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Original Contribution

VARIOUS TYPES OF HORSES USED FOR WORK IN BULGARIAN FORESTRY

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ABSTRACT

The object of this paper was to study the various working horses used for logging in timber industry in three areas: South, South-East and South-West Bulgaria. We sought to establish the typological diversity of horses used for work, as well as show their trend of development. An external assessment of a total of 35 working horses was made. Ten of these underwent three basic body measurements. They comprised height at withers, chest girth and shank girth. Results showed that horses from native primitive breeds were used in the areas of South and South-East Bulgaria while Haflinger, Belgian and Austrian (Noricker) heavy-draught horses were used in South-West Bulgaria.

Key words: Primitive Horses, Working Horses, Exterior, Body Measure

INTRODUCTION

The use of horses in Bulgarian timber industry is traditional. With the injection of various types of horses into the industry some expansion in this practice has occurred in recent years. According to a number of authors, there are many important reasons for the use of horses in forestry: they do not damage soil, trees and plants; the emission of carbon dioxide is less and they are more economical in comparison to the machines. Apart from that, horses could be used on rough terrains and serve in a number of jobs including draught, logging and cart-pulling. Many reports in the literature have pointed to the importance of these animals in forestry. For example, Bodo (1) provided information about these practices in Central Europe; Kosiniak – Kamysz (2) reported about a relatively large number of horses used for forestry work. Data for the usage of working horses in Western and Central Europe (3, 4, 5, 6), in Scandinavian countries (7, 8) and North America (9) have also been published. With all these in view it is then important that the uses of these animals in Bulgaria should be revisited.

Therefore the goal of the present study is to describe the existing primitive breeds and types in Bulgaria; to establish the diversity of horse types used by the timber industry; to point out the kinds of work done by them (10, 11, 12); and to show their trend of development regarding the various types available here.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Workhorses used in Razlog, South-West Bulgaria, Kazanlak in South Bulgaria and Sredets in South-East Bulgaria were studied. External features of 35 horses were observed. Three basic body measurements of height at withers, size of chest and size of shank, were taken for 10 of the horses. Statistical methods were applied to these body measurements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Measurements of the eyes of horses from four herds indicated they were products of natural selection. Some of these horses had rough and primitive shapes, close to the types described by Bichev (10) and Petrov (11). Their heads were big, rough, and connected to low-lying horizontal necks. The withers were low and short. The backs and loins were long and often protruding. The rumps were heavily sloping and eave-shaped. The chests were long, not deep enough and narrow. The

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shoulders and thighs were at a sloping angle connected to strong limbs lacking well defined joints. The tendons were clearly delineated and strong. The hoofs were small with very strong hoof horns. In spite of the prevailing rough body shapes, they were strong and healthy (**Picture 1**). The height at withers for the measured horses was 136 cm on the average, varying from 129 cm to 142 cm (**Table 1**). The chest girth was 160 cm on the average and the shank girth was 19,8 cm. The relatively high values of these last measurements, confirmed the results from the eyeball assessments.

Picture 1: B1 – Native Primitive Horse Type

Table 1. Body measures of horses belonging to the native primitive type (in cm)

Body measures	Height at withers	Chest girth	Shank girth
Average	136	160	19,8
Minimum	129	157	19
Maximum	142	164	20,5

Picture 2: B2 – Austrian Heavy-Draught Stallion

The results of the observation in the area of Razlog (South-West Bulgaria) were totally different. Against the background of the native primitive type of mountain horses described above, Haflinger, Belgian and Austrian heavy-draught horses come to the fore (**Picture 2** and **Picture 3**). The needs of the more advanced timber industry and the availability of logs of larger size are probably the reason for the fast development of heavy-draught horses and their use in this steep mountainous area. Based on the huge benefits derived from them, local people are convinced that horses in this class are more suitable than the Haflinger breed. This therefore created the need for the development of heavy-draught horses in this area. It is needless to describe the Belgian, Austrian (Noricker) and Haflinger breeds of horses since their external characteristics are already well known. We have to point out, though, that native horses are found in this area of survey, too, similar to the ones described in the areas of the Sredna Gora Mountain, the Stara Planina Mountain and the Stranja Mountain (10, 11).

Picture 3: B3 – Belgian Heavy-Draught Stallion

CONCLUSIONS

The horses of native primitive breeds are used by the timber industry in the areas of South and South-East Bulgaria. These horses differ in types and body measures. In the region of South-West Bulgaria, Haflinger, Belgian and Austrian (Noricker) heavy-draught horses are used with an observed tendency for expanding and implementing their crossbreeds.

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