

WBFSH / FEI Rankings: A "Medal Mirror" for Studbooks

There is a great deal of interest in the WBFSH / FEI rankings. With the founding of the WBFSH in 1994, the rankings were set up as a type of "medal mirror" for studbooks, based on the results of top international competitions by the best horses per studbook. It is a concept comparable with the Olympic medal rankings for countries. The WBFSH / FEI recognizes three ranking categories for the Olympic disciplines of jumping, dressage, and eventing: individual horse rankings, studbook rankings, and stallion rankings.

In the individual jumper ranking, horses are awarded points for each international competition, based on their results and the difficulty of the competition: the more difficult the competition, the more points awarded; in addition, the higher a horse places, the more points it receives. All points earned in a ranking year are added up for each horse. The number of points earned determines its position in the ranking. For example, a horse that frequently wins major competitions will earn many points and, as a result, will rank high. The horse ranking says a great deal about a horse's talent, willingness, and durability. Similar point systems are used for the individual horse rankings in dressage and eventing; however, only a horse's best eight dressage competitions and best six events are counted in its respective discipline.

The same total scores per horse serve as the foundation of the studbook rankings. However, only the points from each studbook's top six horses in each discipline are counted in this category. The limitation of horses per studbook serves the purpose – at least to some degree - of compensating for the size of the smaller studbooks.

Stallion rankings are determined by adding all the points earned by offspring in FEI competitions per discipline. A stallion with many offspring in the international sport and which are successful in major competitions will earn many points and subsequently stand high in the ranking.

Although the rankings speak to the quality of the horses, studbooks, and sires included, they should not be considered a type of independent quality certification, as available data is insufficient, and the studbooks differ too much.

In a recently published document in the Z-Magazine an alternative calculation method was used. The most important factor in this alternative method is an attempt to correct for the size of the studbooks included. However, the resulting calculations are problematic as the number of horses were estimated or based on assumptions. Unfortunately it is not possible to take the number of foals born in the various studbooks into account when calculating the rankings because the studbooks do not keep record of their numbers of dressage-, eventing- and jumping- foals and several studbooks breed horses for all three disciplines.

A simple sensitivity analysis shows that even small errors in estimated numbers will lead to different rankings. Another objection to this alternative calculation method is that a horse that wins an Olympic gold medal does not count more than a horse that coincidentally performs reasonably well in some international competition. As a result, top horses are underrated, in the view of the WBFSH. The Board of the WBFSH is therefore distancing itself from the published method. The Board is prepared to improve the WBFSH method but another method must

be objective, controllable, and equally applicable to all WBFSH members, without interfering in the independent studbook policies, for instance, with respect to specialization.

On behalf of the Board of the WBFSH,

Jan Pedersen
President