HETI 2021 SEOUL

30 years CEFTA
THE CZECH EQUINE FACILITATED THERAPY ASSOCIATION

Analysis of The Therapy Horse Certification Program in The Czech Republic

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The Czech Equine Facilitated Therapy Association

- CEFTA, founded in 1991
- Non-governmental and not-for-profit organization
- 61 centers
- 6000 clients per year
- 257 certified therapy equines
- Own research
- **Unique certification system for horses enrolled in hippotherapy**

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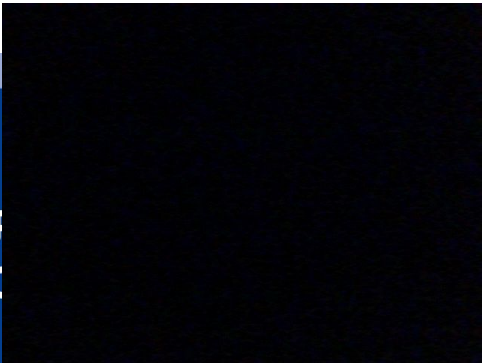
Introduction: An ideal horse for hippotherapy

- The horse is the most important team member
- Selection of optimal horses is crucial
- For physical rehabilitation (HPOT) the horse must have optimal movement mechanics and a good character
- For Equine Facilitated Learning and Equine Facilitated Psychology (EFL/EFP) the key requirement is an excellent horse character and collaboration with human

Horse certification program in the Czech Republic

- CEFTA developed and implemented the certification system in 2011
- The aim of this certification program is to ensure adequate skills and characteristics suitable for HPOT
- All equines have to pass a specialization exam to be certified for HPOT
- The horses are evaluated by hippologic experts
- By October 2020 total 313 horses, 2 donkeys and 1 mule received the certification



Specialization exam evaluation

- Physical characteristics: horse conformation, linear description
- Behavioral characteristics: attention, response and willingness to follow a horse-leader, responses to various disturbing stimuli

- Each activity is assessed on a rating scale from 0 to 10 points
- Final evaluation in an average value of all marks

Rating scale
10 .... Excellent
9 .... Very good
8 .... Good
7 .... Almost good
6 .... Satisfactory
5 .... Sufficient
4 .... Insufficient
3 .... Almost bad
2 .... Bad
1 .... Very bad
0 .... Not presented

Aim of the current study

- Comparison of **hippotherapy (HPOT)** horses and horses prepared for **EFL/EFP** in terms of:
  - movement mechanics
  - breed
  - scapular position
  - character
  - age of successful examination

Material and methods

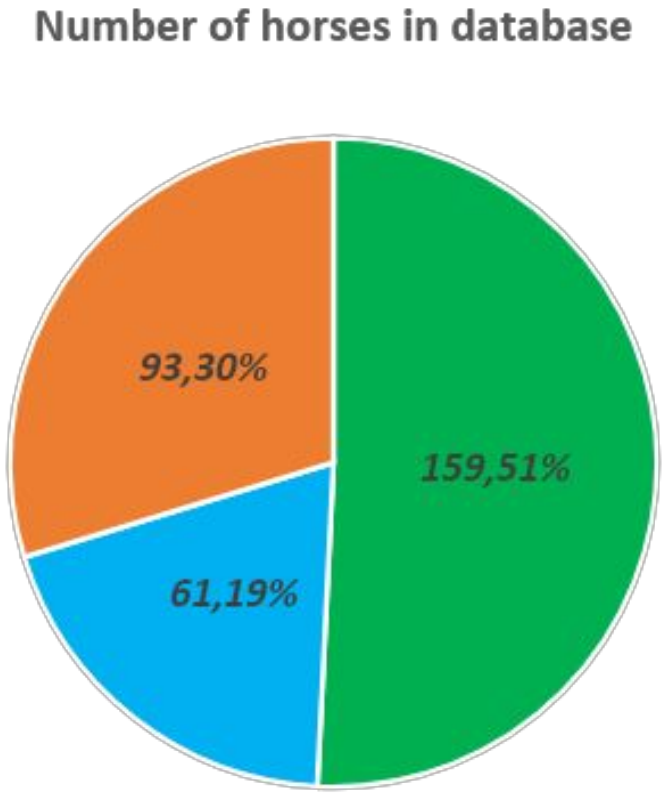
- Data on results of The Therapy Horse Certification Program from years 2011 – 2020:
  - Breed
  - Age (at examination)
  - 22 marks of linear horse description and behavior
  - Final marks of the Specialization exam

