoof is injured and the other hoof then compensates and becomes heavier as it grows out wider. Over all, the wider hoof is desired over a narrow hoof. A broader hoof form offers more perspective for an active hoof mechanism that makes for a good blood flow. In the back of the hoof lies the most important hoof control area.

### MOVEMENT

The checking of defects of both the front and the back legs is also part of the veterinarian exam. Some stands are less desirable, because of the strong traits that are passed on. Scars and wounds are noted. Heavier growth in the area of top and lower joints could point to a deviance in the growth plates - that is, that there was some problem during the growth period. The space between the legs or the stand is looked at (bottom narrow or broad). The veterinarians check the standing horse for the condition of the hind legs; they check for wobbly legs. They also check to see if the jumping and knee joints are filled normally. Too much fluid can indicate possible OCD problems. The knee joints of the Friesian horse deserve special attention. It is well known that there are problems in the knee joints of the Friesian horse. Every abnormality of the knee joint in a potential stallion candidate is undesirable. A veterinarian will palpate the knee during the exam to try to push the joint backward, i.e., to lock the joint. By doing this, he will get an idea of defects. A loose knee joint is also not desired. The problems of knee joints can be an inherited condition, as well as an acquired condition.

The next step is the movement evaluation on a hard surface. The stallion is first lunged on a road type surface. The veterinarian will observe the horse and note if he has any pain during lunging in either the front or the back legs. The nodding of the horse's head, or the sloping of the rump, in work can reveal defects. The well known rule here is that a horse will fall on the healthy leg, making the other one the crippled leg.

For many horses it is better to prepare them for this exam at home and to practise a few times. It will make the exam easier. The movement exam is followed by observation of the stallion while he is walking in a straight line on a hard surface.

Continued...





## VETERINARIAN EXAMS, CONT.

This exam starts with walking up and down in hand. The veterinarians check the movement of the lower legs; too much toeing out or toeing in is not desirable. A Friesian also needs to move the legs correctly, forwards and backwards. Next, the trot in movement on a hard surface in a straight line is judged. This gives the veterinarian the chance to check for bottom narrowness or excess bottom width. Experience has shown much variation in trotting movement.

### ADVICE

The complete results of the exam are noted on paper and given to the registry. The veterinarian judgment will count as a recommendation. The final judgment will be given by the registry (the stallion judging committee). This exam as discussed in this article takes place immediately after the first round, and in the same location. The report will be taken along to the second round by the stallion judging committee, after which a second veterinarian exam will be done. Because each judging is a moment in time and many factors can play a role, it is a good idea for the stallions to be seen several times by the veterinarians. This way the stallions get a real chance and are given a fair report, from the veterinarians' viewpoint. Besides the first veterinarian test after the first round, x-rays are made and checked, as well as the semen inspection. The second round is only possible when all exams turn out positive. When the stallions get joint and bone exams, another veterinarian exam takes place. The emphasis in that exam will be on the movement apparatus. During this exam, the registry wants to see the build of the potential stallions. The movement exam is geared for that. During the movement exam, the stallions will be checked twice by a veterinarian. Any defects that were noted during earlier exams will probably show up at this time. This procedure makes it clear that a breeding stallion goes through an exhaustive veterinarian check up before he gets the coveted license to breed.



### WARNING

During the whole time of the selection process, it is possible that one or more of the potential stallions will be checked for illegal drugs. The owner of the stallion is always responsible for the illegal drugs found in a stallion. So be careful which medicines are administered to your stallion during veterinarian examinations and when they were administered. Ask your veterinarian how long a medicine stays in the system. If you cannot get a clear answer, consult with experts in this field. In extreme cases, ask for a veterinarian statement and consult with the registry.

*With thanks to Drs. Krijn van Muiswinkel.*



## SPERM INSPECTION, CONT. FROM PAGE 34

Given that the Friesian horse, compared to other breeds, matures rather late, it is worthwhile to give it a try again the following year if the sperm of the three-year-old doesn't meet the requirements the first time around. By then, when the stallion has had a chance to mature for another year, the sperm production has often increased and the sperm quality may have improved as well. But note: the improvement in the percentage of motile sperm cells or the improvement of the structure of the sperm cells is most often small and it is unrealistic to expect an improvement of substantially more than five percent, unless the stallion was ill at the time of, or in the two months prior to, the inspection. Remember that a satisfactory sperm report is

no guarantee for a good fertility. The fact of the matter is that a sperm cell needs to have a large number of qualifications to be able to fertilize an egg cell. We test only for a (relative small) number of these qualifications, whereas deviations in the untested qualifications may cause infertility as well.

On the other hand it is a fact that the stallion with an unsatisfactory sperm report will mostly have a poor fertility potential. That is why it is, and will always be, important to carry out sperm examinations of our future Friesian studbook stallions.

