

Haflingers Worldwide – your new source of information on the haflinger breed



Dear readers,

Why does anyone come up with the idea of a new haflinger magazine? For me the answer is: I have talked a lot with haflinger people from different countries over the years. It is very inspiring to exchange information on this breed with people from all over the world, and I have learned a lot from these discussions. However, the more haflinger friends I learned to know the more I realized that there is a gap that needs to be filled in the haflinger world. It is sometimes as if there are two haflinger worlds, one where the people speak German and one where they speak English. I want to build a bridge between those two worlds. This magazine is meant to be that bridge. It is of course a one way bridge, but it is a start.

I would like to thank Emily Gibson from Washington State, USA, for generously offering space for this magazine on her already well-established website <http://www.haflingerhorses.com>

I hope that you will all enjoy Haflingers Worldwide!

Sincerely,

Kerstin Dreborg

Haflinger stallion inspection in Italy, October 2009

8 stallions in class I, winner and second placed stallion out of top mare lines

The national haflinger stallion inspections in Italy traditionally take place the second weekend in October. Those were two intensive days of stallion selection, and after almost 50 candidates had been thoroughly tested by the breed experts, it was obvious that the top stallions were of an excellent quality.

The stallion inspections in Italy are organized centrally since 1997, and the concept has proven itself to be a good one. There has been a constant progress in the quality of the young stallions. To present all stallion candidates on a national level puts quite a lot of pressure on the stallion owners, not only financially. It is also clear that the possibility to compare all the stallions in one place also leads to a more rigorous selection by the judges.

This year the young stallions (age 2½ years) were judged by the breed experts *Dr. Erich Messner, Alessandro Sandri* and *Giorgio Zanieri*. Their coordinator, *Dr. Andrea*

Sgambati kept an eye on the judge's work together with sports judge *Roland Morat*. After the presentation on the triangle and on hard ground, the stallions were also shown at liberty. This year the revised judging model was used for the first time.

Since August 2009 the walk and the trot are judged separately (earlier the Italian haflingers got one note for "movement", which included both walk and trot) and from now on, an Italian haflinger stallion must achieve at least the note "good" in all the single notes to be classified in class I. As could be expected, this new rule had some impact on the classification of the stallions, and stallions that in the past would have achieved class I despite their not perfect movement, because of their excellent type and conformation don't do this any more. Some breeders were "punished" by the new rules, but still the breeders agree that the change is a necessity for further improvement of the stallion selection.

Of the 60 stallions entered to the inspection, 45 were actually shown, 8 of them achieved the breeding value class Ib and 20 the breeding value class IIA. The remaining stallions were not approved for breeding.

The winning stallion as well as the one who placed as number two, both descend from excellent brood mares that have already produced several stallions approved for breeding. The winner **Nachtstern BZ24701** is out of the performance tested mare **Arnika TN11956**, who is also the dam of Landgräfin, the number one three year old mare at the inspection in Meran and National Champion in Verona.



Nachtstern-N BZ24701 (1.563 % arab blood/ox) by Nils-C BZ297X (1.563 % ox) out of Arnika TN11956 (1.563 % ox), winner of the Italian haflinger stallion inspection 2009

The dam of **Maxl-B-N BZ24548** is the not less well known **Blitze BZ19319**, without doubt one of the most successful brood mares in South Tyrol and in Europe. Not only is she ranked as number 7 of approximately 5000 Italian haflinger mares, she was also the South Tyrolean Champion mare in 2007, and is the dam of several stallions approved for breeding, among them **Amo-B-L BZ23387**, winner of the national inspection of haflinger stallions in Italy in 2007. This means, that just their pedigrees let us hope for a successful career for these stallions.



Maxl-B-N BZ24548 by Minos BZ368X out of Blitze BZ19319, number two at the Italian haflinger inspection, October 2009

Also in this year, the interest in the National stallion inspection in Meran was high, and several stallions were sold to other European countries.

Text and photos:

Südtiroler Haflinger Pferdezuchtverband (Haflinger Breeder's Association of South Tyrol)

Translation © Kerstin Dreborg

It is also worth mentioning, that Blitze's dam **Tina BZ15964** got a son approved for breeding this year as well, a $\frac{3}{4}$ brother of Blitze. There's more to read about **Axl-B-N BZ24549** in the article on the stallion inspections in Stadl Paura in Austria. An interview with the breeder of Maxl-B-N, Axl-B-N, as well as many other excellent haflingers, South Tyrolean (Italian) Peter Braun, will be published in a future issue of Haflingers WorldWide!

Inspection and evaluation of the breeding value for haflingers in Italy

In Italy, haflingers are inspected using two parallel systems – the BLUP Animal Model and the Morphologic Genetic Indices. For the BLUP evaluation, the stallions are judged on five different criteria, and receive a verbal judgment/score on each criterion. The criteria are: Type, harmony, legs/correctness of gaits, walk and trot. The possible scores are: Ottimo (excellent), Molto buono (very good), Buono (Good), Discreto (average), Sufficiente (sufficient) and Insufficiente (insufficient).

