



Traditional Irish Horse Association

Cumann Capall Traidisiúnta na hÉireann



High Kingdom (ISH)(TIH) (2001 gelding by Master Imp (TB) out of High Dolly (ISH) by Chair Lift (TB))
Top 10 placing FEI World Equestrian Games, 2014, London 2012 Olympic Games

TIHA Development Programme for the Traditional Irish Horse - Dec. 2015

(Part 2)

Eventing

Background

The Irish Sport Horse (ISH) has led the world rankings in eventing for 20 of the 22 years (including 2015) the rankings have been in operation. We have lacked a comprehensive and cohesive breeding plan and therefore have little readily available data to use in which to help us ensure we can maintain our world standing.

The TIH crosses of our core breeds (Irish Draught, Connemara and Thoroughbred) have been fundamental to our success. In 2013, 5 of the top 6 rated horses, which give us our rankings, have been traditionally bred. In 2014, 4 out of the 6 have been traditionally bred. The TIH characteristics of soundness (longevity), courage, brain, rideability, gallop and scope are famous the world over. The overall picture might look healthy but, on inspection, our genetics and our (lack of) policy need a serious overhaul. The aim of breeders to breed a 4* eventer has a very considerable bonus as the $\frac{3}{4}$ bred + has a secondary market which actually accounts for 80% of our trade. I.e. The pleasure, hunter and amateur markets. Specialist showjumpers and dressage horses are often not suitable.



Master Frisky (ISH)(TIH) (2004 gelding by Master Imp (TB) out of Frisky Legs (P)(ISH) by Coopers Hill (ID)
Placings at CCI3* and CIC3* level.

Differences

The continental cross, especially the first cross (i.e. continental x TIH mare) has proliferated. In the late '80's, 68% of all Irish mares visited Thoroughbred stallions. In 2011, 11% visited TB. These (2011 coverings) are now 3 year olds and in another 5/7 years will be the International flag fliers of the ISH breed.

The TIHA maintain that there is basically not enough blood in our National Herd. Quote from Carol Gee...we are breeding now (as regards % of TB in the cross) what Germany was breeding 20 years ago. Germany is breeding now what we were breeding 20 years ago. The TIH foal and young horse matures slower than the continental cross and can therefore be difficult to sell at foal stage. However, the market puts a high value on them as quality 3 year olds. (viz Goresbridge September 3YO Sales)

Current position in FEI Rankings: Eventing: 1st



Key Issues: (Eventing)

- A. 1. Without remedial action, the first cross (continental x TIH mare) will be a thing of the past as the TIH mare will be about gone and we will be relying on second cross.
2. The TIH represents what Ireland has which is 'unique'. The Strategic Plan references the need for a healthy and sustainable genetic pool of Traditional Breds.
- B. 1. Our Thoroughbred stallions available to cross with our sport horse are very under-used and therefore untested .
2. Most available TB stallions have a very aged profile. The financial feasibility of standing a TB stallion is low. Ireland has a vibrant bloodstock industry with the best TB genetics resident here both on the flat and National Hunt.
3. There must be a way to utilise this gene pool. We already have a close connection with a number of horses off the track competing at events and also the racehorse to riding series. Our future partnership of racing and sporthorse industries can forge a closer bond.
- C. 1. The TIH Stallion (The crosses of TB, ID and Connemara) has found it difficult to impress at stallion inspections when compared to the continental.
2. Many industry experts believe the current method of evaluating horses for eventing (or breeding for eventing) is flawed. The placing of increased value on the trot over the walk and canter is short sighted at best. The value of a fluent jump rather than an outwardly impressive hugely elevated one is not recognised.
3. The mental qualities (mind, temperament, brain, character and genuineness) of the horse are not adequately assessed.
4. The gallop, with obvious connections to the Thoroughbred, is of paramount importance to the eventer.
- D. The lack of genetic diversity in the TIH herd is , again, a worry as we have a proliferation of Clover Hill, Cruising and 2nd and 3rd generation of King of Diamonds. These are obviously foundation sires and the foundation of the success of the Irish bred in all disciplines. We need outcrosses. There is a very rewarding opportunity in the use of Connemara x TB both as a competition horse/pony and a stallion to service ½ bred mares.



Cambalda (2002 gelding by Balda Beau (WNTR) out of Cathys Lady (ISH))
Competing successfully for USA at CCI3* level

Key Issues: (Eventing) (contd.)

