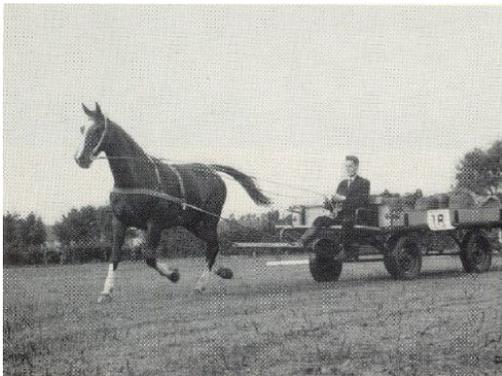


# The KWPN explained

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The Royal Dutch Warmblood Studbook (KWPN) has been the leading studbook for the last seven years in the WBSFH-ranking for show jumpers. For a long time it has been second (after the Hanoverians) in the ranking of dressage horses, but since 2009, this position has been taken over by KWPN as well. Success is also reflected in the recent results from Edward Gal with Totilas and Adelinde Cornelissen with Parzival. What is the secret behind these successes of KWPN? And what can we learn from it?



*figure 1. Morgenster. Dam of Sinaeda. Imported from Holstein*

The KWPN as a horse breeding organization has been around for many years. The studbook has its roots in a large number of small breeding groups, scattered across the Netherlands in the early 1900's, and focusing on an

agricultural horse with capabilities for carriage riding.



*figure 2. Camillus. Sire of Sinaeda. Groninger studbook*

Around 1920, many of these breeding groups merged to larger studbooks, with as an end result the Groninger and Gelderlander studbooks. The breeding objective was still the same, although the Groninger horse was heavier built than the Gelderlander, reflecting the soil type of their respective areas of breeding (clay versus sand).

After the second world war, the demand for horses on the farms dropped dramatically, as their role was taken over by tractors, but the demand for riding horses increased. This led to a major change in the breeding objective and a new type of horse emerged that had better riding abilities. In order to

speed up the changes into a desirable direction, stallions were imported from other studbooks like Selle Francais, Holstein (who were originally closely related to Dutch breeding lines) and later Trakehner and Hanoverian. The Geldlander and Groninger studbooks merged to a new studbook (WPN : Dutch Warmblood Studbook. The prefix 'Royal' was added in 1988).



*figure 3. Sinaeda, the most influential Dutch Warmblood, played an important role in the transformation to sport horse*

As the horses were still heavy built, the studbook allowed to mix with thoroughbreds to add agility, forwardness and elegance. Up until today, the KWPN has a policy of encouraging the use of thoroughbreds on the heavier built mares.



*figure 4. Farn, imported from Holstein, rejected because of his old-fashioned type. Became very influential when his jumping ability was discovered. Sire of Nimmerdor. Even today still a positive breeding index for jumping.*

A scientific approach was adopted in the late eighties, when dr. Huub Huizinga explored the possibilities of evaluating the genetic merit of individual horses for different traits, like ability for dressage and show jumping, and for traits that can be measured at young animals as a predictor for later performance. His work has resulted in the establishment of breeding indexes which are published every year and which helps breeders to select the stallions best suitable for their breeding objective.



*figure 5. Gondelier. First Geldlander in international jumping competitions. Jumped 2.20 m. Even today still a positive breeding index for jumping.*

An advantage that the KWPN has over other studbooks is the size. Although Germany has the largest total number of sport horses, these are all registered with smaller studbooks, each with their own breeding objectives and policies (see figure 11. which represents the number of foals born per year per studbook). Therefore, the KWPN has the capability to apply a sharper selection in the stallion population than other studbooks, which results in a higher rate of genetic gain in the sport-related

traits. In order to collect performance data, the KWPN has a close working relationship with KNHS, the Dutch equivalent of Equestrian NZ.



*figure 6. Waldo. Approved as 'Agricultural Riding Horse'.*

As the KWPN has been very successful over the last decades, it would be good to try and learn from their approach. Not as a model that should be directly copied to New Zealand, but as a model that may contain concepts that could be translated to our situation. So what are the differences, and what are the similarities?



*figure 7. Ulft. Dressage with Coby van Baalen. Very influential through his son Ferro*

In the first place, NZ has a much smaller population of sport horses than the Netherlands. This is a disadvantage,

as genetic progress can be easier made in larger populations, because a sharper selection can be made in the horses used to produce the next generation. Therefore, we will need the input from overseas genetics (imported semen or imported stallions) to improve our sporthorses.

The KWPN is a very open studbook, meaning that horses from other studbooks can be registered as well, as long as these studbooks meet certain criteria regarding level of organisation and similarity of breeding objective. This is a very important successfactor, as it has increased the genetic pool that could be drawn from. Therefore, given the size of the New Zealand sporthorse population, all registrations should be with one studbook only, representing the interests of the sporthorse breeding community. The New Zealand Warmblood Horse Breeders Association and the New Zealand Sporthorse Register seem to be best prepared for these tasks. It would be great if these responsibilities could be accommodated in one organization.



