

Horse welfare in Denmark



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Welfare items in Denmark

1. Rules for keeping horses in Denmark
2. Hotbranding - prohibited in 2010
3. Research in riding "low, deep, and round"



1. Rules for keeping horses in DK

BACKGROUND:

Pressure from welfare organizations on the Danish government for making regulations to improve the welfare of horses

- The regulations affect all horse owners, private as well as professionals



1. Rules for keeping horses in DK

FROM 2008:

- Exercise on or on field/paddock at least 2 hrs. per day, five days a week
- Foals and youngstock must on field together with other horses
- Should be looked after at least once a day
- Free access to water if more than 4 hrs. in paddock/field. During winter period max. 12 hrs. on field without shelter. Sufficient forage should be offered
- The young horses must learn to be handled
- Trimming of the hooves/shoes must be done when needed



1. Rules for keeping horses in DK

FROM 2011:

- Horses must not be kept in tie stalls, but they are allowed to stay there for max. 2 hrs.



FROM 2016:

- All horse keepers must have access to a paddock of at least 800 m² and a plan for using the field must be made
- No more than 4 horses on 800 m² and a max. of 5 groups per day
- If more than 4 horses the paddock must be extended with 200 m² per horse
- No more than 20 horses must be together on the field



1. Rules for keeping horses in DK

FROM 2020:

- The area of the individual loose-box must be at least (2 x the height at withers)² of the horse (ex. 1.70 m = 11.6 m²)
- The area of a foaling box must be at least (2,5 x height at withers)² of the mare. The foal must have access to a foaling box the first month of its life
- The barn must have a volume of at least 30m³ per horse, regardless of the size of the horses
- Window area must be at least 7% of the floor area to ensure natural light. Lamps must be added to ensure light at any moment



1. Rules for keeping horses in DK

FROM 2020:

- Min. height inside the barn:



Max. height at withers	Min. height of ceiling
1.35 m	2.10 m
1.45 m	2.20 m
1.55 m	2.30 m
1.65 m	2.40 m
> 1.65 m	2.60 m



1. Rules for keeping horses in DK

- "Danish Forum for Horse Welfare" established in 2010 with the aim to advise the Danish Department of Justice on horse welfare matters
- Consists of representatives from:
 - The organization of Danish Veterinarians
 - Danish welfare organizations
 - The National Federation
 - The Knowledge Centre for Agriculture, Department Horses
 - Danish Warmblood Society
 - Danish Trotter organization
 - Danish Racing organization
 - Danish Icelandic Horse society
- Right now working on a consideration answer for the Department of Justice for adjustment of "Rules for keeping horses".



1. Rules for keeping horses in DK



"DANISH FORUM FOR HORSE WELFARE" RECOMMENDS:

- Volume and the height of ceiling in the barn should follow the size of the horses
- Area of the loose-box should be at least $(1,7 \times \text{the height at withers})^2$ and the area of a foaling box $(2,0 \times \text{the height at withers})^2$
- Artificial light should be sufficient in barns, where horses are kept on fields in the day time
- No max. number of horses on the field
- Demand for keeping at least two horses together
- Rules for education of the farrier



2. Hotbranding prohibited in DK

- In 2008 a Danish master project concluded that hotbranding is more painful than microchip transponder injection
- Danish welfare organizations published the results through television and other media
- The public (without horse knowledge) forced the politicians to prohibit hotbranding in 2010



2. Hotbranding project

BACKGROUND:

- The Danish Animal Protection Act states that animals should be protected from pain the best way possible
- In 2000 the Danish Animal Welfare Council judged that hotbranding was not against the rules, mainly because it was not possible to prove the suffering of the horses
- A veterinary student therefore made a research with 7 horses that were hotbranded and microchip transponder tagged in a cross-over study



2. Hot branding project

RESULTS:

1. Behavioural responses were scored, based on 4 reaction scores
 - 5 horses reacted more against branding than chip injection, 1 horse reacted more against chip injection than hot branding and 1 horse showed the same reaction
2. Skin temperature, skin sensitivity and skin reaction was evaluated
 - briefly rise in skin temperature and higher risk for skin reaction by hotbranding. But no long-term effect, as the horses were observed sleeping and rolling on the branded side.
3. Amount of stress hormones was measured
 - no reaction, meaning that the tissue damage were not high enough to elicit the hormone system



2. Hot branding project

CONCLUSION:

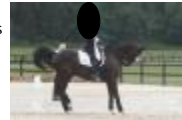
- Microchip transponder injection induced less signs of pain and inflammation and did not seem to pose a higher long-term risk than hot iron branding.
- Consequently, results indicated that hot iron branding does inflict more pain and should be abandoned where possible



3. Research in "low, deep and round"

BACKGROUND:

- FEI rule: max. 10 minutes continuous "low, deep, and round" in the warm-up arena
- Danish Animal Protection do not support this rule, but knowledge about the consequences of LDR is missing
- Danish and Dutch research co-operation wants to examine the difference in stress when riding:
 - a. remount posture
 - b. normal competition posture
 - c. "low, deep, and round"



3. Research in "low, deep and round"

METHOD:

- 16 horses are ridden in each of the three postures: 5 min. trot, 4 min. canter and 1 min. walk
- Heart rate, stress hormones (samples of spit) and pressure on the reins are measured
- Analysed by video to check that the horses are in the correct posture

RESULTS:

- Presentation at Global Dressage Forum 2012 ?



Thank you for your attention!

