

Equestrian disciplines in Bulgaria

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Abstract

Equine sport in Bulgaria includes some disciplines – jumping, eventing, dressage, and endurance. Some of them have a rule, the issue of Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI). The horses involved in competitions are warmblood European and Bulgarian breeds. They are less common in cold-blooded breeds. The most popular breeds are Holsteiner and KWPN. On Bulgarian horse breeds most common are Bulgarian sport horse and Eastbulgarian. The number of competitions, jockeys and horses are similar in the last five years.

Keywords: equine sport, jumping, dressage, eventing, endurance

Introduction

The Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) was formed in 1921 and headquarters are in Lausanne, Switzerland. The first joining of the national organizations are Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Japan, Norway, Sweden and the United States of America. Today, there are 134 National Equestrian Federations affiliated with the FEI, including Bulgaria since 1928. The FEI recognizes eight disciplines under global governance in both regular and para-equestrianism competition: show jumping, dressage, eventing, endurance, reining, equestrian vaulting combined driving, para-equestrian. Bulgarian Equestrian Federation (BEF) includes the discipline Jumping, Dressage, Eventing, and Endurance. Bulgarian athlete was ranged fifth place in eventing (individual) was on the Olympic Games in Stockholm in 1956. Again on the Olympic Games in Moscow in 1980, Bulgaria has a silver medallist on team in Dressage, sixths place on team in Jumping, and fifth place individual in Eventing. In 2000 the Bulgarian rider ranked on 20 places on individual competition in Jumping. Regarding Bartolomé, et al. (2013) the rider is one of the most important external

factors that can affect a horse's performance (especially for young horses). According to Roman-Popovici, et al. (2015) 82.5% of jumping horses are 10–14 years old, 10.7% are under 10 years old and 6.8% over 14 years old. The largest group of gelding – 44.7%, group of mares – 33% and stallions – 22.3%. In many of the studies related to the jumping horses, the subject of research has been the relationship between results of competition in young horses and the same but in old horses. This is most commonly seen in Swedish sport horses (Viklund et al., 2010). Medium to high genetic correlation (over 0.50) was observed in most of the studied parameters. This suggests that the presentation of young horses is a sign of their further development as an adult horse. In the equine industry, adult jumping horses normally express their maximum sport potential when they reach the highest competition level, thus justifying the considerable time and money invested in their long, productive lives (Solé et al., 2017). The present study aims to introduce with the equine disciplines of FEI and BEF, and their rules. The object of study are the number of horses, riders, events (international and national).

Method

The investigation used protocols of all competitions of BEF and database with official statistics of FEI and BEF. The research shows a registered number of horse breeds, breeding in Bulgaria and foreign horse breeds (for competitions in 2018). The statistics are included several events of disciplines – international (by FEI) and national (by BEF), registered athletes and horses, and number athletes by gender in category. The article covers a period of 5 years - from 2015 to 2019.

Results

Jumping rules

A Jumping Competition is one in which the combination of horse and athlete is tested under various conditions throughout obstacles. It is a test intended to demonstrate the horse's freedom, its energy, its skill, its speed and its obedience in jumping and the athlete's horsemanship. This is the most popular equine discipline, which is developed in the years (Aldridge et al., 2000). If an athlete makes certain Faults such as knocking down an obstacle, refusing, exceeding the time allowed, etc. he incurs penalties. The winner of the competition is the athlete who incurs the least number of penalties, completes the course in the fastest time or gains the highest number of points, depending on the type of competition. Horses entered for Olympic Games, World Championships and FEI World Cup Finals must be at least nine years of age. Horses entered in Continental Championships, Regional Games and Regional Championships must be at least eight years of age. They have different categories with min./max. height in meters like to follow as:

CSIO5* – 1.30 ÷ 1.60 cm; CSIO4* – 1.30 ÷ 1.50 cm; CSIO3* – 1.20 ÷ 1.45 cm; CSIO1* – 1.00 ÷ 1.20 cm; CSI5*, CSI4*, 3*, CSI2*, CSII*/CSI-YHI* CSI, Grand Prix, and Derby.

Dressage rules

The object of Dressage is the development of the horse into a happy athlete through harmo-

nious education. As a result, it makes the horse calm, supple, loose and flexible, but also confident, attentive and keen, thus achieving perfect understanding with the athlete. These qualities are demonstrated by:

- The freedom and regularity of the paces;
- The harmony, lightness, and ease of the movements;
- The lightness of the forehand and the engagement of the hindquarters, originating from a lively impulsion;
- The acceptance of the bit, with submissiveness/thoroughness without any tension or resistance.

The horse thus gives the impression of doing, of its own accord, what is required. Confident and attentive, submitting generously to the control of the athlete, remaining straight in any movement on a straight line and bending accordingly when moving on curved lines.

