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**A project of the method for assessing horse suitability  
for leisure riding**

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Projekt metody oceny przydatności koni do rekreacji

**Summary.** Horse leisure and tourism have become more and more popular in recent years. This implies an increasing demand of horse riding centers for horses that would be best for this type of use. However, no assessment procedure enabling to select the appropriate animals has been developed yet. Considering this problem, the present survey aimed at comparing the actual state of horses in the centers with demands of potential riders for leisure horses and at determining the importance of some traits used for assessing these horses. The next issue was to create a description of the standard of a leisure horse and to develop the formula helpful in assessing such animals. A survey was designed, in which questions about the most important characteristics of leisure horses were included. The responses were received from six horse riding center owners and thirty-seven leisure riders. The statistical analysis was conducted applying PQStat software, while the significance of differences between the means was estimated with Tukey's test. The obtained results made it possible to conclude that perfect recreational horse should be Malopolska breed gelding with a height at the withers above 160 cm, at the age of eleven to fifteen years, bay or chestnut in color, sanguine type with character traits described as friendly, submissive, and energetic, with excellent health and good feed utilization. It is also important that its riding quality should be at least at a moderate level. It should be broken well enough to move easily, not only in the basic gaits. Its usefulness for jumping that would allow to overcome the parkour including obstacles about 100 cm height and the ability to be used for tourist rally or short walks would also be positive traits. It was concluded that the formula proposed in the present study may help in the selection of horses for this type of use.

**Key words:** horses, leisure, individual traits, assessment methods

INTRODUCTION

Various forms of horse riding are considered as the most popular sport in some European countries [Supeł and Wróblewski 2012]. The recreation riding as a perfect

form of leisure activities along with a contact of a man with animal appears to be the key issue [Grobelny and Barska 2010]. Such relations are very important factors of education, upbringing, health, cognitive, pro-ecological, and in some cases also resocialization factors [Gancarz *et al.* 2003]. The still persisting interest in leisure riding makes an increase of competitiveness of centers involved in this type of activity [Łojek 2001]. At the same time, demands of potential customers who want professional horse riding lessons with horses characterized not only by the appropriate utility values, but also relevant mental traits [Jeziński *et al.* 2006] and even exterior ones, which are most often of aesthetic or cognitive importance [Janczarek and Zniszczyńska 2009], increase as well. The ability of constant improving the skills of riders and even their starts in amateur equestrian competitions, is very important [Nowicka-Posłuszna *et al.* 2006]. However, the horse's traits that directly affect the rider's safety are the key [Jeziński *et al.* 2006]. According to Dudek [2008], number of injuries during sport horse riding is so large that it is exceeded only by team sports and cycling. It is worth noting that the accidents happen mostly to people doing leisure riding. The animal's fault is usually associated with errors made during rearing, preparation for mounting, and subsequent use of horses [Wolińska *et al.* 2012]. However, it cannot be forgotten about other traits of leisure horses that are considered by the owners of horse riding centers insignificant [Kamieniak *et al.* 2008]. For example, Jurek [2011] emphasizes not only the aesthetic, but also cultural significance of the horse's color type in its breeding and use. In the era of concern for animal welfare, the conditions, care, and general wellbeing of leisure horses are also important problems [Zagor 2008]. These issues led to the situation that the present study aimed at developing a simple method for assessing the suitability of horses for recreation, as well as a comparative analysis of the actual state of horses with a demand for animals with traits particularly valued by riders.

#### MATERIAL AND METHODS

The material for study consisted of answers to the questions in the poll targeted to six owners of centers specializing in recreational horse riding, as well as 37 people (17 women and 15 men) aged over 20 years practicing the leisure riding. The polled horse ride center owners and leisure riders came from all over Poland. All persons had some knowledge upon the breeding and use of horses.

