

The 2014 Basic Grading for Purebred Spanish Horses (PRE) in the UK

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The annual UK Basic Grading is held in order that the Spanish PRE Studbook can determine which young horses of 3 years of age or older are suitable to be approved for breeding purposes and entered into the breeding section of the PRE Studbook (known as the LGPRE). Some countries refer to the Grading as 'the Basic Revision' or 'the Basic Evaluation', the Spanish call it the 'Valoracion Basico', but all phrases refer to the assessment of PREs by a Spanish Equine Vet employed by the LGPRE and trained in the specifics of the basic breeding approval process.

I organised the first Spanish Horse Grading within the UK in 1984, back in the days when the PRE Studbook was managed by the Jefatura de Criá Caballar and very, very strict. There were 3 assessors who examined each horse and all the horses were given overall scores to determine whether they passed or failed, and there was no second chance! After a long interval doing other things, I took over the organisation of the annual Gradings again in 1998, so this year is my 17th Grading in a direct sequence, but only the second Basic Grading for all of us under the new more stringent Basic Grading Rules implemented by the ANCCE in 2013, after 10 years of a very minimal assessment process for breeding approval.

The new Basic Grading Rules have changed the way the Grading visit is organised here because it now takes at least 30 minutes to assess each horse instead of just 10 minutes therefore time is precious. This means that the Grading team can no longer waste many hours travelling around the UK's very busy roads getting stuck in traffic jams en route to Grade small groups of horses near to or at their homes. Instead we must ask 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 just 3 venues, 1 for the North, and 1 South West and 1 SouthEast, with Gradings spread over 4 very busy days. Grading week started for me early on the Sunday morning, 25th May, when I drove the 100 miles to Sandhurst to meet up with my friend and retired BAPSH Ltd Chairman, Amanda Tomlinson, who had again volunteered to do the driving and to assist with all the many tasks that need doing over the Grading visit. Then it was off to Heathrow airport to collect our Grading delegate who was arriving from Spain on the 11.30 flight. This year our delegate was the charming and very knowledgeable, Snr Arnau Garriga Garriga, who is the LGPRE authorised vet responsible for inscribing foals and Grading youngsters for a large region of PRE breeders west of Valencia. From Heathrow we drove up the M1 to Doncaster - a slow journey at the best of times - and arrived in

the early evening so that we could get a good evening meal (instead of the usual rushed sandwich) and retire for the night to be ready for the busy Monday schedule.

The Northern Grading venue was one of our regular places, Moorhouse Equestrian Centre, which has a huge parking area, two indoor arenas, level concrete areas for accurate measuring, and overnight stabling for those travelling a long distance. It is also very close to the motorway network serving the North of England, North Wales and Scotland making it accessible for all our northerly breeders/owners. There were 9 horses to be seen, so we started Grading at 9.30am with a horse coming from just 35 miles away, and then followed on with 2 mares who had stayed overnight due to their very long journey from Glasgow. The majority of the horses and owners were ready and waiting at their allotted times and everything was going very well until the 12 noon horse didn't arrive. We had been advised of their very late departure from home, and had re-organised somewhat, expecting the horse to arrive around 2 pm - meaning it would now be the last to be seen, but we were all getting very anxious about over-running our booked time for the venue when it finally arrived at 2.30pm. However we managed to get packed up and away from Doncaster by 3.15pm and on the road for Somerset - a very long journey, but essential in order to be in the Southwest for Grading on Tuesday. A surprisingly problem free drive saw us thankfully pulling up outside our eccentric hotel at 8pm, more than ready to eat and then sleep.

On second day we had the maximum number of 14 horses to be seen, gathered from Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall. The venue was at Knapp Farm near Crewkerne where there is good undercover level concrete surface for measurements and assessment, and a lovely outdoor arena for movement, the Grading team was also treated to a wonderful lunch by the Westlake family which was much appreciated and enabled us to keep going with the Gradings until 6pm. All the horses behaved very well and were a credit to the training that their owners or trainers had put into them over the preceding weeks. Once all the horses had been seen, it was back into the car again and a 2 and a half hour drive from Knapp Farm, Corscombe via the New Forest and Winchester to our final venue in Hampshire at Star Andalusian Stud where we would be spending 2 days Grading. We arrived at 8.30pm, 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 good weather and an early breakfast so that we could get to the Grading venue at the nearby studfarm and get set up in time for our first horse at 9am. 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 excellent cups of coffee and tea and Paula's delicious home-made cakes and traybakes - thank you both of you. During the day Sam, Amanda, and I walked many miles to ensure that everyone Grading horses were where they were supposed to be at the right times, knew what was happening, and also got safely away again, homeward bound. The 11 horses were assessed and all completed by 5pm and the Grading team and our hosts retired for a sequence of hot baths to soak weary feet and legs before an excellent evening meal at the local pub.

