

The Acceptance of Outside Stallions: A Policy Explanation

[Executive Director's note: during the AHS's board meeting of January 17, 2003, the board and VhW Deputy Breeding Director Dr. Ludwig Christmann again visited the issue of the society's policy regarding the acceptance of imported, VhW approved non-Hanoverian stallions into the AHS Stallion Book. This is a very complicated issue with many ramifications. At the request of the board, Mare and Stallion Committee member Vanessa Carlson has prepared the following article, which we hope will clarify the society's position.]

I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO WRITE AN article explaining the AHS policy for accepting VhW-approved non-Hanoverian stallions that have been imported into the United States. Even the subject heading is confusing! I have to say, I didn't know where to start to make the answer any less confusing than the question, so bear with me in my attempt to explain this – and let's first go to the AHS Rules of Registration and look at the stated Breeding Philosophy – Section 3 (1):

“The major breeding philosophy, also known as “pure breeding,” encouraged by the AHS, is to enter primarily Hanoverian stallions and Hanoverian mares in the Stallion Book and the Main Studbook. This does not exclude the admission of genes from other riding horse populations.”

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Although the goal of the AHS, as well as the VhW, is to use primarily Hanoverian breeding stock, a superior stallion from another breed population may, in certain cases, be accepted for breeding approval. This is done with the expectation that including such an “improvement stallion”



AN EXAMPLE OF AN ACCEPTED OUTSIDE STALLION - in the pedigree of the AHS-approved Oldenburg stallion *Feinbrand*, we find that nine of his 16 great-great grandparents are registered Hanoverians. Therefore he has 56.25% Hanoverian “blood” in his pedigree.

in our breeding program will be a beneficial addition to the Hanoverian gene pool. Well known examples of VhW approved non-Hanoverian stallions include the

Anglo-Arab *Matcho* x, the Thoroughbreds *Prince Thatch* xx and *Lauries Crusador* xx, and the Trakehners *Caprimond* and his son *Hohenstein*. These stallions are generally accepted to improve “type.”

Stallions such as the 1986 DLG Champion *Donnerhall* (Oldenburg), and the Westfalen *Rubinstein I* (136.19 stallion test score at *Adelheidsdorf*, 1989) are notable additions from other German warmblood riding horse populations that have had very good success, both in competition and as progenitors of outstanding Hanoverian dressage horses.

Calypso II, with his exceptional results in show jumping competition, is but one of a number of Holsteiner stallions accepted by the VhW for their jumping ability. The Hanoverian studbook, both in Germany and in this country, is therefore said to be an “open” one, whereby certain horses of certain non-Hanoverian breeds may be graded into the breeding program.

These and many other non-Hanoverian stallions have been selected and approved by the VhW specifically to improve the mare base in Lower Saxony. It therefore follows that they would not necessarily be the stallions the AHS would approve, as we have a very different mare base here in the United States. While our Main Studbook may be similar, we do have a large proportion of Thoroughbred and F1 mares in our Pre-Studbook and Studbooks. An F1 mare is the result of breeding an approved non-Hanoverian Pre-Studbook mare (i.e. Thoroughbred, Arab or Anglo-Arab) to an approved ▶

AHS stallion. A total of 912 mares have been graded into the AHS Pre-Studbook. Of this number, no less than 612 (68%) are Thoroughbreds; an additional 113 (12%) are F1 mares. Thus 80% of our Pre-Studbook consists of Thoroughbreds or daughters of Thoroughbreds, a situation quite different from Germany. This is the reason that the AHS reserves the right to not automatically approve non-Hanoverian stallions that are approved in Germany by the VhW, and then subsequently imported to the United States.

So what is the policy of the AHS regarding approval of these stallions? To begin with, just as non-Hanoverian warmblood mares must score higher than their Hanoverian counterparts to be entered into our Main Studbook, stallions from foreign populations must also be exceptional to be eligible for approval into our Stallion Book. Both the VhW and AHS have the same policy for non-Hanoverian stallions regarding performance – they must have scored at least 120 points in their performance test, and in the case of Holsteiner stallions, must have achieved a jumping index of 130 points. Exceptions are only made if the stallion has an outstanding performance record – usually from international competition.

The AHS policy regarding non-Hanoverian stallions with more than 50% Hanoverian “blood” in their pedigree differs somewhat from stallions having less than 50% Hanoverian “blood,” which leads to the question, “How is the percentage of Hanoverian blood determined?” The explanation is quite straightforward. The fourth generation of the stallion’s pedigree (or a mare’s pedigree for that matter) consists of 16 individuals, the great-great grandparents. In order for a stallion to have 50% or better Hanoverian blood, at least eight of these 16 individuals must be Hanoverian by birth. Thus in the pedigree of the AHS-approved Oldenburg stallion Feinbrand, we find that nine of his 16 great-great grandparents are registered Hanoverians. Therefore he has 56.25% Hanoverian “blood” in his pedigree. The AHS-approved Oldenburg Fuerst Gotthard has only four great-great grandparents that are Hanoverian by birth. Fuerst Gotthard thus has 25% Hanoverian “blood” in his pedigree even though his own sire is the Hanoverian First Gotthard. If in doubt with your calculations, call the central office and ask to speak to the Registry department.

Once the percentage of Hanoverian “blood” has been determined, the first step in the AHS approval process is for the Mare and Stallion Committee to review the pedigree of the stallion submitted for approval, along with his performance record and progeny record if applicable. Following this careful review, the Committee then makes a recommendation to the board which makes a determination based upon all available evidence. If the pedigree, performance and progeny record meet the requirements of a stallion which is considered to be appropriate and beneficial to our mare base, the stallion owner will be invited to present the horse for inspection.

The stallion must be presented at one of the designated stallion inspection sites to a four-person licensing commission, which consists of two judges from Germany and two from the AHS. The presentation is made on the triangle, where conformation and movement in hand are judged. The stallion must score at least an overall 7.0 for this phase with no sub-category less than 5. Free-jumping is not required, the reasoning based on the fact that the horse has previously been successfully performance tested. However, the commission may ask to see the horse at liberty in order to further evaluate his gaits. At this point, a VhW approved non-Hanoverian stallion with at least 50% Hanoverian blood will be approved for breeding by the AHS – given that his scores by the licensing commission are sufficient.

In the case of a stallion which has less than 50% Hanoverian blood, there is a third phase – and this is, as part of the above licensing process, the licensing commission may impose breeding restrictions on the stallion. For example, he may be limited in the number of foals which the AHS will register annually, until he has offspring which can be evaluated by the society. Any restrictions will be conveyed to the stallion owner as part of the licensing evaluation.

The reason for this additional phase ties back into our breeding philosophy stated at the beginning of the article, which emphasizes “pure breeding.” We have a much smaller Hanoverian mare base compared to Germany, and an approved non-Hanoverian stallion could potentially have a much bigger influence on our mare population. Your board clearly understands that it is in the best interests of the long term

breeding goal of the AHS that we keep both an open mind and an open studbook, and that the acceptance of non-Hanoverian stallions into the Stallion Book be made with great discretion.

The stallion licensing commission has a huge responsibility to uphold the breeding goals of our society, since an inappropriate stallion can make a very big impact on our breeding stock for many generations. Just as our mare base evolves, the policy regarding stallion approval must evolve accordingly. ■

Contributed by Mare and Stallion Committee member Vanessa Carlson, who has been a member of the AHS board since 1995 and served as the society’s Treasurer in 1996 and 1997. She and her husband Ron own and operate Woodridge Farm in Claremore, Okla.

