

## 2015 UK NATIONAL PRE GRADING

by Mary McBryde

The Basic Grading is the compulsory assessment of any PRE horse before becoming a brood mare or breeding stallion; if approved for breeding (APTO) the horse receives a unique 'Reproducer' number and is entered into the breeding section of the PRE Studbook (LGPRES). Countries outside Spain usually have just one Basic Grading per year because it requires the week long services of an experienced Spanish Equine Vet employed by the LGPRE, trained in the specifics of the basic breeding approval process, and flown here especially for the job.

The earliest date at which a horse can be presented for its Basic Grading is the day of its third birthday but many are presented much older, and there is no upper limit to the age of presentation. Each horse takes at least 30 minutes to be assessed and then paperwork must be completed, so time is precious and the team work hard to make sure that the maximum number of horses can be assessed each day. This means that the Grading team must avoid travelling around the UK and asks horse owners to do the travelling so that the Grading team can stay mainly in one place and just assess horses non-stop all day from 8.30am to 6pm or later.

This year we had 4 venues in 4 very busy days, North, South West & S.Wales, and 2 in the SouthEast. On Sunday 24th May I met up with my regular Grading assistant, Amanda Tomlinson, and then drove to Gatwick airport to collect our Grading delegate, Maria Jose Sanchez, arriving on the 2.30 flight. This was Maria Jose's third Basic Grading visit to the UK and she is known to be tough and very knowledgeable with over 30 years experience Grading PREs. We then drove up the M1 to Doncaster - a slow journey at the best of times - and arrived late evening for a quick supper and an early night to be ready for the busy Monday schedule.

The venue was Moorhouse E.C. which has all the facilities required and is very close to the motorway network serving all areas of the North. Grading started at 9am with 8 horses to be seen and Maria Jose worked her way through them efficiently. A real highlight of the day for me was the approval of Aguja Esposa (Bozena Bienkowska) who had failed to pass in 2014 due to an old pelvic injury affecting her stance and movement, but 12 months of careful and dedicated work from her owner had changed this mare beyond recognition and she was declared Apto. On the other hand we also had the sadness of seeing a stunningly beautiful and talented mature stallion, Duque SF, fail to be approved due to the temporary partial fall of his crest after some loss of body weight during a busy showing season. All the Grading team encouraged the owner to re-present this gorgeous horse next year when back in tiptop condition, and I hope that we will see this happen in 2016. The last horse was completed by 1.30pm and then we were on the road for Somerset, a 4 hour plus journey, but essential in order to be in the Southwest for Tuesday. A problem free drive saw us arrive in good shape at our hotel just 5 miles from the next venue but more than ready to eat and then sleep.

On day 2 our venue was Hudds Farm Training Centre near Bradford-On-Avon where we had 15 horses to be seen. This is a huge number to get through in one day so we started at 8.15am and worked until after 5pm to get all the horses assessed, taking just a short lunch break to recharge our

'batteries'. Most horses behaved well and were a credit to the training put into them over the preceding weeks. One young, immature stallion was not approved for breeding but his owner was philosophical about it and is now planning a show jumping career for him. Once finished we got back into the car and drove the 2.5 hours to our 3rd venue at Star Andalusian Stud, Hampshire where we would be spending 2 days. We arrived after 8pm, all very tired, and we were very grateful for the warm hospitality and good food provided by Samantha Jo Tilley and her partner Dave.

We awoke to another sunny day and were set up in time at the studfarm for our first horse at 9.30am. The day went well with horses arriving on time, well behaved and beautifully turned out, accompanied by smartly turned out handlers too. We were helped along by Natasha's cups of coffee and tea, and a sandwich lunch provided by Sam. The 11 horses were assessed and all completed by 4pm, with just one stallion not being approved for breeding. This tall and rather immature 3 year old showed good movement and potential but in retrospect he would have been better to wait a year longer to gain muscle and topline before being Graded. However, his owner departed filled with determination to carefully develop the stallion's physique over the next year and then present him again for Grading (two attempts are permitted).

Our fourth Grading day started at 8.45am with a 40 minute drive to Yeguada Esperanza - a professional training centre which had attracted a total of 10 residential horses to be trained over some weeks and presented for Grading. It was a pleasure to have all the horses living at the yard and no worries about delayed lorries on the motorway. The day's proceedings went swiftly and smoothly with a sequence of well trained and presented horses appearing before us. We had a few anxious moments when several young stallions hoisted up their 'crown jewels' in a way that only PREs seem to do but a quiet few minutes in their own stables allowed 'things' to drop down again and got these boys certified as entire. Just one youngster didn't get approved, and his owner says he will now be gelded and developed into a very good riding horse. We finished at 4pm and immediately climbed back into the car to take Maria Jose to Gatwick to catch her 7.30pm flight. We really had to hurry to reach the check-in on time but did get our delegate safely on her plane and back to her usual job of looking after the PRE breeders in a large region of Spain. Amanda and I then had a celebration coffee and cake at M&S before splitting up to drive hundreds of miles back to our own homes and horses. Another Basic Grading was completed and I most sincerely thank our venue hosts/hostesses, and all the people who helped out with refreshments and gofer-ing, and particularly Amanda for her excellent driving skills and good company.



