



## **56th Annual Meeting of the European Association for Animal Production**

**Uppsala, 5-8 June 2005**

**Commission on Horse Production, Session H 1.1**

## **IDENTIFICATION METHODS OF HORSES IN GERMANY**

**T. Dohms and K. Miesner**

German Equestrian Federation (NF), Breeding Department

Freiherr-von-Langen-Str. 13, 48231 Warendorf, Germany

Email: [tdohms@fn-dokr.de](mailto:tdohms@fn-dokr.de), Internet: [www.pferd-aktuell.de](http://www.pferd-aktuell.de)

### **Introduction**

Projections from the market study of the German Equestrian Federation (FN) carried out in the year 2001 show that more than 1,000,000 horses and ponies live in this country. That means that in the last 35 years the horse population in Germany has more than tripled.

The German Equestrian Federation is the umbrella organisation for equestrian sport and horse breeding in Germany. As member organisations, 17 regional equestrian associations with 403 county associations and 7,429 riding clubs are linked to the NF. And at present, 28 recognized breeding organisations are also member associations of the German Equestrian Federation. In these breeding associations altogether 110,635 brood mares and 8,923 approved stallions of different breeds are registered. More than 45,800 foals were born in 2004. The sport department of the German Equestrian Federation reported that 137,173 booklets with entry forms for equestrian events for sport horses were issued in the year 2004. On top of that, 23,566 new competition horses were registered. From those, 20,150 horses had certificates of German breeding organisation and 3,416 horses were without German breeding certificates.

### **The identification of German horses**

The identification of horses in Germany is based on the regulations of the Council Directives on animal health conditions governing the movement and import from third countries of equidae (90/426/EEC) and on the zootechnical and genealogical conditions governing intra-Community trade in equidae (90/427/EEC). Identification documents are issued according to the Commission Decisions on establishing the identification document (passport) accompanying registered equidae (93/623/EEC) and on establishing the identification of equidae for breeding and production (2000/68/EEC). In Germany national legislation about identification exists also. The regulations on the transport of animals (the so-called

“Viehverkehrsverordnung”) and for the German breeding organisations define the identification of horses.

The reasons for distinctive identification are the animal health as well as human health, the zootechnical and economical motives and the equestrian competitions control functions. In a horse's passport, the health status is documented by indication of the medications and vaccinations. That is important not only for the trade and transport of horses, but also for the human health (food chain). If a horse is identified as an animal for human consumption, then consequences for medical treatment exist. The zootechnical and economical reasons for identification of horses are certification of origin and pedigree, breeding program regarding performance tests and estimation of breeding values as well as trade with certified status. As well the identification is important for the competition performance of horses. At equestrian competitions, the horses must be identifiable.

### ***Identification of registered horses by breeding organisations***

In Germany the identification of registered horses by the breeding organisations is done in four steps: at first the ***indication of the sex and the description of colour and markings*** of horses including the ***diagram*** in the passport. The document (passport) for the identification of registered horses is issued in accordance with the regulations of the Commission Decision of equidae over the document for the identification (93/623/EEC) and of establishing the identification of equidae (2000/68/EEC). The passport of breeding horses is attached to the certificate of breed in one passport. The certificate of breed has to contain at least the following data of the horse: name of the breeding organisation, date of issue, unique equine life number, breed, name and address of the breeder and owner, date of covering, date of birth, sex, colour, markings, identification, breeding information and identifications about parents and grandparents, registration into the studbook, signature of authorised person of breeding organisation, information about the performance test and about the estimated breeding value and if necessary the decision about the licensing. The next identification method, in addition to the ***brand mark*** of the breeding organisation, is the ***number brand***. All registered horses are identified with hot branding which is burnt exclusively outside on the left thigh. In the year of the birth the assignment of branding is done by breeding organisation which issues the breeding certificate. Additionally at the birth registration each foal gets the alphanumeric (passport) and numeric (database) respectively ***unique equine life number*** (UELN) with 15 digits since the year 2000. The first six digits of the unique equine life number are for the identification of the database of first registration. The code for Germany is

267 (first to third digits). The next three digits indicate the breeding organisation which registered the corresponding horse for the first time and burnt it with the brand mark. The next nine digits reproduce a serial registration number within the breeding organisation. As active marking, the number of brand is considered which is to be found on digits twelve and 13 of the life number. And the year of birth of the horse stands at place 14 and 15. This unique equine life number is very important for the identification of the horses as well as for evaluations regarding performance tests and estimation of breeding values. And at the inscription into the studbook, a ***name*** for the horse must be assigned. This assigned name must be maintained during the complete life of the horse. In exceptional cases the name can be changed. In these cases the original name must however always be recognizable.

