



Dr. Leo De Backer, Veterinary Surgeon
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Horsing around Is Serious Business

World-class, prize-winning horses aren't just born, they're bred. Hereditary lines are generated through artificial insemination of sperm from champion horses. One of the world's top breeding centers for show-jumping horses is Studbook Zangersheide, whose horses have won Olympic and other international awards.

Lab Technician Steven Poncelet collects and evaluates semen from stallions at the facility using the Hamilton Thorne Equine Motility software on the IVOS. According to Poncelet, "I use the equine motility software daily to check the ejaculate of each stallion. Mainly I look for VAP (path velocity) and STR (straightness), then I check my findings with the given number of progressive motile cells. I use the four-chamber slides from Leja."

The reputation of this professional stallion station depends on consistently producing sperm of desirable qualities to sire future winning sport horses. To maintain that reputation, objectivity and accuracy are required.

"There are many advantages to using the IVOS," reports Dr. Leo De Backer, the veterinarian in charge at Zangersheide. "Its objective computerized method for evaluating semen ensures that all semen is analyzed in the same way. The greatest advantage is the automatic calculation of the amount of doses that can be made from one ejaculate. The IVOS clearly reduces our work time."

Studbook Zangersheide also uses the Metrix program on a monthly basis to monitor the sperm morphology of each stallion. In addition, they use Metrix for fertility research experiments, such as assessing various sperm extenders and testing different methods of conservation and transportation.

Dr. De Backer concludes, "The IVOS is easy to use. Hamilton Thorne installed the system three years ago, provided training and explained the need for standard protocols. The IVOS is more reliable than the human eye and a normal microscope. In the near future, we plan to make even more use of our IVOS by exporting the results into other software programs. For example, we want to include the IVOS results of the total amount of doses in our customer database."



By analyzing sperm with the IVOS, the practice of breeding show-jumping horses can continue to produce prize-winning results such as Almé Z, Ramiro Z, Carthago Z and Caretano Z, all of these grand sires bred by sperm originating from Studbook Zangersheide. To read more about Zangersheide, go to www.zangersheide.com.

If you have any questions you'd like to ask Dr. De Backer, email him at Dr.L.De.Backer@village.uunet.be.

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The legendary
Ramiro Z (left)

Carthago Z (right)

Charlie Z, winner
of 3 year old show-
jumping horses at
Z Festival 2001
(by Carthago Z)