Two questionnaires were prepared, each containing 12 identical questions to allow an assessment of selected traits of leisure horses. Six traits (horse breed, age, sex, color, height at the withers, as well as health and feed utilization) were defined as general, while two other ones (temperament and character) as mental traits; the remaining four ones (riding quality [www.pzhk.pl 2013 ], the usefulness for jumping, for dressage and for tourist rally) were the evidences of the usefulness of horses. The first survey called *Questionnaire for the owners* was carried out in order to gain information about the actual condition of horses within the features being the subject of analysis in present study. It also included a question about the number of horses kept in a given center. The second survey called *Questionnaire for the riders* was used to obtain information on the potential need for leisure horses characterized by precisely defined features. The results were sorted according to the frequency of responses making thereby a ranking of their various

options referring to each of the features. These activities have also become the basis for confronting the actual situation of leisure horses with potential demands. In addition, *Questionnaire for the riders* helped to establish the significance weight of studied traits. In this case, respondents were asked to assign points (scale 1–10) for the importance of their opinion on each of the trait polled. The next step consisted in developing a method applied to assess the leisure horse. The proposed project included algorithm that used the results of *Questionnaire for the riders*. The following rules were adopted: each of 12 traits included in the questionnaire was taken into account, an average score given by respondents was accepted as the significance weight of each traits; the first three ranks of particular traits (ranking by frequency of responses) were given the scores according to the following system: the higher the rank, the higher number of points (i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> place – 3 points, 2<sup>nd</sup> place – 2 points, 3<sup>rd</sup> place – 1 point, the other rank – 0 points).

Statistical analysis was performed applying the PQStat 1.2.4 software. The single-factorial analysis of variance was carried out taking into account the importance factors for each of studied traits. The significance of differences between mean was estimated with t-Tukey test. The standard deviations and variation coefficients were calculated, as well as extreme values were presented. The percentage comparisons were prepared as well.

## RESULTS

The average number of horses kept in the surveyed centers amounted to 10.16 with a variation coefficient equal to 34.23. The extreme values ranged from 3 to 17.

The importance factors of general characteristics describing the leisure horses ranged from 2.49 points for color to 8.78 points for health and feed utilization (Tab. 1). Differences between mean values were significant. Most similar values characterized the age, sex, and height in withers. Full scale ratings, i.e. from 1 to 10 points, were used for the breed and color of horses. In those cases, the highest variation coefficient was also recorded. Results referring to the mental traits did not statistically differ among to one another and reached average values of about 8.70 and 8.54 points. Considering the utility traits of horses, the highest significance weight of traits was assigned to riding quality, while the lowest – the jumping usefulness. These differences were neither statistically significant. Only in the case of the riding suitability assessment, the full-scale evaluations were used. The highest variation coefficients were recorded for the jumping and tourist rally usefulness.

In the analyzed horse recreation centers, Polish Warmblood horses were mostly used (Tab. 2). There were no Wielkopolska, Polish Konik, and Hucul breed representatives. The poll results indicating the potential demand allowed for placing the Malopolska breed in the first rank. Over 30% of respondents marked the Polish Warmblood horses that took the second rank. Only single respondents indicated Shetland pony, Polish Konik, and Hucul horses. Surveyed horses were at the age of 6–10 years. No single case of leisure use referred to an animal over 15 years of age. The results on the requirements, however, indicated that the most desirable age of recreationally used animals ranged between 11 and 15 years of age. Nearly 30% of respondents pointed out that the age of horses intended for the present usage should be 6–10 years. Interest in the oldest and the

tab. 1

Table 1. Significance weight for general, mental, and utility traits describing the leisure horses  
 Tabela 1. Wagi znaczeniowe cech ogólnych, psychicznych i użytkowych charakteryzujących konie rekreacyjne