The verbal judgments are transformed into a numerical value, and the judged criteria are then “weighed” so that the criteria to which currently most attention is being paid gets the highest weight. For example, when this system of evaluation of the breeding value in Italian haflingers was initiated, the main focus was on increasing the withers height in the Italian haflinger population, as the Italian haflingers at that time were generally very small. So the criteria “height” then got a higher weight than the other criteria. Today, extra attention is being paid to the haflingers movement, so the movements get a higher weight than the other criteria. The (weighed) numeric values are then summed up, and the total value determines the haflingers breeding value class (see also above, on the lowest demands on the young stallions candidates to get the breeding value class I).

What is BLUP?

BLUP is short for Best Linear Unbiased Prediction, and is a way to estimate the breeding value of a certain horse. It is a way to sort the genetics of a horse from the environmental factors. To achieve this, a statistical correction is made for year of birth, place (region) of birth, judge and year of inspection, Also the horse’s withers height is corrected in accordance with the horse’s age at the time of measurement. When calculating the genetic indices, all information that is available on a horse and its relatives is used. The results from the relatives of the horse have a greater impact on the horse’s index the closer the relationship is. The BLUP-indices are indices made in comparison to a reference group of horses, which is made up by the Italian haflinger mares born 1980-1984. The indices are thus to be seen as the difference between the breeding value of the evaluated horse and the average breeding value of the mares in the reference group. In the near future, a new genetic basis (reference group) will be used, which will change the BLUP-values, but not the ranking of the horses.

The estimated breeding values of the Italian haflinger stallions and mares are reevaluated yearly, using the BLUP-system. The statistics are used to rank the

Italian haflingers, for both the single traits; Index for type = ITP, Index for height = IHT, Index for Harmony = IAR and Index for movements and correctness of gaits = IAI as well as a total rank (IMT) which is the (weighed) sum of the single trait's indices. The results of the statistical evaluation are revised yearly, using the new data that are gathered at the annual inspections, and the results are published yearly in the HaflIndex, which can be found on the website of the ANACRHAI (Associazione Nazionale Allevatori Cavalli di Razza Haflinger – Italia, National Association for Haflinger Horse Breeders – Italy) at the following web address: <http://www.haflinger.it/INDICIGENETICI/INDICI.html> Stallions and mares are listed separately, and the horses are listed in alphabetical order as well as in the order of their IMT-rank. Separate listings are made for the best stallions and mares (the 50 stallions with the highest IMT rank and the 500 mares with the highest IMT rank) who make up the P.A.P (Piano Accoppiamenti Programmati). These horses are highly recommended for breeding purposes.

The Italian haflinger stallions approved for breeding are the 250 stallions with the highest IMT. This means that every year, some stallions are sorted out, while new young stallions are approved for breeding, so that only the stallions with the highest rank are allowed to breed.

The goal for the breeders is of course to better haflingers each year. This breeding progress can make it difficult for some older stallions to keep their high rank when younger stallions are approved for breeding. This does not mean that the old stallion is bad; he's just producing offspring that is better than him, which is the ideal for all stud stallions.

The morphological genetic indices

The Italian haflingers are also judged using a “linear” morphological schedule. In this system, several criteria, such as body color, color of the mane/tail, length of neck, volume of head, slant of croup, length of stride and several other points are “judged” or rather “described”, as the note given does not value the horse, but describe it. For example, “length of neck can be from 0 (=very short) to 10 (=very long), and the color of the coat can range from 0 (=very light) to 10 (=very dark). When a stallion has at least 6 offspring that have been judged using this linear system, a “morphological genetic index” is evaluated for each of the 26 characteristics in the score sheet used for linear judgment of the stallion. These morphological genetic indices serve the purpose to distinguish the genetics of the stallion and what characteristics he is likely to pass on to his future offspring, in comparison to the average Italian haflinger. The indices can thereby be used by the

breeders to find the stallion with the most suitable genes for any given mare. For example, a stallion with the genetic index -3 for “length of neck” has the genetics that predict he will pass on the genes for a shorter neck than the average Italian haflinger. A stallion with the genetic index 0 for the same criteria is predicted to pass on an average length of neck, whereas a stallion with the genetic index +3 is predicted to pass on the genes for a longer neck than the average Italian haflinger. So, for a mare with a neck that is too short, a stallion with a positive morphological genetic index for the characteristic “length of neck” should ideally be preferred over one with a negative morphological index for that characteristic.

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A traditionally dressed South Tyrolean breeder with his likewise traditionally “dressed” haflinger (Gerti, born in 2003, by Arkan von Meran BZ272X (liż. Alpenstern × Minerva) out of Romantika BZ14849 (Sterżł × Melody)

(Photo: Kerstin Dreborg, 2006)