



Semen Traceability Skype Call – 26th November 2019 at 14h00 (GMT +1)

Attended by Bérengère Lacroix (SBSF) (chair), Anne-Sophie Levallois (Haras de Semilly), Eva Maria Broomer (British Breeding / AES), Emilie Goulas (IFCE), Nadine Brandtner (WBFSH)

Excused Ralph Venrooij (KWPN)

Did not reply Alison Corbally (ISH), Jeanette Nijhof (Team Nijhof)

Agenda:

Discussion to develop a proposal for the project, considering elements such as:

1. Platform of exchange about foals registered; not necessarily a database, but a way with authorisations to check
2. Zootechnical certificates; how could it be a help to trace?
3. How to protect the Stud Books investment in young horses through a system under the umbrella of the WBFSH, involving stallions' owners?

Minutes:

Opening and welcome by Bérengère Lacroix.

She gave a short summary of the present situation and discussions in Saumur:

- The open letter suggests a platform of exchange to track foals registered
- Consideration of the zootechnical certificate and how it can be utilised
- Need to guide studbooks and help protect what they invest in selecting and producing horses
- The investment that the stallion owners make in producing stallions.

Possible goals:

These were discussed with possible challenges and solutions.

- To propose **WBFSH good practice protocol for the industry** (for studbooks, mare and stallion owners, vets and AI stations).
- **Information-sharing** (e.g. number of registered foals in each studbook from their approved stallions)

- Some studbooks don't want to share their data openly. Consider non-open system with access restrictions.
- GDPR considerations – mare/foal owner names.
- Cost and time to manage the system (database, automated, manual/Excel files)
- Considerations of how semen sold can be tracked if not used in the same breeding season. OR embryos frozen and foals born in subsequent years and in different countries.

➤ **Covering Certificate**

- Cannot enforce studbooks to register foals only if a covering certificate is provided. EU legislation cannot be used to oblige this. Covering certificates are not defined in the EU legislation. In the EU Regulation, the covering certificate is the main rule. But a member state can decide to allow foal registration based on identification by any other appropriate method that provides at least the same degree of certainty as a covering certificate, such as parentage-control based on DNA analysis (**Animal Breeding Regulation ABR 2016/1012 Part 3.1**) If the breed society wants to keep the covering certificate mandatory, this is possible. In this way it is an advantage that the covering certificate is not defined in EU regulation; studbooks can decide the rules they want to apply through their breeding program. And if all studbooks of WBFSH agree, a common rule for covering certificates could be applied.
- Haras de Semilly currently provide covering certificates to a mare owner on request, when the foal is registered in a studbook and the covering was paid for. Covering cert is a proof of purchase. Currently semen exported is sent without a zootechnical certificate, only with the sanitary papers, as a zootechnical certificate can be used to register multiple foals.

➤ **The Zootechnical Certificate (a model form for bovine, porcine, ovine and caprine was provided by Eva Maria Broomer)**

- Annex I Part A – completed for trade of animal
- *Annex I Part B – completed for trade of semen*
- Annex I Part C – completed for trade in oocytes
- Annex I Part D – completed for trade in embryos

The role of the zootechnical certificate is not to establish if the semen was bought legally, but only for verification of identity. If emphasis can be placed on zootechnics for issuing of passports (their incorporation when issuing equine passports), there could be a solution to the problem of traceability, specifically if all semen and oocyte-trade must be accompanied by the zootechnical certificate.

As a third country, a zootechnical certificate also needs to be produced if wanting to trade with the EU. However, it could be difficult to regulate trade and practice between third countries where the EU is not involved, even if the semen originates from the EU. Studbooks that are members of the WBFSH can be regulated through possible WBFSH membership rules.

POSSIBLE SYSTEM BASED ON ZOOTECHNICAL CERTIFICATES THAT HAVE A TRACKING NUMBER:

The below is a suggestion from a brainstorming that requires further discussion and consideration to assess if it is implementable, or how it can be made functional.

A field for a certificate number already exists on the model forms of zootechnical certificates.

One tracking number can be used for the registration of **one foal**. This implies that stallion owners sell pregnancies not straws. If you sell a single straw to a breeder at his own risk with no guarantees, then similarly the stallion owner cannot expect any guarantees in return. Ideally this needs to be specified in the sales agreement of the semen.