THE MARES, PRESENTED HERE IN ASCENDING ORDER OF AGE



Sky Joya - 3y 0m



Lago Hermosa - 3y 10m



Diamante Negra - 3y 2m



Lago Historica - 3y 10m



Marialba de Vargas - 3y 3m



Maryss Verite- 3y 11m



Lago Hidalgo- 3y 9m



Aztec Fantasia - 4y 0m





Isabela CR - 4y 0m



Tralisaa Isabella - 5y 0m



Bella LXVI - 4y 2m



Delfina VIII - 5y 0m



Lyra SA - 4y 10m



Aguja Garbosa - 5y 0m



Edita - 4y 11m



Aztec Diosa - 5y 11m



Maryss Tiara - 5y 11m



Kleopatra EDM - 7y 1m

Tralissa Alexia - 6y 0m



Bolera LXXI - 7y 1m



Rana III - 6y 1m



Above: Carisma Rio - 8y 0m

Una de Mas - 3y 11m  
Photo not to be published



Left: Aguja Esposa - 7y 0m



THE STALLIONS, PRESENTED HERE IN ASCENDING ORDER OF AGE

Bozenas Alegre - 3y 0m



Above: Zeus JM - 3y 10m

Maryss Warlock - 3y 0m



Pearl of Peace EV - 3y 2m  
Photo not to be published

Below: Maryss Vaquero - 3y

Callisto - 3y 0m



Splendido Torres - 3y 0m



CDI Apollo - 3y 11m







Antares SA - 4y 0m  
23.



Furioso SJ - 4y 10m



Lago Hermoso - 4y 1m

- 26.05.2015



Syrus - 5y 0m

26.05.2015



Vulcano Z - 4y 2m



Nazareno Vicon - 5y 1m



Magnolio VI - 4y 9m



Chulo MSuay - 5y 2m





Joque - 7y 3m



Duque SF - 9y 11m

**PHOTOS & RESULTS** - This year I am presenting the photos of the Graded horses divided by sex, and in ascending ages because its clear that physical maturity affects all the results. Its interesting to see the 3 yr olds then the 4 yr olds etc and compare them. The results table shows the major measurements and scored sections for each horse and is also presented in ascending ages and split by sex. I think we can learn a lot from the statistics and apply it to our own horses.

1. Height at wither & croup - The fully mature horses are the same height at wither and croup or the croup is lower, but many of the 3yr olds are croup high, ie they are still growing.
2. Body length in the PRE is ideally the same as the Height at the wither and many horses fitted into this ideal square.
3. Head length varies a lot, 45-65cm but its not with height.
4. Head width across eyelevel varies little - all the horses (bar 1) from 152 to 172cm height had heads varied by just 3 cms.
5. Chest width also varies little in PREs, both sexes average around 42cms. Age has some affect, width is definitely gained with maturity and excercise, but not as much as one would think, eg. a substantial 5yr old stallion at 172cm tall had a chest just 1cm wider than a 162cm 4yr old stallion.
6. Back Length. It is amazing how short our horses backs are (wither end to start of loin) - 20 cms is just 8 inches !
7. Most PRE Croups are square - the same length as width !
8. Knee and cannon bone circumference have increased a lot since 1984 (1st UK Grading). Back then many mares were 17cm cannon bone circumference or less
9. Ribcage circumference is also very similar for all heights of PRE and both sexes, 180-190cms, apart from a couple of very plump mares who were distinctly more than 200cms around the girth.
10. Maria Jose told us that Shoulder angle is measured up from the horizontal - 60deg seems the average, a lower figure

gives a more sloping shoulder and a higher figure gives a more upright shoulder. A well sloped shoulder blade is considered ideal for riding horses.

11. Maria Jose stated that a PRE pelvic angle should be close to 30deg down from the horizontal. A pelvic angle of 25-20deg was untypical of the PRE and more akin to the Arab Horse. A steeper pelvic angle, seen in some youngsters, can be a sign of immaturity and may change with increased muscle and strength at maturity.

12. Movement - generally all trainers of the horses presented had worked hard to get their horses moving well, having taken to heart the lessons learnt from last year when many horses got Serious Faults for poor quality lazy movement. This year no horse got less than 5/10 for any movement section. However Maria Jose told us that higher marks are achieved by horses that trot and canter with the withers raised higher than the croup - the typical 'uphill' characteristic we see in our horses out in the fields. Clearly we don't want to over excercise or strain the joints of our young horses by too much work on circles, but careful unriden preparation using trotting poles and cavaletti can help a youngster engage the hindquarteres and lift the front; or perhaps it is best for some youngsters to wait another year to gain strength before Grading. This year 1 mare and 5 stallions gained 8/10 or higher in all three paces, and Vulcano Z achieved a fabulous 3 x 9/10. Unfortunately Vulcano was in the indoor arena and we couldn't get photos but below are 2 photos of a youngster that gained 8/10 for trot and for canter, and they clearly show his withers are raised above his croup in both paces. This is something that I didn't know myself, before this Grading visit, so we can all take this information forward to our preparations for 2016.

