

Abstract form

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Inbreeding levels in the Italian Heavy Draught Horse population

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Inbreeding coefficients (IC) of about 38000 Italian Heavy Draft Horse (IHDH) mares and stallions were computed. Relative to the 1982 population the IC ranged from 0.6 to 30.0%. The inbreeding level within the period of study was upwards, although the annual increase in the IC was generally low (+0.03%/year) and only 1.6% of live animals (4900) had an IC higher than 12.5%. The trends in the level of inbreeding showed a cyclic pattern over years, due to the allowed use of stallions imported from the French Breton population (FB). Indeed, stallions obtained by mating IHDH mares with FB stallions showed a lower mean IC than those obtained within the IHDH population (2.90 vs. 4.35%), although the FB stallions imported were more related within group than the IHDH stallions. Despite the widespread of the IHDH population over all the country and a different use of natural mating (NM), inbreeding levels were very similar from the north to the centre of the country. However, a higher number of highly inbred animals (IC>12.5%) were detected in regions located in the centre of Italy, where NM is more used. Within the IHDH mares no relationship was found between the length of life and the mean no. of abortion/year of life with different levels of inbreeding.

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