Assessed trait Oceniana cecha	General traits/Cechy ogólne						Health and feed utilization Zdrowie i wykorzystanie paszy
	Breed Rasa	Age Wiek	Sex Płeć	Colour Maść	Height at the withers Wysokość w kłębie		
x	4,59AB□	6,70AC	6,32AC	2,49B	6,08AC		8,78C
min	1	2	2	1	2		3
max	10	10	10	10	9		10
v	54,16	28,10	37,09	85,11	33,65		19,56
Mental traits/Cechy psychiczne							
Assessed trait Oceniana cecha	Temperament Temperament	Character Charakter					
x	8,70A	8,54A					
min	5	4					
max	10	10					
v	15,76	18,43					
Utility traits/Cechy użytkowe							
Assessed trait Oceniana cecha	Riding quality Jezdność	Usefulness for jumping Przydatność skokowa	Usefulness for dressage Przydatność ujeżdżeniowa	Usefulness for tourist rally Przydatność do rajdów turystycznych			
x	8,51A	6,27A	7,29A	6,51A			
min	3	1	4	1			
max	10	9	10	10			
v	17,86	28,79	18,52	34,26			

□ Mean values within general, mental, and utility traits marked with the same letters do not significantly differ (in other cases, significance at the level of  $P \leq 0,05$ ).

□ Średnie w obrębie cech ogólnych, psychicznych oraz użytkowych oznaczone tymi samymi literami nie różnią się istotnie (w pozostałych przypadkach istotność przy  $P \leq 0,05$ ).

tab. 2

Table 2. Ranking of general traits characterizing the leisure horses  
Tabela 2. Ranking cech ogólnych charakteryzujących konie rekreacyjne

Ranking place Miejsce rankingowe	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Factual condition – equisition/Stan faktyczny – zapotrzebowanie					
Breed Rasa	Polish Warmblood/Malopolska Polski koń szlachetny półkrwi/Malopolska	Malopolska/ Polish Warmblood Malopolska/polski koń szlachetny półkrwi	Shetland pony/Wielkopolska Kuc szetlandzki/ Wielkopolska	Wielkopolska/ Shetland pony Wielkopolska/kuc szetlandzki	Polish Konik <input type="checkbox"/> Konik polski <input type="checkbox"/>	Hucul Hucul
Percentage/Udział procentowy	50,00/43,24	33,33/32,43	16,67/10,81	0/5,41	0/2,70	0/2,70
	Factual condition – requisition/Stan faktyczny – zapotrzebowanie					
Age Wiek	6–10 lat/11–15 lat 6–10 years/11–15 years	11–15 lat/6–10 lat 11–15 years/6–10 years	16–20 lat 16–20 years	0–5 lat 0–5 years	–	–
Percentage/Udział procentowy	83,33/67,57	16,67/29,73	0/2,70	0/0	–	–
	Factual condition – requisition/Stan faktyczny – zapotrzebowanie					
Sex Płeć	Geldings Watachy	Mares Klacz	Stallions Ogry	–	–	–
Percentage/Udział procentowy	66,67/94,59	33,33/5,41	0/0	–	–	–
	Factual condition – requisition/Stan faktyczny – zapotrzebowanie					
Colour Maść	Bay Gniada	Chestnut Kasztanowata	Other Inna	Black Kara	Grey Siwa	–
Percentage/Udział procentowy	100/59,46	0/18,92	0/13,51	0/5,41	0/2,7	–
	Factual condition – requisition/Stan faktyczny – zapotrzebowanie					
Height at the withers Wysokość w kłębie	above 160 cm powyżej 160 cm	up to 160 cm do 160 cm	–	–	–	–
Percentage/Udział procentowy	66,67/70,27	33,33/29,73	–	–	–	–
	Factual condition – requisition/Stan faktyczny – zapotrzebowanie					
Health and feed utilization Zdrowie i wykorzystanie paszy	Excellent health and feed utilization Doskonałe zdrowie i wykorzystanie paszy	Good health, but poor feed utilization Dobre zdrowie, ale słabe wykorzystanie paszy	Poor health, but good feed utilization Złe zdrowie, ale dobre wykorzystanie paszy	–	–	–
Percentage/Udział procentowy	66,67/100	33,33/0	0/0	–	–	–

In the case of the same ranking for the owner's and rider's answers, only one variant is presented.

