

Is The Friesian Horse Overbuilt?

By Piet Hoekstra - FPS Inspection

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Countless people think that the Friesian horse is overbuilt. In the sport, an overbuilt horse will be at a disadvantage. On average, the front legs carry two thirds of the weight of the horse. When the horse is overbuilt, even more weight is put on the front legs. Why a horse is overbuilt is closely related to the length of the front leg.

At the time when horses were still used in agriculture, it was absolutely necessary that the front leg was short, in order to assume an adequate pulling position. With a long front leg this wouldn't be possible. But in most of the sport disciplines we need the horse to "sit down," to bring his balance to the hind-quarters. This isn't too difficult with a correct length of the front leg. An overbuilt horse is often pushing, rather than carrying. The length of the front leg is therefore one of the important criteria in the evaluation/inspection of the Friesian horse.

To get a better insight into this matter, the Inspection decided last year to measure not only the size at the withers, but also the size at the croup at several ABFP tests. In the year 2002, a total of 89 three-year old horses were measured. The results are shown in diagram #1 and in chart #1. The results show that more than half of the measured horses were built uphill.

The conclusion is that most of the Friesian horses are not overbuilt (anymore). We do have to point out that the horses that were measured were still young. We may expect that the horses will only get more uphill when they mature.

Nevertheless, the length of the front leg will remain a closely scrutinized subject matter in the breeding of the Friesian horse.

For the Inspection, Piet Hoekstra

Fig. 1



Gelijk: 22 %
The same: 22%



Overbouwd: 25%
Overbuilt: 25%



Ideaal/opwaarts: 53%
Ideal/uphill: 53%

Tabel 1: resultaten van schoft- en kruishoogtemetingen bij ABFP-paarden
Table 1: the results of the measurements of the size at the withers and the croup in ABFP horses

		aantal	gem. schofthoogte (cm)		gem. kruishoogte (cm)
		Total	Average size at withers		Average size at croup
gelijk	same	20	159,5		159,5
overbouwd	overbuilt	22	158,0		159,6
opwaarts	uphill	47	161,0		159,0
totaal	total	89	159,9		159,3

Uit de resultaten blijkt dat van de gemeten paarden meer dan de helft opwaarts van bouw is.

Results: more than half are built uphill.