

Thoroughbred State Standing Stallion Importance

Upper Midwest Analysis, by Dave Astar

For many years, Thoroughbred breeding and racing states have deliberated on the importance of state standing stallions. The evidence of differing views on this subject resides in the variability of state breeding and racing programs. Many states understand the interstate competitive nature of the Thoroughbred industry related to attracting and retaining top tier stallions. Other states often ignore the importance of state standing stallions.

Those states who value state standing stallions overtly create a variable combination of provisions in their breeding and racing programs by:

1. Establishing clear stallion breeder's fund payment percentages as a percent of purses.
2. Recognizing the difference between foaling versus truly breeding in a state, related to incentives.
3. Requiring breeders to commit to several months of in-state mare residency.
4. Having breeders breed back to in-state stallions for them to have full access to state-bred breeder's fund benefits.
5. Structuring restricted races which recognize state standing stallion foals.

State organizations that recognize the importance of in-state standing stallions quality cite many reasons for structuring their programs in the fashion they do. These organizations see true breeding, not just foaling, as very important to their state's agricultural economy. These organizations tell me that breeding farms which house stallions, and in-state breeding and conception related veterinary services and suppliers, benefit from in-state breeding. More importantly, these state organizations claim state standing stallions are a key to state-bred breeding volume and quality.

Historically, state standing stallions produce near 50% of an entire state's state bred foal crop. This indisputable percentage means that in-state standing stallion quality has a more prolific effect on state bred racing population quality than any other identifiable factor! Even in states with lower quality stallions, where there is a greater tendency to utilize out of state stallions, the near 50% factor holds true.

Upper Midwest State	2015 In-State Conception (Jockey Club Data) (Percentage of state bred registered foals from mares bred to in-state stallions)
Michigan	87.8%
Indiana	57.3%
Iowa	52.8%
Illinois	47.8%
Ohio	45.3%
Minnesota	39.3%

Why do breeders breed to poorer in-state stallions when higher quality out-of-state stallions are available? Because, breeders will always attempt to hold down breeding expenses associated with higher shipping and stud fees if possible. They also try to mitigate stress for mares and foals in the breeding process. Not only are mares shipped to stallion breeding farms but foals that have not been weaned must also be shipped. Consequently, the availability of local high-quality sires directly impacts state breeding volume, quality and conception rates.

So, how do the stallions in the upper Midwest compare? The answer resides in Sire Production Indexes, or SPI's for short. SPI's indicate the average racing class of a stallion's foals. The SPI is the calculated average earnings per start, normalized by sex, age, and inflation, for every foal sired by a specific stallion. The

national average SSI is 1.00, and by identifying all state standing stallions with an SSI over 1.00 in any given year, it is easy to determine the quality of the stallion population in any given state.

Following is a complete listing of listed as living upper Midwest state's standing stallions that exceeded the national average SSI in 2016 or 2017. (Bloodstock Research Data)

Stallion & Year	State	SPI
Straight Line, 17'	IL	2.66
Cherokee Rap, 17'	IL	2.51
Parent's Reward, 17'	OH	2.04
Unbridled Express, 17'	IN	1.69
Alcindor, 17'	OH	1.67
Parent's Reward, 16'	OH	1.51
Straight Line, 16'	IL	1.35
Alcindor, 16'	OH	1.20
Skylord, 16'	IN	1.19
Mondavi, 17'	IN	1.16
Native Ruler, 17'	IA	1.14
Three Hour Nap, 16'	IL	1.13
Colorful Tour, 17'	IA	1.10
Vaquero, 16'	OH	1.09
Mondavi, 16'	IN	1.09
Article Of Faith, 17'	IN	1.08
Notional, 16'	IN	1.07
Zulu Magic 17'	MI	1.06
City Weekend, 17'	OH	1.05
Colonial Colony, 17'	IN	1.04
Colorful Tour, 16'	IA	1.04
Law Enforcement, 17'	MN	1.02
Woke Up Dreamin, 16'	IA	1.02

Since stallions can see over 100 mares per breeding season, and considering pedigree and nicking variation is important when trying to match mares with stallions for breeding, the number of quality sires available in any state offers a fair indication of stallion quality.

Indiana placed stallions with SPI's over 1.00 seven times during 2016 and 2017. Their top five stallions also averaged an SPI of 1.19 in 2017, 19% over the national average. Not surprisingly, Indiana's breeding program offers the best combined breeder and stallion incentives in the upper Midwest. They offer stallion owners 10% of earned purses as awards in their breeding program. They also require mares to be in-state by November 1 of the year before foaling, or bred back to in state stallions to be eligible for their state awards.

When Indiana's stallion owner incentives are coupled with a powerful breeder award structure, where in-state breeders earn 20% of earned purses in state, and even 10% of the winners share for certain out-of-state purse earnings, Indiana's program simply attracts high tier stallions and mares. This is evident when evaluating state-bred racing quality. The NAICSC qualified 19 Indiana state bred races as black type in 2017, thus qualifying 86% of Indiana's state-bred stakes races as black type. Other upper Midwest states have just a handful of black type state bred stakes races, and struggle to qualify even half of their state bred stakes races as black type, because their state bred race horses are simply too slow.

The Jockey Club just released information regarding mares bred in 2017. While the data is only 90 to 95% complete, with some late reporting to follow, it offers an interesting indication of future breeding quality and volumes. Here are the reported numbers of mares bred to upper Midwest state stallions who have seen 20 or more mares in 2017.

Stallion	2017 Mares Bred	State
Tidal Volume	54	OH
Stroll	39	IA
Woke Up Dreamin	30	IA
Victor's Cry	30	IN
Dowsing (JPN)	28	IN
Forest Attack	28	IL
Taprize	27	IN
Sing Baby Sing	25	IA
Monba	25	IN
Majestic Harbor	24	IN
Skylord	24	IN
Cowtown Cat	24	OH
Blueskiesnrainbows	23	IN
Notional	22	IN
Unbridled Express	22	IN
Kettle Corn	21	OH
Unbridled Energy	20	MI

This listing allows interesting insight into those states that attract new and prolific stallions. Indiana has 53% of the stallions on this list. This is a solid future indicator of where “true breeding” and quality is headed in each state. In fact, the Jockey Club recent 2017 mares bred report indicates 544 mares were bred to Indiana stallions, and while that total is estimated to be only 90 to 95% complete, Indiana will be one just a few states nationwide to show an increase in “true” 2017 breeding. Many states, some in the upper Midwest, will show dramatic drop-offs once reports with final totals for mares bred and foals born in each state are available.

The ability to attract and retain high quality stallions directly relates to “true” state-bred breeding and ultimate racing quality, and has a partial effect on foaling volume. Those states that recognize the importance of stallions are becoming more abundant.

Total purse earning potential, not individual race purses since many states offer fewer race days or earning opportunities, will continue to impact breeding. However, those states that oversimplify stallion and mare owner behavior and think purses are all that matter, will suffer until they develop understanding of how a breeding program must be designed to feature multiple elements that deliver clear economic return. Simply put, data indicates an accelerated movement of quality breeding stock owners to states which have incorporated some combination of the five stallion related features mentioned at the beginning of this article.

This is the nature of interstate data transparent Thoroughbred breeding competition.