On our fourth and final Grading day we again had good weather and got started at 9am with the first horse, and then worked our way through the next 10 horses over the course of the day, with only one hiccup when an expected horse did not arrive. An enquiry to the owner discovered that an email had been sent saying that the horse was lame but unfortunately I had not received it. Natasha and Paula looked after us very well again with refreshments whenever needed, and generally the whole day passed smoothly winding up at 4pm after the last horse had been assessed. That evening we had a relaxing meal together before saying goodbye to our delegate Arnau who was meeting a friend and fellow Spanish vet very early the next morning to accompany him around the local polo pony yards. Amanda and I left Sam and Dave's house after breakfast on the Friday morning to go back to Sandhurst before splitting up to drive hundreds of miles back to our own homes and horses.

So another year's Basic Grading was over 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.

A list of the horses who were presented is provided below and photographs of all of them too, but it is interesting to briefly analyse the results.

The most common SERIOUS DEFECT was Movement related - if your horse gets **less than 5 marks** on its Walk, or Trot, or Canter, then it will get a Serious Defect, and there were 17 Movement Serious Defects amongst our 47 horses. Many of these were due to horses being untrained, unfit, or badly handled (too tight a circle at canter for example), and the Walk section had many Serious Defects just because the handler simply ambled along in a meandering manner instead of getting the horse to walk out in an energetic way - tracking up properly with a regular active stride. Movement is one of the few Sections where good preparation, training and handling can really make a huge difference to how your horse moves and so prevent your horse collecting avoidable Serious Defects. Five SDs result in NON-APTO, and if you collect 3 SDs on your horse's movement then there is not much room for any more SDs before failure.

The next most common SERIOUS DEFECT was Slightly CONCAVE Dorsal-Lumbar section (Back) - 9 mares collected a Serious Defect for this body area. 6 horses had SERIOUS DEFECTS for being Slightly Back At-The-Knee, and 4 horses had SERIOUS DEFECTS for Slightly Inverted Necks, but 2 horses got a VERY SERIOUS DEFECT for an Inverted/Ewe Neck. 6 horses got SERIOUS DEFECTS for being slightly Knock-Kneed, and 3 got SDs for being Open in the Hock Joint. There were also VERY SERIOUS DEFECTS awarded to 2 mares with Pigeon Toed front feet, and to 1 horse with a Concave Head Profile.

Here below is a table of the overall results and the best and worst scores in the sections that have marks out of 10. The mares have a higher percentage of zero Defect individuals, but they also had a higher number of badly scoring individuals. I hope that the brief analysis of the results is interesting and helps owners better understand what the Grading delegate will be looking for at the 2015 Grading.

2014 GRADING RESULTS ANALYSIS

HORSES PRESENTED

DEFECTS	STALLIONS (14)	MARES (33)
NONE	1	7
1 SERIOUS	7	9
2 SERIOUS	3	5
3 SERIOUS	1	3
4 SERIOUS	0	3
5 SERIOUS	1	0
7 SERIOUS	0	0
1 VERY SERIOUS	0	1
1 VERY SERIOUS + 1 SERIOUS	0	1
1 VERY SERIOUS + 4 SERIOUS	0	1
3 VERY SERIOUS + 3 SERIOUS	0	3
DISQUALIFYING	1	0
	14	33
TALLEST	168cm	164cm
SMALLEST	154cm	153cm
BREED QUALITY - BEST	8/10 (1 Horse)	8/10 (5 Horses)
BREED QUALITY - WORST	4/10 (2 Horses)	3/10 (1 Horse)
HARMONY - BEST	8/10 (1 Horse)	8/10 (2 Horses)
HARMONY - WORST	4/10 (1 Horse)	3/10 (1 Horse)
CANTER - BEST	8/10 (1 Horse)	8/10 (1 Horse)
CANTER - WORST	4/10 (1 Horse)	0/10 (1 Horse)
TROT - BEST	8/10 (1 Horse)	8/10 (2 Horses)
TROT - WORST	4/10 (2 Horses)	3/10 (2 Horses)
WALK - BEST	8/10 (1 Horse)	8/10 (1 Horse)
WALK - WORST	5/10 (4 Horses)	3/10 (1 Horse)