The FEI established an International Dressage Event in 1929 to preserve the Equestrian Art from the abuses to which it can be exposed and to preserve it in the purity of its principles, so that such principles of the discipline could be handed down intact to future generations of athletes. The International Dressage Events are divided into CDII* to CDI5*, CDI-Ws, CDIO2* to CDIO5*, CDIU25, CDIU25, CDIY, CDIOY, CDIJ, CDIOJ, CDICH, CDIOCh, CDIP, CDIOP, CDIYH, CDIAm, FEI Championships, Regional and Olympic Games. They must be held according to the rules. Each competition has its test and the horses are no less than four years old (for young horses). The other competitions are Prix St. Georges, Intermediate A, Intermediate B, Intermediate II, Grand Prix. Horses of any origin may take part in International Dressage Events provided they are a minimum of six years of age. The arena must be flat and level, must be sixty meters long and twenty meters wide. The arena must be predominantly of sand.

Eventing rules

Eventing constitutes the most complete combined equestrian competition, demanding of the athlete considerable experience in all branches of equitation and a precise knowledge of his

horse's ability, and of the horse a degree of general competence, resulting from intelligent and progressive training. An Eventing competition consists of three distinct tests during which an athlete rides the same horse throughout, namely: Dressage, Cross Country and Jumping.

- Dressage test – one or several days. On the next day must be

- Cross Country – competition with obstacles in the field. The next day must be

- Jumping test.

Each athlete's good marks awarded by the judges are converted into penalty points. They are recorded and published after the test for inclusion in the Dressage and final classification. In Cross Country Test each athlete's penalties for faults at obstacles are added to the penalties for excess time and to any other penalty that he may have incurred on Cross Country. They are recorded and published after the test for inclusion in the Cross Country and final classification. In Jumping test each athlete's penalties for faults at obstacles are added to the penalties that he may have incurred for excess time. They are recorded and published after the test for inclusion in the Jumping and final classification. The winner is the athlete with the lowest total of penalty points from the three tests. The Eventing competitions are divided into CCIs (international individual), CIOs (international), CCI from 1* to 5*.

Endurance rules

Endurance riding is a competition to test the athlete's ability to safely manage the stamina and fitness of the horse over an endurance course in a competition against the track, the distance, the climate, the terrain, and the clock. In an Endurance competition, any member of the Genus Equus counts as a "Horse". The competition consists of some phases. No phase may exceed 40 km and should, in principle, be not less than 20 km in length, and cannot be less than 16 km. At the end of each phase, there will be a compulsory halt for Veterinary inspection. Phases may be spread over one or more days. Each phase of an Endurance competition must be separated by a compulsory rest period, or hold time. Each day of an Endurance competition must be divided

into at least three phases, separated by a Veterinary inspection and a compulsory rest period, or hold time. In every Endurance competition, there shall be at least one hold no shorter than 40 minutes. The combination that finishes the course in the shortest time will be classified as the winner of the competition after completing all final Veterinary inspections and medication control.

In Bulgaria, the horse sport begin long years ago, but since 1914 start to work "Bulgarian jockey club". After that in 1945 changed name to Bulgarian Equestrian Federation. In 1915 was the first horse competition in Bulgaria. Bulgarian athletes participated on the Olympic Games in 1924, 1928, 1932, 1952, 1956, 1960, 1972, 1980, 1992, and 2000 years. Their horses were breeding in Bulgaria. The last years ago, after closed the state stud farms, the horses are imported from foreign country. Unfortunately, that is not a good idea for a Bulgarian selection. A little part of horses are breeding in the countries. Only Bulgarian sport horse (BSH), Eastbulgarian horse breed and Trakehner Bg breed are a basic breeds in Bulgarian sport calendar (fig. 1). The others breed are from foreign European horse breeds such as Holsteiner, KWPN, Oldenburg, Hanoverian, Zangersheide, etc. (fig.2). In Endurance competition most common are Purebred Arabians and Shagya Arab breeds. Bartolomé, et al. (2011) research influence of foreign breeds (Holsteiner, Oldenburg, Hanoverian, Westphalia, and Trakehner) on the genetic structure of the Spanish sport horse population.

These equine disciplines are a subject of many investigations because the breeders would like to good results of their competition. The reasons for that are genetic conditions and the other outside factors, such as gender, age, physical and mental state of horses, etc. In horse sport, the human factor has a major effect. That it's a rider and trainer.