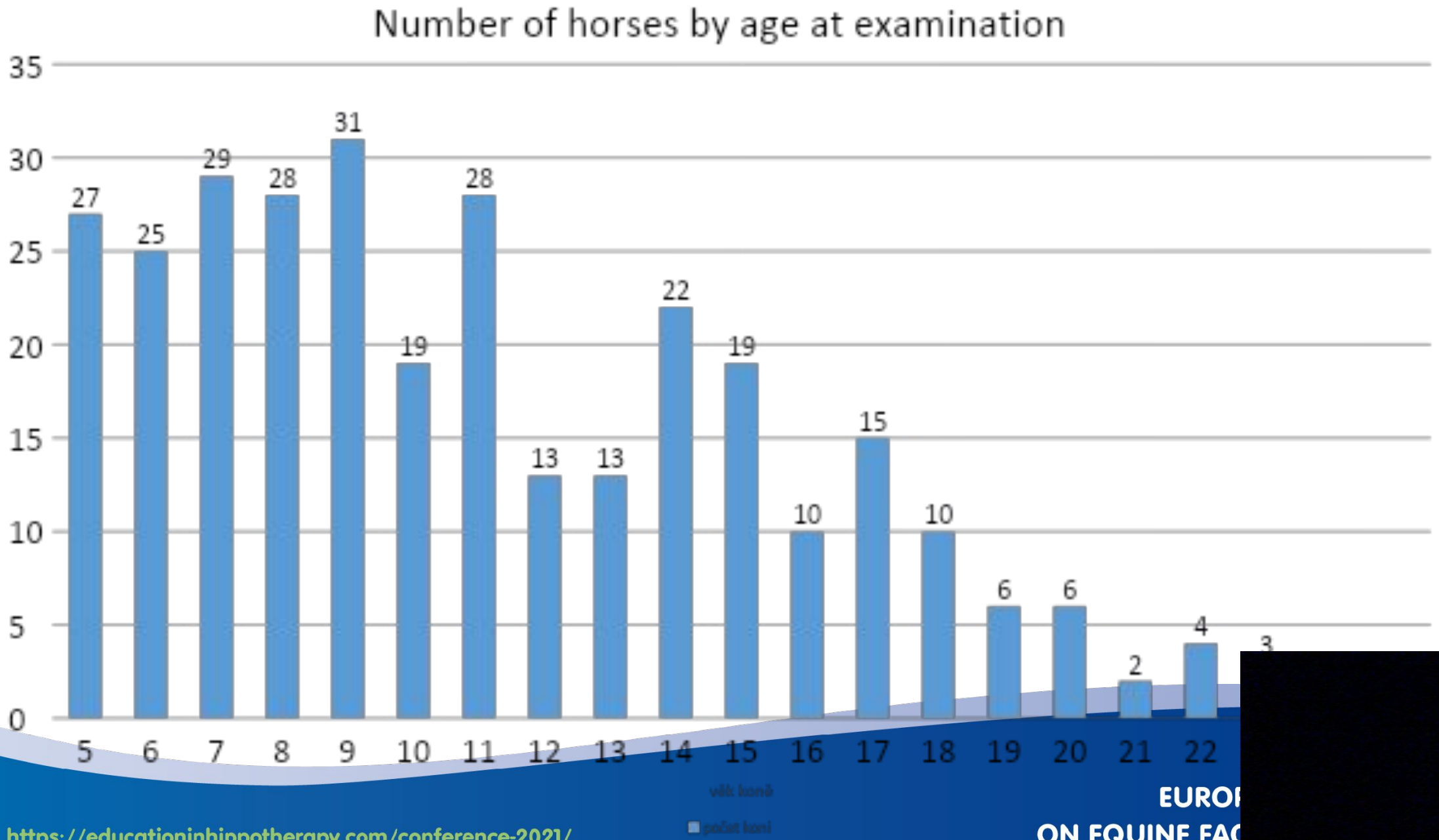
- Statistical data analysis used generalized linear model, Pearson´s correlation and corrected for multiple comparisons using Scheffle and Tukey-B post-hoc tests.

