

## What Academy Riders Expect Of Breeders

Having seen published my ideas regarding some changes of rules in the KNN in the last Knabstrupper Nyt emboldened me to write this little essay for breeders of baroque type horses, as many of these are intended for riding in an academic setting. Academy in the following will be used as a synonym for the new ones, for example the Court Riding School of Bückeberg or the European Academy for the Art of Riding initiated by Bent Branderup, which has no single locality but exists as a web of clinics all over Europe and even beyond.

Hoping this to be the starting point of a little compendium for breeders, I divided it in chapters.

The Academy Horse to be shall come as sound as possible in physical and emotional health to facilitate the long and demanding education directed to the high school lessons. Naturally a perfect horse is very, very rare, but we breeders can do many things to keep the foal/youngster in the good condition it mostly is born with and so keep it attractive to a buyer!

One important chapter of this compendium we all together could compose should be the **prevention of injuries to the head/neck** ligaments, bones and muscles.

Though it is very useful to train the foal frequently and early for being used to halter and rope, one should be extremely careful in doing so: pulling too hard on it can easily produce these injuries, risking future difficulties for the desired easy, smooth and accurate bending in the neck necessary for the high school lessons.

1. Especially the young should always be put in a comfortable situation when tethered. Horses feel quite bad when they are tied in front of a wall, as they always need to scan the surroundings for predators. This alone can make them pull backwards and often tear their halters.
2. The force of pulling at the halter should be limited by a breaking point. One proposal is using a rubber ring for preserving jars between halter and rope. The available big and long rubber tethering devices are dangerous: a foal tearing on it will lengthen it considerably and, loosing his power in the end, might be pulled forcefully crashing into the wall!
3. Leading mare and filly by one person is often far easier than for a person leading mare and colt: fillies tend to walk more in front, prepared to be pushed by the stallion walking behind in a natural setting; they can be directed forwards quite easily by going besides their belly. But a colt's behaviour is to stay far more behind, where a stallion's place would be,

with additionally training frequently to hop on his mother's hind. To avoid constant pulling at the rope to get him moving, the rope has to be far longer and often a colt has to be trained many times before with a longe behind and round his hindquarters to "push" him rather than pulling at the head, which all in all is a bit complicated to do for one person alone.

4. Taking off the halter on the pasture is a good option, if you will not be in a hurry later getting him off the pasture. Alternative: keep it on and make the place absolutely free from dangerous points, on which it could catch itself and tear his halter.

Another chapter would regard **the hooves** as the fundament on which legs and body reside. Research shows that up to the age of 3 the horse's joints and tendons in the legs adapt to the form and positioning of the hooves, after this age it is the other way round: from then on the now fixed shapes of the bones will always press the hoof capsule back into the same shape.

1. My proposal would be to give a foal/youngster much time to stand and walk on hard surfaces, as the hooves tend to form themselves in the early years according to the wear of horn substance. On a smooth ground the regulatory forces are very much weaker, and a hoof care is more often and more precise necessary.
2. The hooves should be kept predominantly dry, as fouling of the frog can distort hoof growth, with aforementioned consequences.
3. Taking up and cleaning the hooves as often as possible (even daily) for control and teaching is very useful too, as the hoof orthopaedist/farrier will have a better chance to work properly on them, and the horse's trust into man increases a bit more every time.

The next chapter would repeat my remarks in the last "Nyt" issue on the **disciplining tools** for the presenting a foal/youngster or the beginning of work. As long as possible the Academy Horse should have an undisturbed mouth, which suggests using a cavecon/Kappzaum when a halter might not be sufficient or leads to undesired responses. The first one putting a piece into the mouth should be the academic rider!

***Although the cavecon normally is intended merely to guide the horse gently in accordance with the handler's body language,*** in a case of emergency, when all other measures fail, it can apply big pressure on skin and bone of the nose to stop the horse.

We find several types: there is a presenting/longeing cavecon with only one ring in the middle over the nose, others additionally have two rings to each side of the middle one for affixing reins; the material on the nose varies from

foam under textile over some consisting of rolled, hard leather to bicycle chains rolled in leather, which fit more smoothly than the steel bows in leather and finally the serrata, a sawed blank iron, which can easily produce skin wounds with residual scars.

To be observed by the user of a cavecon:

1. Don't let the cavecon slide too much down on the nose, as the bone here is very slim and fragile! Don't jerk abruptly and hard!
2. Never tether a horse using a cavecon! In panic, it may break the nose bone!
3. If the horse or the handler pulls too hard on the rope/rein, the cavecon's cheek piece on the contrary side might touch that side's eye, so always correct it, when it slides too far to one side.
4. Avoid letting the cavecon diminish the movability of the horse's nostrils even slightly, as it can breathe only through these and might panic in fear of suffocation!

**Performance Tests** have been developed to restrict breeding licences to identify only the very best individuals of a breed for a given purpose *out of many*. Having to sort through many aspirants, they can be a good tool. But the overall effect on an endangered breed could lead to negative effects and in effect reduce the number of stallions too much. (The KNN tries to counteract this quite successfully by issuing the "Limited Breeding Licence" of its "Pure Breeding Program " and the full breeding licence for very good graded stallions for up to 3 years before a performance test).

The Academy Rider, as mentioned above, desires an unriden, "raw" horse very much. (At the most he might accept a performance test/trial performed by another Academy Rider). A performance test should be designed according to the intended purpose of the horse, which for baroque type horses for example is not jumping, which should not be a compulsive part and, if taken voluntarily, shouldn't influence the grade in any way.

If a stallion is not allowed to breed before a performance test, this then leads to this **paradoxical situation**: those horses, which are valued highest by Academy Riders (who belong to the group of riders best informed about baroque type horses!) might never get the chance to produce offspring and the breed will get weakened extremely. Together with the receding numbers of foals every year due to the end of the economic growth this could well be the final blow for the baroque type horses!

**Psychological chapter**: Regarding the mental health, most breeders know: the foals/youngsters should get movement many hours a day, preferably with direct

social contact to other horses, if possible in groups. Especially the future Academy Horse should never be frightened, hit, chased or violated, it should learn always to trust his handler and rather wait than flee. If, for example, a stallion is not trained enough for a presentation and/or gets nervous and hyperactive, there is no use in hitting/jerking/shouting: rather should he be let going round in circles, even if the handler might fear a worse grading-result (this might show a future buyer the fine educational capabilities of the breeder); the Academy Horse will not be trained in a military/harsh fashion, anyway!

The next chapter we should care about is **feeding**: naturally the foal/youngster should get enough, but we also know that overfeeding might lead to diseases such as laminitis, insulin resistance (diabetes) and to an undesirable growth acceleration with resulting bone/tendon weaknesses like chips. Too much grain food can mean a disturbed calcium/phosphate balance: bad for the bones, too. Regarding deworming procedures there are strong hints of a hyperactivity of the allergy producing system should there be too little contact to parasites in the early years and so there is considerable doubt about the benefits of deworming 4x per year.

The fruits of the Academy Horse's education will only be reaped after many years, so a good health to begin with is even more important here than in other forms of horse riding.

Naturally most of us cannot respond to all these demands perfectly and at all times and in every emotional state, and we all suffer greatly from lack of experience (with every new foal we rear and every new horse we prepare for riding we think regretfully: "If only I had known, what I know today, with my last foal/last horse!"):so we can only try to do our very best!

I assume there are some people here interested in completing and amending this start of a compendium, and will welcome everyone participating!

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