Each horse is identified as a foal at foot according to the rules of that studbook which at least should require the covering certificate. The identification is issued by the authorised organisation which manages the studbook. For each registered horse the breeding organisation can require a pedigree check to save the identity. This is obligatory if a mare was covered within one or in two sequential heats by more than one stallion, if the pregnancy deviates 30 days and more from the middle pregnancy of this breed or if the foal was not identified at foot of the mare. Some breeding organisations accomplish an obligatory DNA-analysis as a pedigree check for all registered foals and mares. For the inscription of a stallion a DNA-profile has to be submitted for each stallion. All information about the breeding horse are kept in database.

#### ***Identification of registered competition horses without breeding certificates***

For registered competition horses a passport is issued, if this is not already present. The passport of horses who are not breeding horses in the sense of the animal breeding legislation do not have a certificate of breed. Identification documents accompanying registered equidae must be in conformity with the provisions of the Commission Decisions on establishing the identification document (93/623/EEC) and on establishing the identification of equidae for breeding and production (2000/68/EEC). Therefore the competition horses are identified also with indication of sex and description of colour and markings including diagram in the passport as well as with unique life number and name. Besides, these horses have to carry an unmistakable and active identity characteristic (number brand). The horses which did not get a brand as a foal have to be burnt with a number brand. The identification is issued by the authorised person of the breeding organisation or of the regional administrative organisation.

As well the marking of the horse with microchip is permissible. All data to the horse are stored in a database, including the information in the diagram.

### ***Identification of registered leisure horses without breeding certificates***

The identification of the leisure horses is analogous to the competition horses. The request for a passport is filled in either by an authorised person of the breeding organisation or by a veterinarian. However, the active identification by number brand or microchip is not obligatory for leisure horses. It is recommended imperatively, however, for reasons of the unmistakable identification. A database with the recorded information about the horse exists.

### **Conclusion**

The breeding organisations agree that if the identification of horses is done by means of completely filled-in passport plus additional brand mark and number brand, this would be sufficient. In an expert's report (MEYER, 1997; MEYER, 2000) it is attested that the individual characteristics of the horse provide the highest degree of security for identification, since individual characteristics as well as the brand mark of the breeding organisation can be read without special measures from laymen, too. It must be added that meanwhile a large part of all foals is additionally identified by means of DNA-typing. In future all foals will be typed by means of DNA-analysis. The planned introduction of the unique equine life number (UELN) in all sport horse breeding nations is favoured and should be realized in the near future. The requirement of the European Commission to install a central database in the member states is welcomed. The German Equestrian Federation as an overall organisation already has a database of approximate two million registered sport, breeding and leisure horses.

### **References**

- DEUTSCHE REITERLICHE VEREINIGUNG E.V. (FN): Jahresbericht 2004
- DEUTSCHE REITERLICHE VEREINIGUNG E.V. (FN): Zuchtverbandsordnung (ZVO)-Stand Mai 2004
- MEYER, H. (1997): Schmerz, Heißbrand und Transponder; Gutachterliche Stellungnahme zur tierschutzrechtlichen Relevanz des Heißbrandes sowie zu alternativen Kennzeichnungsverfahren beim Pferd.  
ISBN 3-88542-291-3; FN-Verlag der Deutschen Reiterlichen Vereinigung, Warendorf
- MEYER, H. (2000): The Implantation of Transponders in Saddle Horses  
ISBN 3-88542-366-9; FN-Verlag der Deutschen Reiterlichen Vereinigung, Warendorf