



Teagasc On Tour: The group, with leaders Wendy Conlon, Crea English and breeder Harm Thormaehlen with the leading horse at the 2002 World Equestrian Games, Fine Cera

IN HIS WORDS - DR THOMAS NISSEN, BREEDING DIRECTOR AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, HOLSTEINER VERBAND

“WE select the stallions starting in August and watch around 250 to 300 stallions. Eight, nine years ago, we had about 500 to 550 stallions and then the horse business goes down. So now we have about 250 stallions at the beginning of this year and we selected 71, then the vets check them and all the radiographies [X-rays].

“Some years we have dressage stallions, it varies between one and five, but this year there was only one. We say to our breeder, ‘we have to concentrate on producing jumping horses’. We do not want to combine jumping mare lines with dressage lines, because otherwise we have neither good jumping or dressage horses.

“In Europe, we have such specialised dressage breeding and lines that it is not our aim to follow them and breed dressage horses. But some of the breeders love to breed dressage horses and so we make a small line for them.

“If you breed jumping horses, you can also produce eventers. We had the luck, that when we changed from the foundation horse to the sport horse, that there was a lot of thoroughbred in the pedigree in the third and fourth generation. The eventing rules changed and before, they needed very blood horses with a lot of thoroughbred. Now the racing [long format] has gone, so they need horses with good movement and good jumpers, so it is perfect to buy them here. Or Ireland! The Irish breeder is very good at producing eventing horses.

“When we select the young stallions, it is important that you know we have mare lines you can follow to the 18th century. You will not have success only with mare lines - the performance of the horse must be in context with the stamm [mare] line - but you will find a lot of performance horses that appear from the same stamm [mare] line every time. So the breeders, riders and dealers



know the stamm line and they will look for that line. Casall, for example, is from the stamm line 890.

“So I think the success of the breeding is not the stallion but the mother line. The breeder here knows that without good mother lines, you will not breed good horses. Sometimes, if you have good luck, it happens that you get a good horse but we say that is a coincidence.

“Ten years ago, we were very protective in Holstein, very closed, we did not accept other stallions and then we noticed that it was necessary to get other genes in our breed, because there will be too much inbreeding. So we used international stallions like Diamant de Semilly and Quidam de Revel. Some 20, 30 years ago, we went to France and looked for some stallions and there we found Quidam de Revel. He was a young stallion at the start of his career and we bought some semen from him, we selected 20 mares and from his first crop, we had three approved stallions. So today we are much more open.

“We have also opened a part of our studbook - Holstein Global - to bring in other mares. If you combine a foreign

mare with a Holstein stallion, then the foal will have 50% Holsteiner genes and this one can come in that part of our studbook.

“For us, for the breeding committee and for the breeders, we have two different parts. One part is the selection of the stallion and the genes we need for us. The other part is for the show. We never will select a winner that is not accepted by the people, he [Sandro Junior] was not only the favourite with us but he had a lot of presence, he was a fantastic mover and jumped very well yesterday, the people loved him.

“The highest price here [for an approved colt] was €600,000 for the stallion Cascadello I. The full-brother of Cascadello I brought, I think, €450,000 the following year.

“Out of this [stallion inspection process] you find the next generation. It is very difficult to find the next [superstar] like Casall, or like Contender, like Caretino or like Cassini. You will get such a stallion not every year. These stallions are sometimes not the champion of their year, Diarado was a champion, Cascadello was second place in his year but Casall was a stallion out of the middle [results] when he was approved. Also stallions like Contender, like Caretino, like Capitol, they came out of the middle, not the top.

“Money is necessary. It is extremely expensive to rent this place here, it costs €100,000 so we need the money to organise this show.

“We were in the comfortable situation of having stallions like Casall, Contender and Caretino. Corrada is still alive, an old man but still available by frozen semen and now we have Casall, he is out of sport and he has very interesting sons.

“If you breed horses for the top sport it is not easy to combine all things for an uncomplicated horse, so we have to

find the right balance. Sometimes we have stallions for the more professional rider but if you produce only horses for the normal rider, then you will only be in the middle.

“Most of the stallions that aren't approved here are then usually gelded and go into sport. You have the chance here to get the best genetics of the breed and buyers know this, here is the chance to get a horse for the future. This place has a special atmosphere, the visitors can go around the hall and visit the horses. The Holstein horse is popular amongst our young European show jumping breeders and they come here each year.

“The Holsteiner Verband has 5,000 members, 60% of which are in the Holstein region and we have around about 3,000 active breeders. We have also have around 5,000 registered mares.

“We try to use thoroughbred stallions but it's not so easy just now when we talk about the situation in the breed when selling goes down the last years, now it begins to grow. But when it goes down, the breeder wants to sell their foals and when you present a half-bred foal, then the buyers are looking more for Quidam de Revel or Diamant de Semilly or the more popular sires.

“If you have a thoroughbred sire, no-one knows the name so if you buy a foal and go back to Italy and say ‘I have a foal by Fragonard’, - we have a very good son by Fragonard - then everybody will say ‘Oh, who is Fragonard? I've never heard of him before. Is he a Holsteiner?’ But if you go back and say ‘I have a son of Casall’, then they say ‘Oh, Casall! That is very good’.

“Everyone knows you need thoroughbreds, you cannot work without thoroughbreds. At the moment it is difficult but I am sure within the next five or six years, we will need thoroughbreds and then we will come to Ireland to find them!”

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Urbanus, Irish National Champion 2017 for the second consecutive year at the Irish National Championships, ridden and owned by Anne Marie Dunphy.

Photograph by Alf Harvey

Irish National Champion #FedonTopSpec

“At 16-years-old Urbanus looks fantastic, is feeling stronger and more supple than ever and getting better with age, thanks to TopSpec.”

Anne Marie Dunphy



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