Regarding FEI and BEF the numbers of international and national events, registered athletes and horses have been kept the last five years ago. Every year the National sports calendar are including breeding tournaments and exhibitions of Bulgarian sport horse and Eastbulgarian horse. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and

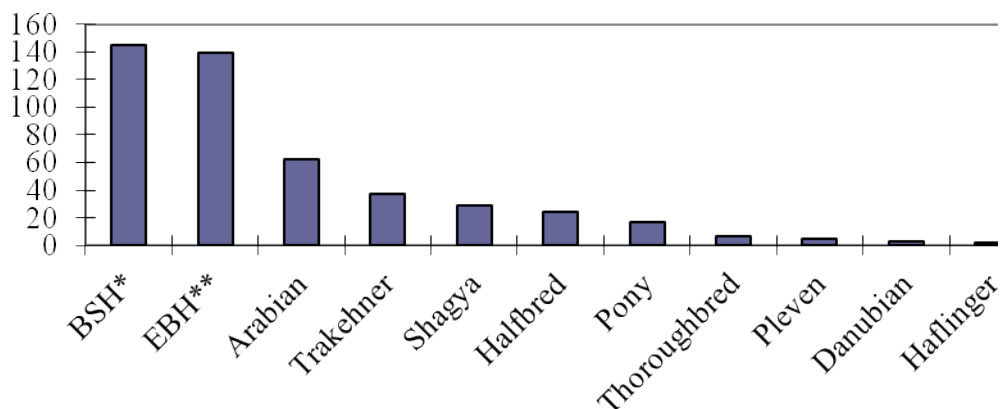


Fig. 1. Registered number of horses breeds, breeding in Bulgaria for competitions in 2018

(BEF)

BSH* – Bulgarian sport horse

EBH** – Eastbulgarian horse breed

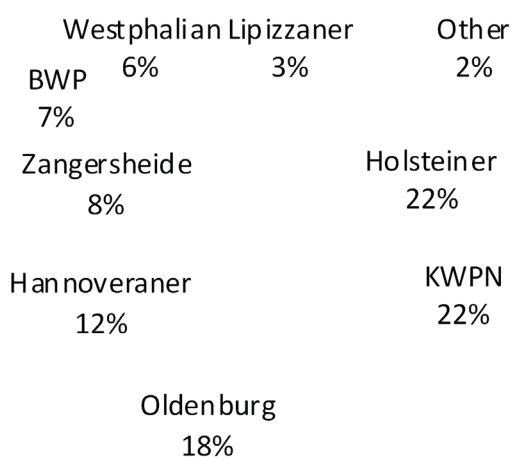


Fig. 2. Registered horses in BEF for 2018 from foreign horse breeds

Food, the number of horses in 2014 is 113.000, and in 2018, 116.000 horses (Agricultural report by Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry – 2017, 2018). The registered horses are from Bulgaria and import from a foreign country (including ponies, which not subject to our study). The highest percentage of the studied breeds are warm-blooded horses from Germany – 34%, followed by Belgium (26.2%) and the Netherlands (18.4%). France (8.7%) and Sweden (2.9%) represented the lowest percentage of warm-blooded breeds (Roman-Popovici et al., 2015).

Bulgaria has a 28 dully registered private horse farm. They do a sport, medic, amateur

Table 1. Number of events – international (by FEI) and national (by BEF)

Number of International competitions'	jumping	dressage	eventing	endurance	total
2015	4/39	-/5	2/5	5/11	11/60
2016	2/45	-/5	2/4	4/13	8/67
2017	15/43	-/5	2/4	4/9	21/61
2018	3/38	3/5	1/4	5/11	12/58
2019	4/36	4/5	3/4	5/11	16/56

Table 2. Number of athlete registrations by FEI

Number of athletes [*]	jumping	dressage	eventing	endurance	total
2015	51	14	10	22	92
2016	55	12	10	18	91
2017	70	12	8	25	112
2018	79	16	9	25	127
2019	75	19	11	22	126

Table 3. Number of horse registrations (horses may be registered for more than one discipline) by FEI*

Number of horses. [*]	jumping	dressage	eventing	endurance	total
2015	102	15	15	33	165
2016	110	14	13	28	165
2017	121	12	14	39	182
2018	124	23	13	33	191
2019	118	22	18	38	196

* Official date to October 2019 FEI

Table 4. Number athletes by gender in category

amateur		children under 14 year old		children under 18 year old		men/women m/w	
m	w	m	w	m	w	m	w
60	117	20	73	17	49	128	62

and/or tourist activity. The total number of athletes is 526 by BEF. The group of men/women is the biggest of the other groups and the number of men is higher on the number of women. Participants in this category compete in the largest classes and competitions (Table 4).

Conclusions

The main discipline in the National sports calendar are jumping, dressage, eventing, and endurance. In recent years, the number of competitions held in the various disciplines has in-

creased, including national, European and International event and Championship. The Bulgarian athletes take more foreign competitions, and most of them top rankings. Of the horse breeds with which they participate in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian sport horse and the Eastbulgarian horse breeds take precedence over the rest.

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