Subjects

- 313 horses (the donkeys and mule were excluded from analysis)
- 37 breeds

- Categories:
  - warm
  - draft
  - pony




Number of horses by age at examination
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
27
25
29
28
31
19
28
13
13
22
19
10
15
10
6
6
2
4
3
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
věk koně
počet koní

PONY

WARM

DRAFT

CROSS BREED

Movement mechanics

- We found that HPOT horses have significantly larger leg stride than EFL/EFP ones.
- Mean values:
  - HPOT – walk: 6.0 points
  - HPOT – trot: 5.1 points

  - EFP/EFL – walk: 5.7 points
  - EFP/EFL – trot: 5.0 points

Breed

- The **largest** leg stride was observed in horses bred for sport performance and racing
- The **shortest** leg stride have ponies and mountain breeds with exception of welsh pony

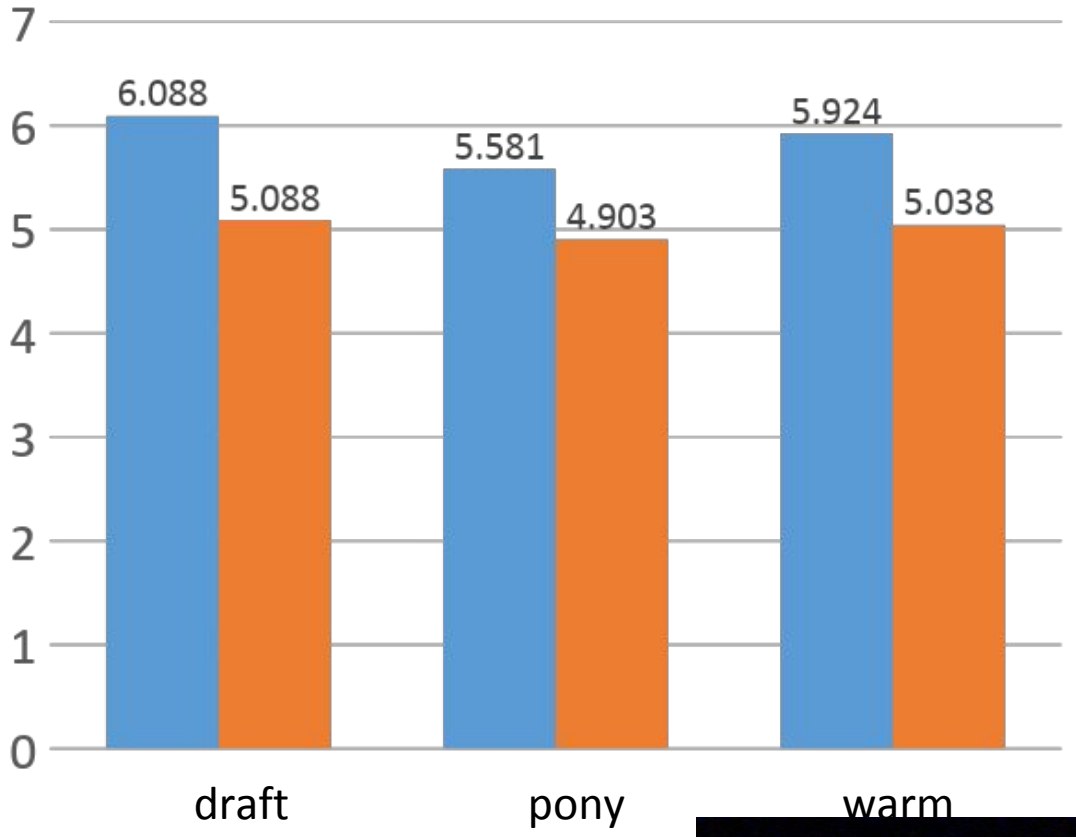
Mean marks for movement mechanics

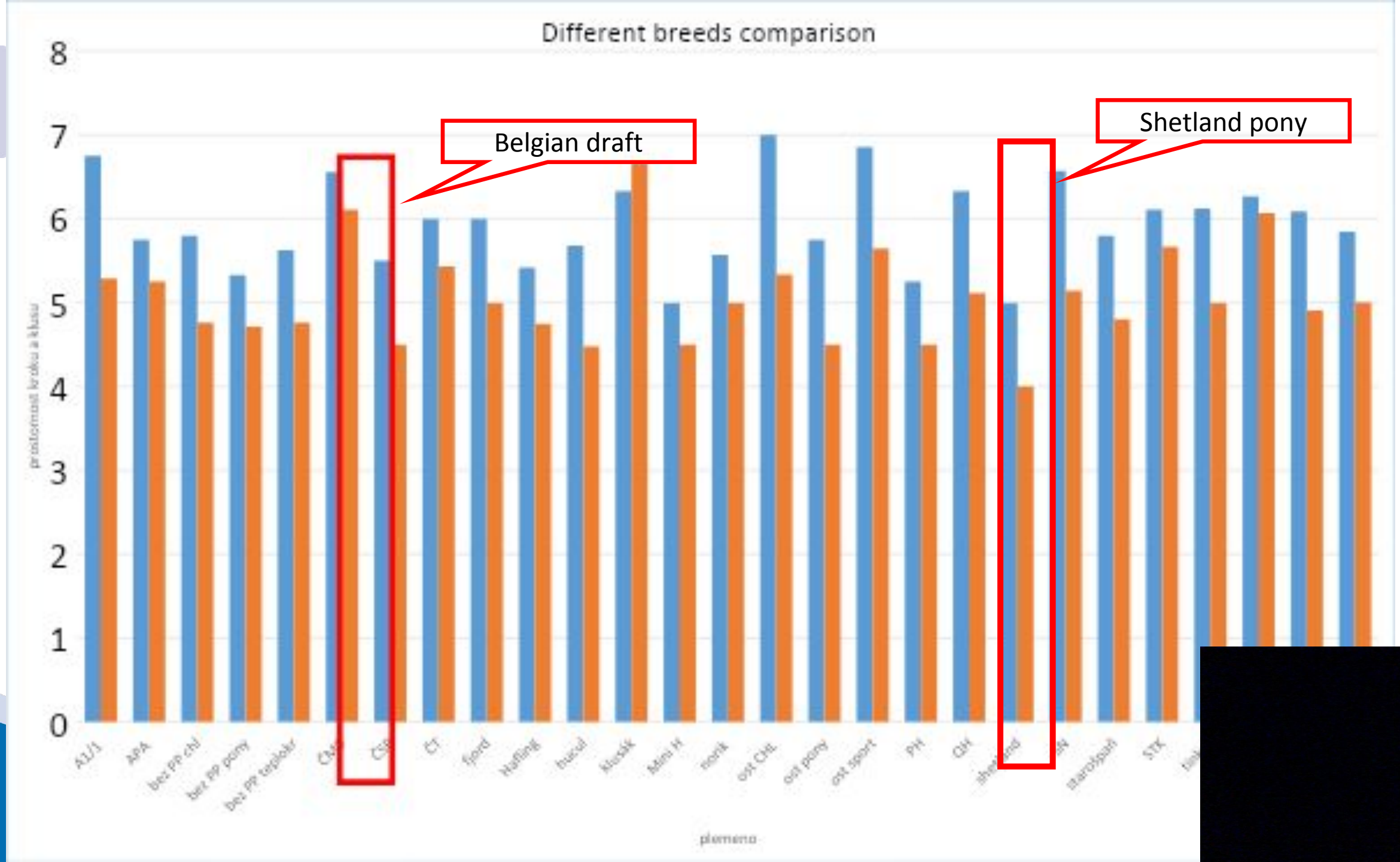
Overall mean (**WALK**): 5.85 points

- draft – 6.09
- warm – 5.92
- pony – 5.58