VENUE	RESULT	HORSE NAME	AGE	OWNER	Horse location
MONDAY					
1.north	Fail	Grays Gamberro	5	Grays PRE	Hull
1.north	Fail	Aguja Esposa	6	Bozena Bienlowska	scotland
1.north	Apto	Bozenas Primarosa	4	Bozena Bienlowska	scotland
1.north	Apto	Caprichosa JM	5	Laura Millington	Cheshire, congleton
1.north	Apto	Mas Talante	5	Juliette Riley	Northampton
1.north	Fail	PTSS Pascuala	4	Maggie Eaton	Powys, Welshpool
1.north	Apto	Aztec Quiza	10	Arran Parker	Shropshire, Shrewsbury
1.north	Apto	Alto Irlandesa	4	David & Liz Andrews	Derbyshire, Buxton
1.north	Apto	Alto India	4	David & Liz Andrews	Derbyshire, Buxton
TUESDAY					
2.SouthWest	Apto	Jacaranda CA	3	Mary McBryde	Somerset, Evercreech
2.SouthWest	Apto	Jandala CA	4	Mary McBryde	Somerset, Evercreech
2.SouthWest	Apto	Maryss Ultrafina	4	Mary McBryde	Somerset, Evercreech
2.SouthWest	Apto	Maryss Tzarina	5	Ayton PRE	Devon, North Tawton
2.SouthWest	Apto	Catalina XXVIII	5	Emma Treby	Devon, Wembworthy
2.SouthWest	Apto	HRP Inesperada	8	Ayton PRE	Devon, North Tawton
2.SouthWest	Apto	Lago Fluvial	5	Emily Burns	Devon, Chudleigh
2.SouthWest	Apto	Lago Gitana	4	L.M.Westlake	Dorset, Crewkerne
2.SouthWest	Apto	Lago Gabriella	4	L.M.Westlake	Dorset, Crewkerne
2.SouthWest	Apto	Lago Magica	4	L.M.Westlake	Dorset, Crewkerne
2.SouthWest	Apto	Armas Gardenia	5	L.M.Westlake	Dorset, Crewkerne
2.SouthWest	Fail	Entonado RPB		Ann Burling	Devon, Newton Abbot
2.SouthWest	Apto	Mas Urbe	4	Sarah Sutton	Somerset
2.SouthWest	Apto	Mas Ural	4	Sarah Sutton	Somerset
WEDNESDAY					
3.Southeast	Apto	Chiquita VIII	4	Michelle van Meurs	Surrey, Woking
3.Southeast	Apto	Feliciana NVW	3	Naomi Vance Webb	Surrey, Rusper
3.Southeast	Apto	Napolitano NVW	3	Naomi Vance Webb	Surrey, Rusper
3.Southeast	Apto	Islero CXIX	3	Olivia Kelly	Surrey, Horley
3.Southeast	Apto	Federal YAF	5	Mandy O'Nion	Sussex, East, Battle
3.Southeast	Apto	Emperador Las Lunas	4	Jennifer Cunliffe	Sussex, East, Bexhill-on-sea
3.Southeast	12.00	Cancellation	0		
3.Southeast	Apto	Abocado	8	Samantha Smith	Suffolk, Redgrave
3.Southeast	Apto	Sky Inca	3	Anthony & Julie Barham	Hertfordshire
3.Southeast	Apto	Eva SHUK	4	Fenella Humphreys	Sussex, Billingshurst
3.Southeast	Apto	Beatriz VIII	6	Lucinda Evans	Hampshire, Fordingbridge
3.Southeast	Fail	Isbilya	4	Julie Copas	Hampshire
3.Southeast	Apto	Gazaro Lycosa II	6	Lauren Jukes	Staying at Milland
THURSDAY					
4.Southeast	Apto	Jaleo Bas	4	Smith & Thomas	Sussex/Hants
4.Southeast	Apto	Centenario XXXVII	6	Julie Walls	Hampshire, Marwell
4.Southeast	Apto	Puma SA	3	Eileen Brooks	Hertfordshire
4.Southeast	10.30	Cancellation	0		
4.Southeast	Apto	Don JM 1	7	Joanna Bowns	Warwickshire, Coventry
4.Southeast	Apto	Damisela de Lydia	4	Eileen Brooks	Hertfordshire
4.Southeast	Apto	Grays Gema	5	Grays PRE	Kent, Canterbury
4.Southeast	Apto	Grays Gitana	5	Grays PRE	Kent, Canterbury
4.Southeast	Apto	Napoli	6	India Birch	Kent, Tonbridge
4.Southeast	Apto	Cati V	5	Sarah Earle	Essex, Harlow
4.Southeast	Apto	Rocky L Majesty	3	Amanda Blake	Oxfordshire, Henley
4.Southeast	Apto	Aliyana II	3	Margaret Shawcross	Hampshire, Rake