The tracking number can be designed similarly to the UELN for ease of interpretation (e.g. first 3 digits the country of origin of the stallion/semen). Or stallion owners/agents register and receive a registration number that is incorporated to the tracking number (accounts for different people having rights to sell semen from the same stallion)

When a dose is sold, it is sent with its zootechnical certificate with a tracking number. Stallion owner records:

- a. Name of Sire
- b. Permitted use of semen: immediate use (same season) by AI, with or without flushing
- c. Permitted number of foals (or should it be pregnancies if there is no LFG?)
- d. Name of intended mare
- e. Name of mare owner/buyer of semen
- f. Zootechnical certificate tracking number for registration of one foal

When studbook registers a foal:

- a. Owner provides zootechnical certificate which verifies identity and has a tracking number.
- b. Studbook checks the platform or contacts the stallion owner to see if the tracking number has already been used.
 - i. Has not been used – foal is registered, and number is now flagged as “used” in the system
 - ii. Has been used – stallion owner issues another zootechnical certificate when the covering is paid for.

Potential problem: A passport issuing body must follow EU regulation and issue ID papers/passports timeously for sanitary reasons (biosecurity and food-chain security). Therefore, according to EU legislation it is acceptable for a studbook to issue ID papers or a passport without a pedigree where no zootechnical certificate has been provided. To control this potential problem all parties involved in a potential solution must commit to adhering to the protocol of the solution.)

- c. All tracking numbers that have been used to register a foal are flagged in the system as “used/not available”
- d. (Zootechnical certificate forms part of the horse’s passport – this is an option that can be considered and needs to be debated for feasibility)

Although one can initially try to manage this system manually with an Excel file for semen sold for immediate use (same season), a digital platform would be more efficient for a global, long-term solution.

Considerations:

- Multiple foals, over multiple breeding seasons: The situation with frozen semen stored and used later, ICSI and embryos frozen is more complex. However, if a straw of semen is sold with permission for ICSI and a defined number of foals permitted under this sales agreement, then zootechnical certificates for that defined number of foals can be issued (each with a unique tracking number). These certificates/tracking numbers do not have an expiration date by which the foal must be registered.
- If a mare owner requests a repeat dose because his mare has not taken, the tracking number of the semen that did not take can be flagged in the system as unavailable with comment (no pregnancy produced). The stallion owner updates this information in the system when he issues the mare owner a repeat dose. The next dose sent to the mare owner will have a new tracking number.
- A manual system can be introduced to start with, with an automated system considered for development in the future (depending on how the pilot system works, uptake of the stallion owners, etc). Online generation or electronic tracing of zootechnical certificates can be considered, similarly to how many agencies issue online covering certificates at present.
- Although the wish of the stallion owner seems to be that ultimately the system is managed by the WBFSH, it must be kept in mind that according to EU regulation, the issuing of the zootechnical certificates should be done by the breed society/competent authority/semen collection or storage centre. This cannot be done by WBFSH. But the WBFSH can provide a supportive function in overseeing functionality of the platform, and to help studbooks to trace tracking numbers.

Conclusion:

While it is not the responsibility of the WBFSH or studbooks to settle disputes between mare and stallion owner, nor to ensure stallion owners are paid for the semen they sell, the WBFSH does recognise the importance of supporting a healthy industry and is willing to contribute in the development of a good system. For this several factors have been identified:

1. **STALLION OWNERS TO WORK ON THE HARMONISED SALES CONTRACT** for terms and conditions of use of sold semen. Contracts must stipulate if semen is permitted for:
 - a. AI for immediate use (with or without flushing)
 - b. Storing or dealing
 - c. Flushing, ICSI, etc
 - d. Specified permitted number of foals generated per straw or dose, LFG etc

This contract can be included in the WBFSH Good Practice Protocol. Stallion owners are to take initiative to continue working on this, as an important element of the overall solution. The

WBFSH suggests that a working group of stallion owners works on this and provides feedback (as per the meeting in Schiphol in June 2018 – minutes of the meeting to be made available)

2. **STUDBOOKS TO MAINTAIN ACCURATE ADMINISTRATION OF PAPERWORK**
3. Consider making it a **WBFSH MEMBERSHIP RULE** to that studbooks may only register foals if the zootechnical certificate is produced from the purchase of the semen/covering. This would therefore be part of the WBFSH Good Practice Protocol.
4. Since at the time of sale of semen, it is often not known which mare the semen will be used for, neither when or where, the zootechnical certificate should accompany the semen, with a **UNIQUE TRACKING NUMBER** that allows for the semen to be traced. Currently in France, the stallion owner can keep the covering certificate until the covering is paid but this relies on a weak regulation (arrêté) and this is objectionnable.
5. **APPLICATION FROM DAY OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SYSTEM** (not applicable retrospectively, i.e. “old” semen in circulation sold without documentation or sales conditions)

NOTE:

Information that came to light after the meeting

A new model of the zootechnical certificate for semen, oocytes and embryos is under discussion at EU level. This may have an impact on this project. Emilie Goulas (IFCE/WHIRDEC) will keep the working group updated with new information as it becomes available, and when the new text is validated.