W przypadku zajmowania tego samego miejsca rankingowego odpowiedzi udzielonej przez właścicieli i jeźdźców zamieszczano tylko jeden jej wariant.

tab. 3

Table 3. Ranking of mental traits characterizing the leisure horses  
 Tabela 3. Ranking cech psychicznych charakteryzujących konie rekreacyjne

Ranking place Miejsce rankingowe	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Factual condition/requisition Stan faktyczny/zapotrzebowanie								
Temperament Temperament	Sanguine Sangwinik	Phlegmatic Flegmatyk	Melancholic Melancholik	Spitfire Choleryk	–	–	–	–
Percentage Udział procentowy	66,67/70,27	33,33/16,22	0/13,57	0/0	–	–	–	–
Factual condition/requisition Stan faktyczny/zapotrzebowanie								
Character Charakter	Submissive/ Friendly Uległy/ Przyjazny	Energetic/ Submissive Energeticny/ Uległy	Lazy/ Energetic Leniwy/ Energeticzny	Friendly/ Distancing Przyjazny/ Zdystansowany	Distancing/ Inquisitive Zdystansowany/ Ciekawski	Inquisitive/ Dominating Ciekawski/ Dominujący	Dominating/ Lazy Dominujący/ Leniwy	Bojaźliwy Timid
Percentage Udział procentowy	33,33/ 40,54	16,16/ 21,62	16,16/ 18,92	16,16/ 10,81	16,16/ 8,11	0/ 0	0/ 0	0/ 0

In the case of the same ranking for the owner's and rider's answers, only one variant is presented.

W przypadku zajmowania tego samego miejsca rankingowego odpowiedzi udzielonej przez właścicieli i jeźdźców zamieszczano tylko jeden jej wariant.

youngest horses was little or it did not occur at all. Geldings were the most commonly used in surveyed centers, and their presence was marked by almost 70% of respondents. Mares were placed at the second rank. None of the respondents indicated the use of stallions for recreation. Similar responses were achieved after analyzing the questionnaires showing the demands for the horse riding services. The horse ride center's owners indicated that they possess only bay animals. Within the results presenting the needs for a particular type of horse color, bay animals took the first rank. Representatives of chestnut and other colors, were placed on subsequent ranks. Only individual responses referred to the will of riding the black and gray horses. Considering both questionnaire types, similar answers to the question about height at the withers of leisure horses, were achieved. Indication of horses taller than 160 cm was recorded over two times more often than it did in the case of the second variant of response, which is the smaller animals. It was found that the majority of leisure horses from surveyed centers are characterized by excellent health and feed utilization. The second rank was occupied by the answer: *good health, but poor feed utilization*. In the case of potential riders, only one answer variant was selected, which emphasized the excellent health and use of horse feed as an asset of leisure horses.

Table 4. Ranking of utility traits characterizing the leisure horses  
Tabela 4. Ranking cech użytkowych charakteryzujących konie rekreacyjne

Ranking place Miejsce rankingowe	1	2	3	-
Factual condition/requisition Stan faktyczny/zapotrzebowanie				
Riding quality Jezdność	Intermediate/ Very good Średnia/ Bardzo dobra	Very good/ Intermediate Bardzo dobra/ Średnia	Small Mała	-
Percentage Udział procentowy	100/86,49	0/13,51	0/0	-
Factual condition/requisition Stan faktyczny/zapotrzebowanie				
Usefulness for jumping Przydatność skokowa	Parkour up to 100 cm height Parkur do 100 cm	Obstacle up to 100 cm height Przeszkody do 100 cm	Parkour up to 50 cm height Parkur do 50 cm	Obstacle up to 50 cm height Przeszkody do 50cm
Percentage Udział procentowy	50,00/43,24	16,66/35,13	16,66/10,81	16,66/10,81
factual condition/requisition Stan faktyczny/zapotrzebowanie				
Usefulness for derassage Przydatność ujeżdżeniowa	Not only basic gaits Nie tylko chody podstawowe	Only basic gaits Tylko chody podstawowe	-	-
Percentage Udział procentowy	66,67/62,16	33,33/37,84	-	-
Factual condition/requisition Stan faktyczny/zapotrzebowanie				
Usefulness for tourist rally Przydatność do rajdów turystycznych	Small/High Mała/Duża	Intermediate Średnia	High/Small Duża/Mała	Lack Brak
Percentage Udział procentowy	50,00/56,76	33,33/37,84	16,67/5,40	0/0

