

Evaluation of mental traits at young horse performance test


Jönsson, L., Viklund, Å., Höög, Y., Rundgren, M. and Philipsson, J.

Department of Animal Breeding and Genetics &
Department of Animal Nutrition and Management
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences



Swedish Warmblood Breed

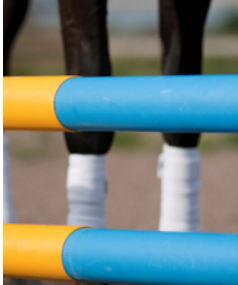

Breeding objective: "Internationally competitive horses in dressage, show jumping or eventing"

Questionnaire SWB breeding



1200 questionnaires
590 answers (50 %)

Trainers
Riders
Breeders
Riding school managers





Important traits to improve?



Rideability
Durability
Temperament

Current evaluation of temperament

Young-horse test for 4-year-olds: 

Temperament scores (1 to 10)
Gaits under rider
Jumping under rider or free jumping
Veterinary examination

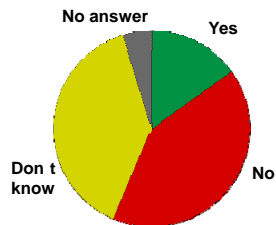
Temperament score reflects performance

Heritabilities
Temperament for jumping: 0.17
Temperament for gaits: 0.41

Genetic correlations with performance
Temp. for jumping – Jumping : 0.97
Temp. for gaits – Gaits : 0.76-0.93



Is the current consideration of temperament adequate?



Definition of temperament

Good temperament
Cooperative, attentive and calm

Bad temperament
Nervous, tense or aggressive

Difference between sport- & leisure horses
Rate of explosiveness, energy and sensitivity



A pilot study
Evaluation of defined mental traits



Young-horse test for 4-year-olds
60 horses evaluated at 1-3 stations
Veterinary examination
Conformation and gaits
Jumping (free or under rider)



Documented mental traits

Little  Much

Calm	Freeze
Lively	Flighty
Shy from behind	Attentiveness, surroundings
Spooky	Attentiveness, handler
Tense	Handler influence (pos-neg)



Correlated temperament scores & mental traits

Mental trait	Temperament for gaits under rider	Temperament for jumping under rider	Temperament for free jumping
Attentive to handler	0.46**	0.56**	0.71***
Tense	-0.36*	-0.45*	-0.27
Spooky	-0.25	-0.37*	0.28
Prone to freeze	-0.50***	-0.28	-0.20



Summary

A more specific temperament evaluation needed as a complement

Possible to evaluate defined mental traits at present performance test

Further studies will focus on 3-year-olds