*figure 9. Ferro. An impressive dressage career with Coby van Baalen. Silver team-medal in Sydney 2000, 5<sup>th</sup> individual. Seven approved sons.*



*figure 10. Rousseau. Approved with KWPN, Oldenburg, Hannover and Westphalia. Exprted to USA.*

Finally, there is a large population of thoroughbred mares in New Zealand. Although they are not bred for dressage and show jumping ability, there are some mares who do show lovely movements, and who appear to be excellent jumpers. Many people have

already taken the approach to improve the sporthorse qualities of these mares by crossing them with European lines. A very good approach, as long as we select the most capable mares for this purpose.



*figure 11. Appleton. Imported in New Zealand in 2005 as a foal. Approved by NZWHA*

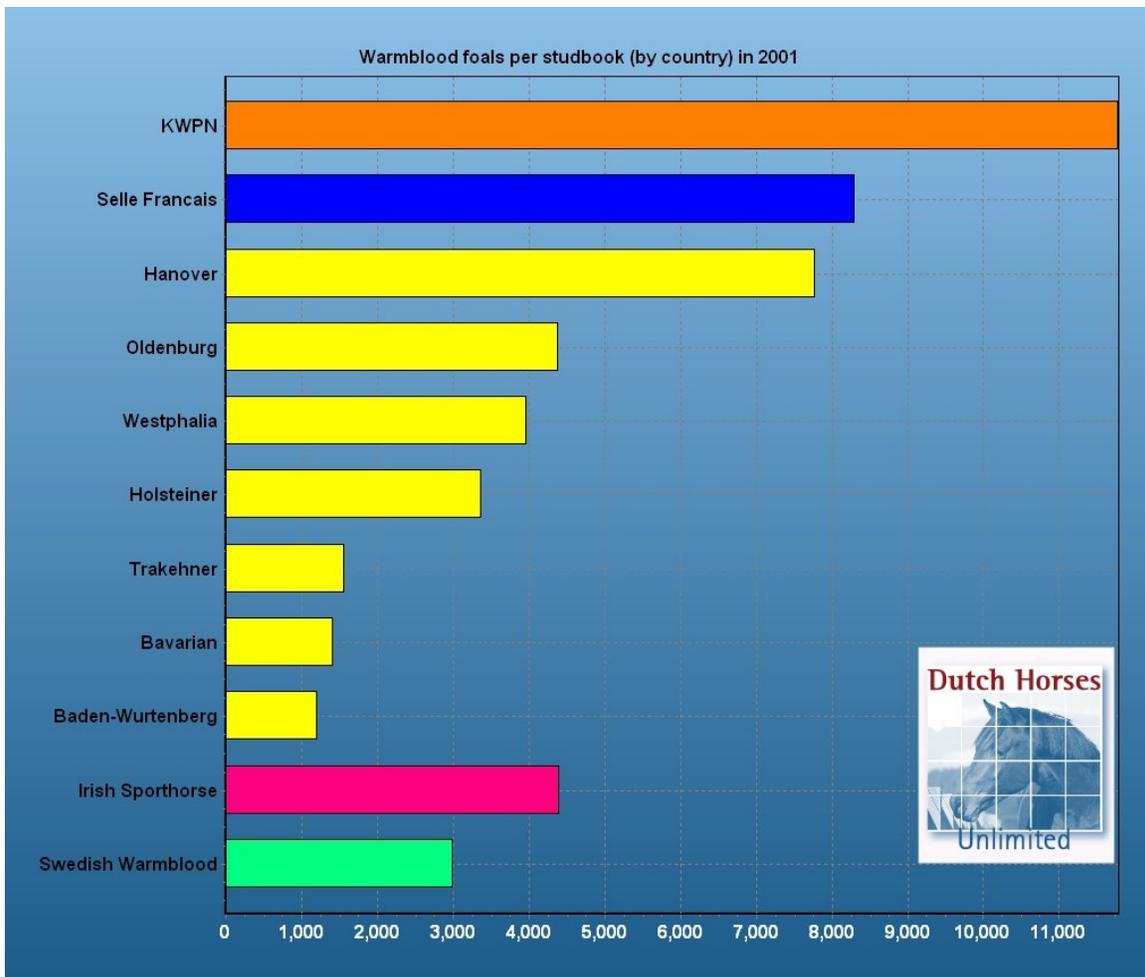


figure 11. Relative sizes of European studbooks. Number of foals born per year.

### About the author

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Responsible for the formation and running of Dutch Horses Unlimited, alongside his wife, horse trainer and instructor Nicole Bours. Ane Visser's extensive experience in setting up breeding programmes for horses has gained a high visibility in The Netherlands. Now in New Zealand, he hopes to contribute to the genetic progress in the population of NZ sport horses. To this end, he and his wife have imported their breeding stock into NZ.