It was found that horses used in the surveyed centers are usually characterized by a sanguine and phlegmatic temperament (Tab. 3). The other two answer variants were not selected. Potential users often chose the sanguine-type horses as animals with the desired temperament. Another ranks were occupied by phlegmatic and melancholic horses. Respondents pointed to the submissive nature of majority of horses kept by owners for recreation. Another parallel ranks were taken by “energetic”, “lazy”, “friendly”, and “distanced” animals. There was no single case of a horse, the nature of which was described as “curious”, “dominant”, or “timid”. The greatest demand referred to “friendly”, “docile”, and “energetic” horses. Subsequent ranks were occupied by distanced and curious animals. Not a single respondent indicated the “dominant”, “lazy”, and “fearful” horse.

Table 5. List and scores for the most desirable traits of leisure horses  
Tabela 5. Wykaz oraz punktacja najbardziej pożądaných cech koni rekreacyjnych

Scores Punkty	3	2	1
Breed Rasa	Malopolska Małopolska	Polish Warmblood polski koń szlachetny półkrwi	Wielkopolska Wielkopolska
Age Wiek	11–15 years 11–15 lat	6–10 years 6–10 lat	16–20 years 16–20 lat
Sex Płeć	geldings wałachy	mares klacze	–
Colour Maść	bay gniada	chestnut kasztanowata	other inna
Height at the withers Wysokość w kłębie	above 160 cm powyżej 160 cm	up to 160 cm do 160 cm	–
Health and feed utilization Zdrowie i wykorzystanie paszy	excellent health and feed utilization doskonale zdrowie i wykorzystanie paszy	–	–
Temperament Temperament	sanguine sangwinik	phlegmatic flegmatyk	melancholic melancholik
Character Charakter	friendly przyjazny	submissive uległy	energetic energiczny
Riding quality Jezdność	very good bardzo dobra	intermediate średnia	–
Usefulness for jumping Przydatność skokowa	parkour up to 100 cm height parkur do 100 cm	obstacle up to 100 cm height przeszkody do 100 cm	parkour up to 50 cm height parkur do 50 cm
Usefulness for derssage Przydatność ujeżdzeniowa	not only basic gaits nie tylko chody podstawowe	only basic gaits tylko chody podstawowe	–
Usefulness for tourist rally Przydatność do rajdów turystycznych	hight duża	intermediate średnia	small mała



The owners indicated that all horses they use, are characterized by riding quality assessed for a medium level (Table 4). Analysis of the other questionnaire revealed that animals distinguished by good responsiveness ranked at the first place. Over 15% of respondents considered the horses with riding quality evaluated as average. When analyzing feature named “usefulness for jumping” of leisure horses, it was reported that horses, the skills of which allow them to overcome parkour up to 100 cm height, are kept most often in centers. Other variants of answers were chosen only by few respondents. Less than 50% of potential users considered as reasonable to keep horses with skills that were most often indicated by the owners. Another rank was occupied by the response indicating the fact that ability to jump over single obstacle up to 100 cm height, is a satisfactory feature of leisure horses. Polled owners of the riding centers responded that the usefulness for dressage of nearly 70% for animals working in the recreation, characterizes their ability to move not only in the basic gaits. Similar results were achieved when analyzing the answers to the questions in the *Questionnaire for the riders*. Considering another issue, the first rank was taken by a variant indicating poor usefulness of horses for tourist rally in surveyed centers. Over 30% of the owners answered, however, that the feature in question is at an intermediate level in the case of their horses. There was no response indicating that horses are not suitable for tourist rally at all. Potential riders most commonly marked the response pointing out the fact that horses should be characterized by high or moderate usefulness for tourist rally. Not a single person indicated that the utility usefulness does not apply to leisure horses.

