

## **Evaluation of buildings and infrastructure at the Hucul Stud in Gładyszów in terms of horse welfare**

### **Summary**

The stables at the Hucul Stud in Gładyszów were found to meet the minimum requirements for housing conditions for horses, with minor exceptions which in most cases do not significantly affect the welfare of the horses. The area of the free-run barns in the stables should be larger or the groups in them should be reduced. However, the horses' all-day access to the paddocks compensates for the insufficient size of the free-run barns. It was also observed that despite the correct natural lighting ratio the light in the stables was insufficient because the windows were situated low and were partly covered by the eaves. An interesting solution is the combination of two housing systems, box and free-run, in a single building. As a result, the entire reproduction cycle and rearing of foals can take place in one stable, which has the benefit of unchanging microclimatic conditions and work organization. An additional advantage in terms of animal welfare is the fact that apart from stallions all other groups of horses at the stud are kept in free-run barns. Although these are not classic sector free-run barns, since they are permanently connected to paddocks the horses can manifest their natural behaviour, satisfying their need for movement, searching for food and social contacts. Hucul horses are undemanding and robust; a large pasture with a shed providing shelter from the wind and rain is fully adequate to meet the welfare requirements for this breed. However, due to the work organization of work at the stud, the decision was made to use a stable and pasture system. The conditions created in the stud in terms of construction of buildings represent a satisfactory compromise between the requirements of humans and animals, with no significant detrimental effect on animal welfare.

**KEY WORDS:** Hucul horses, stable construction, welfare