- E. We need Irish based stallions at the top of the world stallion rankings. We must not rely on imported semen. TB and TIH stallions are used mainly by TIH breeders. The assessment system and criteria must be aligned to the needs of the breeders who use them. As with Showjumping, HSI need to do a detailed analysis of our eventer sires (and dams) which takes account of the quality and quantity of mares covered by each stallion.
- F. The mare herd needs serious research and the top bloodlines need to be identified.
- G.
 1. Mares in competition. There is a need to incentivise more potential broodmares to compete and to have more mares competing at higher levels.
 2. Thoroughbred mares. This potential use is not currently being exploited.
- H. Recognition of breeders and horses, past and present.
- I.
 1. Our level of training and producing the eventer needs an update and also a much improved level of expertise in equitation from pony club upwards.
 2. Our producing standards and our standards of equitation are low compared to our continental neighbours. Our underage eventing teams have done us proud and highlight the importance of training. This training should be more available. Better instruction in the producing of the young event horse will pay big dividends.
- J. Marketing
- K. Genetic research.

Actions Required

1. There must be a suitable budget provided with which to (identify and) promote the TIH bloodlines of excellence so as to ensure a TIH genetic pool of high merit. This will ensure that the TIH and the TIH cross with continental is available.
2. The TIHA will be available to give breeding advice to TIH breeders and have information regarding the number and availability of TB stallions and TIH sporthorse stallions which it would deem to be highly suitable (with genetics, conformation, age, vet. exam and performance taken into account).
3. While the colt retention scheme for the ISH might have been tried without success, the TIHA would strongly promote a budget, on a pilot basis, with which to choose a small number of young colts of genetic merit to help diversify and improve the TIH genetic pool. Without this measure, irreplaceable genetics will be lost.
4. There needs to be a database of information on successful eventing sires and dam lines so breeders can make informed choices.

5. The top eventing mare lines need to be identified and an incentive offered to cross at least once with a TIH or TB sire to preserve the TIH genes (if it is not already being done).
6. The best producing mares and the best performance mares need a 'badge of merit' similar to that of a stakes winning or placed racehorse denoted by 'bold' print (bold print) as pioneered by Marcus O Donnell. HSI should promote this method of cataloguing pedigrees.
7. Breeders of horses who have performed at International 2* or above should be rewarded. It would be a better 'spend' than that of the foal and mare championship as it rewards a guaranteed performance. 60 breeders receiving €1000 apiece for breeding 2* eventers and 1.30m showjumping horses who have competed at International level would amount to €60k, the equivalent of the mare and foal championship. This should be spread across the ISH studbook and include at least 30% of this for the Traditional Bred as 30% of the national herd of mares are Traditional Bred. There should be a 'Hall of Fame' for Sport horses and breeders of top Sport Horses. This has gained huge appreciation in The USA through the venue of The Kentucky Horse Park. We should have a similar venue and it would be a very good equine tourist attraction given the fame of The Irish Bred.
8. The linear scoring of the 'eventer' should differ to that of the 'showjumper'. Depth (ie. room for heart and lungs), ease of going, lightness off the ground on the flat and over jumps, TB quotient (blood type), ground cover, temperament are all qualities that are needed in a top eventer. The 'upper beam' gives percentage marks for walk and trot and again percentage marks for canter, reflexes, technique and scope. This weighting of marks should be reworked to give due emphasis to the canter etc.
9. Our eventing under-age teams have had outstanding success over the last few years and it augers well for the future. There is, however, an acknowledgement that we need a coaching structure at some pony club levels and above to assist a better informed instruction .
A. TIHA need the opportunity to give a presentation to the working group models around the country. Marketing is a big issue. The promotion of the TIH must be made hand in hand with the ISH. Both have a big part to play in the industry.
10. Genetic Research. There is a golden opportunity still open to us through the research of Dr. Emmeline Hill, UCD. There must be a budget set aside for this valuable project. It has been well covered in the TIHA Part 1. Showjumping Presentation.
11. There is need to promote the competing of fillies/mares in eventing. There should be ISH filly/mare prizes in all or selected CNC 1*(and above). Again 30% should go to TIH mares so as to help and promote performance in the TIH as per the Strategic Plan.

All of these measures are needed now to address the issues identified.

*For further information about the Traditional Irish Horse Association,
please visit www.tiha.ie*

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