The future of horse welfare and ethics in the sport horse industry

Overview about the German situation

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Horse Welfare in Germany

Animal Welfare Act in Germany (1/2):

- animal welfare has high priority in Germany
- political impact becomes more and more important
- animal welfare is „aim of state“ and anchored in the National Constitution of Germany since 2002
- animal welfare rules have been always fairly strict in Germany
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Animal Welfare Act in Germany (2/2):

⇒ guidelines issued by the German Ministry of Agriculture and Consumer Protection for horse welfare
⇒ Guidelines about animal welfare in horse sport
⇒ Guidelines for evaluation of horse keeping under animal welfare aspects
⇒ Guidelines for ability tests of stallions of the German Sport Horse Breeds

We have to keep in mind:
Ministry guidelines have no legal character but serve to help as orientation and by interpretation!
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Rules/Principals of German Equestrian Federation:

- Official Rule Books for
  - training and education
  - competition sport
  - leisure riding and driving
  - breeding and keeping
- Ethical principles and basic rules
  - The Ethical Principals of horse-lovers adopted 1995
  - Basic Rules for behavior in Horse Sport adopted 2007
- Several FN-Guidelines for
  - Riding (The Principles of Riding)
  - Volting, Longing, etc.
  - Horse Keeping
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Ministry guidelines about animal welfare in horse sport:

Following aspects are considered:

- Handling of horse on education and use
- Start of training and use in competition
- Equipment and tackles
- Doping
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Actual discussions about welfare in horse sport:

- doping and medication rules
  - discussion about FEI-rules in Germany – in some points they are not strict and clear enough in relation to national rules
  - problems because of differences between international and national rules
  - FN builds up training controls for all cadre riders and their cadre horses realised by National Anti Doping Agency
- „LDR“ / „Rollkur“
  - problems with acceptance of FEI-definition
  - realisation of the regulation is problematic
  - first study about LDR shows pictures about movement and manipulation of the larynx movement
- draw rains
  - there is a general discussion about the use in competitions
  - German Animal Welfare Organisation asks for prohibition
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Ministry guidelines for evaluation of horse keeping under animal welfare aspects:

⇒ maintenance and management of horses

⇒ horse keeping
  ⇒ pasture and underrun
  ⇒ stable climate and conditions of illumination

⇒ building construction and dimensions
  ⇒ keeping moulds
  ⇒ dimensions

Actual discussions about horse keeping:

⇒ keeping in tie stalls is forbidden as well in barbwire!
⇒ docked tails are forbidden!
⇒ increasing discussions about dimensions of „old“ stables
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Ministry guidelines for ability tests of stallions of the German Sport Horse Breeds:

- gives a frame how to test young horses
- issued 2003 for 30-day Ability Test for stallions in March
  - describes procedure, criterias, maximum requirements and control (i.e. tests not before 1. March, max. 1,30 m for loose jumping)
  - guidelines „serves as example“ for testing and judging young horses
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Hotbranding (1/4):

- Hotbranding is a possible and acceptable identification method prior to EU legislation
- EU-Directive accepts alternative methods for identification like i.e. diagram + hotbranding + DNA
- Hotbrand or transponder are at best tools and part of a identification method and alone not sufficient
- German National by-law sees identification method by transponder as compulsary method
- „additional“ identification by hotbranding is at present allowed
- as well in the animal welfare act!
- BUT: German Animal Welfare Organisation(s) and a few political parties want to ban hotbranding in Germany
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Hotbranding (2/4):

Emotional Animal Welfare!!!

Campaign: Feel like a horse.

⇒ initiated by German Animal Welfare Organisation

⇒ not acceptable in the opinion of FN and German Breed Societies

⇒ The factual level is left with this campaign!

⇒ horse breeders = animal abusers = violent criminals
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Hotbranding (3/4):

- Sequences of identification method with transponder
- only two examples of some foals with abscesses
- no problems with hotbranding since 1992
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Hotbranding (4/4):

- there are advisory opinions in Germany saying that hotbranding is acceptable prior to animal welfare act
- this opinion is supported by many veterinarians
- new studies attests that stress and pain of both methods are equal and credible prior to animal welfare act
  - Study of University of Vienna
    - analysed stress hormonon cortisol, behaviour, body- and body surface temperatur, heart rate
    - around 30 to 40 foals
  - Study of University of Kiel
    - body surface temperatur, heart rate, behaviour proofen by video analysis up to one week
    - 28 foals
    - study compared it with clipping and there is no difference
Hotbranding (5/5):

- another study will be commissioned by some federal states of Germany at present
  - will consider existing studies
  - new aspects will be considered like sense of pain and mutations of the skin
- 35,000 supporting signatures have been collected and presented to German Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Consumer Protection
- some federal states and several politicians support the aim that hotbranding will be allowed in the future in Germany

Future of hotbranding in Germany? ➔ open end!