

Typical Dutch: The Dutch Welsh Riding Pony (NWR)

As described in the article '50 years NWPCS' the development of the section NWR (Dutch Welsh Riding Pony) is a good example of the policy of the NWPCS, a breeding based on the rules and regulations of the WPCS and our own supplementary regulations. By following this policy we created a unique sportpony which is now famous all over the world.

In the beginning of the Dutch Society the most of the imported ponies belonged within the sections A, B and D. But in the early 70's we came to the conclusion we needed higher riding ponies for our children. Naturally we started looking around in Great-Britain and we thought the WPBR ponies would be very suitable for our purpose. So the next few years several WPBR's were imported to Holland, for instance from studs like Oakley, Keston, Small-land and Downland, stallions like Small-land Mambrino and Downland Folklore did superb work within the breeding of Dutch riding ponies. Very soon we discovered the ponies were still too small for our children because the length of the average Dutch child is the largest of Europe. And to increase the height of the ponies we started crossbreeding the WPBR ponies with several Arabians, Anglo Arabians and Thoroughbreds.

Thoroughbreds we used are, for example, All Wins XX, Bright Moon XX, Cocky Dundas XX, Mytens XX and Julio Mariner XX; and we attained our goal, the ponies gained height, but we were not pleased with the riding-quality, they were still not very suitable for our children. The ponies needed better movement and character, so severe selection on that issue took place. One of the dangers of crossbreeding with horses is the loss of the pony type and Welsh-impression, and that was absolutely not what we wanted. The breeding purpose we were aiming for, and still are, is a Welsh riding pony with a true pony model and Welsh-impression, easy to ride for children, beautiful to see and top athletes in the sport arena. The desired height lies between 1.38 cm to 1.48 cm with the ideal height of 1.48cm, because no higher measure is needed for national and international sports.

Breeding section NWR (formerly called section K) became very popular in Holland and several breeders saw the challenge of breeding a good section NWR and helped developing the type of NWR pony that we have now. It is always very tricky to mention a few well-known breeders because so easily some other breeders will be forgotten who should be mentioned too, but nevertheless we will give some examples of important studs in Holland. One of the few breeders who stood at the cradle of the section NWR is Mr Wim van Bommel, his stud produced stallions like Speycksbosch Naturel, Speycksbosch Nelson and Speycksbosch Nando and many mares who did, and do these days, very well in breeding en showing. At Speycksbosch Stud bloodlines were used from Blwch Valentino, Downland Folklore and Small-land Mambrino, just as the Bokje Family did. They are the breeders of amongst others the stallions Wester Aikema's Andor, Wester Aikema's Cedric, Wester Aikema's Adios, Wester Aikema's Nando, and Wester Aikema's Norbert. The Coelenhage's Stud, owned by Ronald Vrolijkken, is based on the combination Thoroughbred dame and section B stallion and that worked out very well for him. Some of his famous products are the stallions Coelenhage's Let's be the best and Coelenhage's Purioso. The van der Zalm Family is known as the breeders of the stallions Orchard Limp Lopper, Orchard d'Avranches, Orchard Boginov and Orchard Red Prince; also many of their Orchard mares are the leading mares of today. Mr. Wim van der Zalm bought de Thoroughbred Cocky Dundas XX from the

track of Duindigt by Den Haag, he was very successful in both the sexes. Gosewien van Klaarbergen, daughter of Wim van der Zalm has since 2009 inherited the Orchard stud. These breeders and many others invested in good stock and very important, they invested in time, lots of time, and they are still successful breeders today. Quite an achievement! Because it cost decades to get as far as we are now and we can say: 'Yes, we are doing well!'

After decades of breeding and using bloodlines from other sections or breeds, the NWPCS decided to close the section NWR, only under very special circumstances new bloodlines are allowed to use. This possibility is necessary because the population is not big enough to close the section totally; today there still is the risk of too much inbreeding.

Everyone is aware of the fact that the severe selection system has brought us as far as we are now, and it is very special that all serious NWR breeders look unanimous for the same goal, with enough space for the individual breeder to make an accent. The new breeding program, made up in 2008, is modern and is monitored every year to see if we are on the right track.

Breeders who like to use other bloodlines can breed in the Welsh Part Bred section as well. The NWPCS follows the WPCS guidelines for the Welsh Part Bred section but the NWR has a unique guideline which makes it so very special! Maybe one of the greatest dangers is our own success, many ponies of good quality are sold and exported all over the world, but we also need them at home in our own meadows to maintain the quality on this high level.

To give an idea how tough stallion-selection is, every year we have the stallion show in February and there we chose the best stallions for breeding. Commonly about 45 to 50 NWR ponies compete for the approval and mostly about 5 to 7 stallions are selected for the performance test. During this performance test which lasts 32 days, new NWR stallions will be tested on attitude, movement and talent as a riding pony in either dressage or jumping classes. Of course their pedigree is checked by DNA and they have to be sound, healthy and fertile.

Not every stallion will succeed at the performance test and some of them will be exported after finishing the test. So each year between 3 or 5 stallions are approved and may call them a "stamboek" stallion.

At this moment we breed the best quality sport ponies through careful en severe selection. They should excel in all of the traditional sport disciplines, such as dressage, hunter/jumper, eventing and driving. They should prove to be talented and suitable mounts for either children or adults. And after at least four decades of breeding we can say: our breeders did and do a wonderful job; we have a typical Dutch product to be proud of!

People interested in more information should contact the NWPCS, call for information: 0031 341 255 570 or visit our website www.welshpony.com

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