

POLISH KONIK – A RELIC OF NATURE AND NATIVE BREEDING

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The research inspired a broader study on breeding the Konik, carried out by Prof. T. Vetulani in the following years. With 100 years of research and breeding, this breed of Polish horses is a relatively new field of study. The breed itself is one of the latest to be described and officially registered in Poland: the Registry of Koniks was issued in 1955 and the first volume of the breed's studbook – in 1962.

This breed is remarkable for its numerous practical advantages, linked with the mentioned ability to adapt to different conditions, such as: herd behaviour, best observed in horses from reservations, low maintenance requirements and good tolerance of low quality forage, very high breeding indices, sturdy conformation, and high ratio of body weight to motive power.

Data on morphometric parameters of Koniks are rather limited. Usually, only the three measurements were performed that are required for a studbook entry: height at withers, chest circumference, and cannon bone circumference. These data does not sufficiently describe conformation and proportions. Similarly limited data is available for other breeds of horses in Poland. Therefore it is required to perform a more detailed analysis of all body parts of this precious breed and to present possible exterior differences that result from various breeding conditions. The Konik is believed to have a unified morphotype, although some authors observe increasing differentiation in types and conformation. The Polish breeders aim at sustaining the primitive features of the horses, e.g. the conformation, therefore the biometric model of the breed is strictly followed. The requirements for adult horses are as follows: height at withers – 130.0-140.0 cm, minimum chest circumference – 165.0, and minimum cannon bone circumference – 16.5 cm (mares), 17.5 cm (stallions). The issue of morphometric changes in Koniks, both in Poland and other countries, has not been sufficiently researched and described, therefore an update is needed.