

Evaluation of horse keeping in Schleswig-Holstein

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Aim:

The objective of the project was to get more insight into practical horse keeping in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany. Farms have been evaluated with emphasis to animal welfare in order to determine weak elements.

Material and Methods:

46 boarding farms were inspected once in autumn 2003 and once in spring 2004. On the basis of a questionnaire 104 individual housing systems (individual stables) with 1909 horses were evaluated. The design of function areas, hygienic conditions and management were considered and additionally climate data were recorded. In total 42 parameters were assessed using a scale from 0 to 4. The value 4 matched the requirements of horse keeping with regard to animal welfare in the best way.

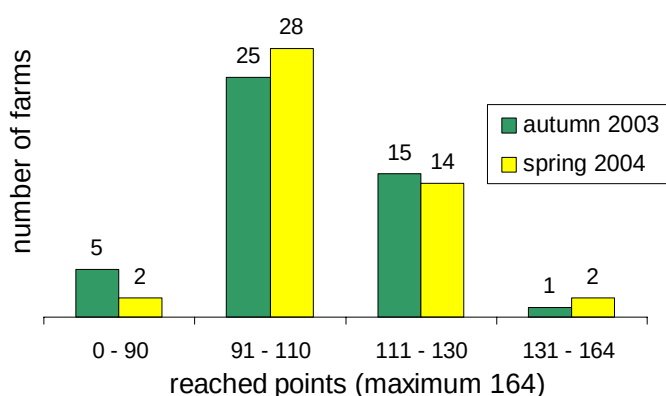
Results:

Function areas:

- 96 % horses in solitary loose boxes
- 35 % horses in solitary loose boxes (open-fronted)
- 8 % horses in solitary loose boxes with permanent access to a paddock
- 100 % cribs were fixed too high
- 2 % without social contacts to neighboured horses



Distribution of reached points



Management

- 43.5 % avoided dust near the horses
- 58.7 % had vaccination and deworming regulations
- 67.4 % provided food three/four times a day

Exercise management

- 67.4 % owner-independent daily access to a pasture
- 34.1 % minimum 8 hours on a pasture in summer
- 22.7 % minimum 4 hours on a pasture in winter

Climate data

- temperature/relative humidity similar to external climate
- average ammonia concentration 1.98 ppm
- average intensity of light 567 lux

Conclusions:

- ✓ results were independent of the managers qualification
- ✓ horses were mostly kept in solitary loose boxes
- ✓ deficits were found in design of function areas, exercise management and in intensity of light

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