Overall mean (**TROT**): 5.00 points

- draft – 5.09 points
- warm – 5.04 points
- pony – 4.90 points



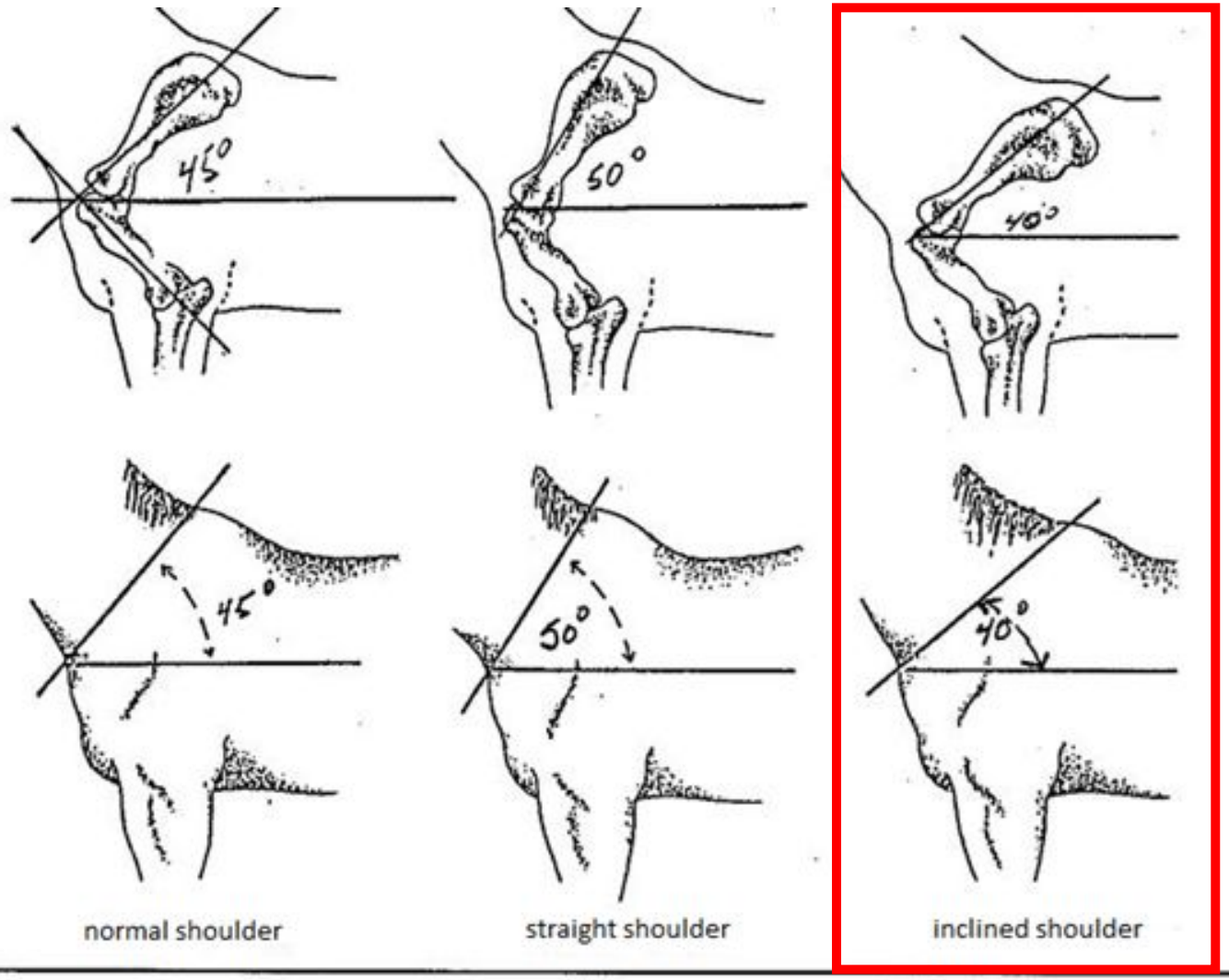

Different breeds comparison
Belgian draft
Shetland pony
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
plemena

Scapular position

Scapular position has a direct impact on leg stride and therefore the balance area of the horse

- We observed a significant correlation of marks for scapular position and movement mechanics in trot (non-significant in walk)

The lower the angle the better larger leg stride



Character

- Horses used for HPOT do not have to cooperate with human as closely as those used for EFL/EFP, hence we expected a difference between them
- We observed lower marks for cooperation in HPOT subjects, but they were not statistically different from marks of EFL/EFP horses
- Notably, this analysis suffers problem of subjective evaluation of the horse behavior by observer

Age

- We evaluated the following age categories:
  - 5 to 7 years
  - 8 to 15 years
  - 16 years and older
- We observed significantly lower marks in the youngest category (9.87 points vs. 9.91 for the two older groups)
- It seems that psychological development and previous experience play a role in the successful enrollment of the horse for HPOT

Conclusion

- It seems, that examination of horses for HPOT is the most demanding
- Out of 313 horses:
  - **176** horses were examined for **HPOT** – 9 of them failed for flaws in movement mechanics (mean mark 9.86 points)
  - **298** horses were examined for **EFL** (mean mark 9.93 points)
  - **177** horses were examined for **EFP** (mean mark 9.92 points)
- Physical condition, but most importantly experience (i.e. age) may contribute to the horse selection process and lead to decrease of fail rate in the examination
- **The certification system allows adequate and standard selection of horses suitable for HPOT**

Thank you!
See you in Prague!

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