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Thoroughbreds – A Must in Sport Horse Breeding

The fact that a Thoroughbred stallion was licensed on this year's trip is an absolute novelty in the short history of the American Hanoverian Society. Coconut Grove xx himself has been described in the inspection report. When he was licensed, his age and his outstanding performance in show jumping were considered. We all hope that his use will bring progress for the American Hanoverian breeders. The use of Thoroughbreds in modern sport horse breeding is sometimes risky, but absolutely necessary. There is no sport horse-breeding program worldwide that does not successfully include the use of Thoroughbred genes. The Thoroughbred is the most suitable horse for refinement without losing performance ability. It is, however, very necessary to only use such Thoroughbreds which are already suitable as sport horses with regard to their type, conformation, temperament and gaits, especially as regarding jumping ability. A breeder who uses a Thoroughbred stallion needs to think in generations, as the benefits of using Thoroughbred blood very often do not show up in the first generation, but frequently in the second or third generation. Some of the risks are undesired conformation traits (e.g. set off neck, formation of hock), barn vices and lack of movement in the first generation.

So far the Thoroughbred has been introduced into the population of the American Hanoverian Society through the mare's side. This year's inspection trip to me has given very clear evidence that it is necessary to give those breeders, who base their breeding programs on pure Hanoverian mares, the possibility of using Thoroughbred stallions for refinement purposes. We saw quite a few Hanoverian mares that were young, but old-fashioned. These mares

were heavy in calibre, but also quite heavy in their movement with little elasticity. So I hope that the use of Coconut Grove xx is only the beginning. The Hanoverian population in North America has need for one or two more excellent Thoroughbred stallions, especially one with suitability for dressage.

I would also like to come to a third point. This time, more so than when I was last travelling around, there were a few U.S.-bred mares with excellent pedigrees, sometimes descending from top stallions in Germany, but which were not satisfactory in their quality. Some of these mares did not achieve the minimum necessary score (6.0) for entering the Main Studbook. This, however, is not unusual. In horse breeding one and one does not always equal two, and there is no stallion which matches with every mare and which produces only top offspring. It is important that the breeder is aware of that. He should be able – I know this is very difficult – to evaluate the quality of his mares and should be ready not to use a mare for breeding, which might have a good pedigree, but is not satisfying in quality. Pedigree is important, but not everything and the mare should stand up in her quality to the pedigree.

These were some thoughts, which came into my mind on this trip. I always enjoy visiting the U.S. and this year too I had a good time, partly due to the good company in our commission with Barbara Richardson and Hugh Bellis-Jones. I found the tour very well organized again (congratulations to the Central Office) and every host put a lot of effort in the smooth running of the inspection on their farm. I met many friends, made some new ones, and I felt overall that the AHS is on the right track. ☐