

1. What is the Grading Register?

The Grading Register is an up-grading breeding program for part bred CBs . It allows for the introduction of new blood to the Cleveland Bay breed. It is a breeding programme that has been in place for almost 90 years but has been little used in recent years.

2. Why is there this need for new blood?

New blood can contribute to the maintenance and improvement of the genetic health of a breed. It can lead to the reduction of a high inbreeding coefficient.

3. What is genetic health?

A breed is healthy when it has a low in-breeding coefficient, when there are a wide number of unrelated horses and there is a wide choice of unrelated stallions and mares.

4. What is a genetically unhealthy breed?

In small populations closely related horses repeatedly breed together. This leads to inbreeding which eventually give rise to the possibility of health issues in horse populations. Frequently repeated names of horses can be observed when writing out a 6 or 7 generation CB pedigree.

5. How does a breed become 'small'?

Genes are lost in the normal process of breeding. In breeds with small populations such as Rare Breeds this is particularly so. The genetic base of the breed becomes smaller leading to reduced genetic variation.

6. Why is inbreeding a problem to avoid?

Inbreeding can lead to 'inbreeding depression', erosion of vigour and can manifest itself in birth deformities, infertility and other health issues.

7. Is the Cleveland Bay breed at risk?

Not immediately but considering the already inbred nature of the breed, the decline in pure bred breeding, the length of time that breeding programmes take to work through into the stud book, then steps need to be taken now to help avoid serious consequences in the future.

8. What needs to be done?

Recognising early indicators is important so employing strategies well ahead will avoid problems before they arise. A horse generation on average is about 8 years. The grading up breeding programme takes 4 generations so could take upwards of 25 years before any benefits are significantly felt within the breed. Breeding needs forward thinking.

9. Are there signs visible now within this breed?

Figures indicating the overall inbreeding of the CB show this breed to be one of the most inbred horse breeds. Repetition of horses in pedigrees cannot be avoided. Breeding lines are limited.

10. Is there a solution?

One solution is for more horses to enter the upgrading process so bringing in new blood. Part bred horses accepted into the GR will have a major portion of CB blood and a smaller portion of non CB. This latter will be the new blood and is therefore important for the Breed. The ultimate objective is to widen choice so that horses with distinctly different pedigrees can be bred together.

11. What does this entail?

Horses may enter that have at least 75% CB blood. They are identified as Grade C horses. They then breed to a licensed, pure bred stallion and the female offspring progresses to the next stage: Grade B. Subsequent breeding with this foal at breeding age will produce a Grade A horse. The next crossing will breed a horse that would be eligible for entry to the full studbook of the Society.

12. What % then of new blood will enter the full stud book?

That will be 3.145 % of new blood per entry to the full stud book . One horse entering the stud book will not make much difference but a number entering would.

13. What can I do to help?

If you have a 75% (¾ bred) mare or have mares with even higher CB content they could be eligible to enter the Grading Register subject to various conditions. e.g. Horses have to be bay in colour, healthy and good quality. Veterinary and breed inspections will be held. Full information is available from the CBHS.

14. When can I start?

You can start breeding within the GR as soon as your horse is approved. You will need to be a member of the CBHS, CBHSNA or CBHSA and your horse registered, or over-stamped, as a Part bred with the CBHS.

Further information from:

www.clevelandbay.com