Based on achieved results, the following formula for the leisure horse assessment (OKR) was proposed:

$$\text{OKR} = w_1(P_1) + W_2(P_2) + w_3(P_3) + \dots + w_{12}(P_{12})$$

where:

$w_1 - w_{12}$  – significance weight of particular traits (mean values: Tab. 1),

$P_1 - P_{12}$  – scores (grade 1–3) achieved by assessed horse for each traits on a base of the first three ranks (Tab. 5).

The higher OKR value, the higher value of the horse as an animal for leisure.

## DISCUSSION

The method for choosing the right horse for leisure allows not only for the safety during the riding lessons, but also to offer services that would make possible to get more and more customers among a wide range of products related to this type of activity [Moniowska *et al.* 2010].

Results of present study indicate that in the case of certain traits of leisure horses, there is a mismatch of the facts and needs of possible riders. The greatest discrepancy relates to the so-called general characteristics of used horses. According to Janilik [2011], most centers keep horses, the utility value of which is incompatible with the actual specifications in many aspects. This situation is primarily affected by economic reasons that are a priority for people involved in the field of leisure riding service. The potential demand for tourism and horse riding recreation was highlighted by Janczarek and Zniszczyńska [2009], who also indicated the main drawbacks associated with this

type of activity. The current state seems to be still far from the expectations of leisure riders and tourists.

Lack of the procedure for a reliable assessment of leisure horses urges to search for this type of methods. It appears that developing the methods for assessment of horses is the primary activity of many researchers [Janczarek 2011, Santamaria *et al.* 2006, Koenen *et al.* 2004]. It should be noted, however, that these assumptions are mainly focused around the competition [Potgieter 1991], rather than leisure, and touristic horses. Most of up-to-date methods use so-called significance weight [ww.pzhk.pl 2013]. Their use has a positive impact on the perception of horses that are characterized by traits considered by users as the most valuable [Janczarek 2011]. The results indicate that health, feed utilization, temperament, character, and riding quality can be considered the most desirable traits of leisure horses. It is surprising that potential riders selected the first of above traits, because it usually has no direct impact on the comfort during intercourse and use of horses by amateurs. Most likely, the observed situation is related to the fact that the *Questionnaire for the riders* was filled by adults who have some knowledge upon horse breeding and horse riding, or increasing people's consciousness in the field of animal welfare [Jeziński and Górecka 2007]. Another of these traits relate to the mental properties that are considered as the most important in the assessment of leisure horses and pointed out as the only selection criterion in many methodology manuals on horse riding [Elsner *et al.* 2008, Zagor 2008]. The importance of riding quality as one of the key traits during learning the horse riding should be also emphasized. By definition, the term describes a willingness to cooperate with the rider, submission to his will, susceptibility to aids, softness of "carrying" the rider, and rider's mood during the ride [www.pzhk.pl 2013]. It seems that it is nothing more than a list of traits enabling students to feel at least a minimum of comfort during the first riding lessons. It is also worth mentioning that the feature indicating the color of horses reached the lowest importance significance weight. It is mainly of an aesthetic significance, which was considered as prominent in ancient times already [Jurek 2011]. That author also refers to Aristotle, who thought the colors for their own and at the same time essential philosophy of the subjective perception of the surrounding world. The type of horse's color is usually of little impact on its utility value [Stachurska and Ussing 2007]. Probably, some other results in this regard would be achieved if the poll was directed to children and young people, whose rationality does not exceed the individual experiences [Harwas-Napierała and Trempała 2009].

Based on achieved results, it should be useful to describe the leisure horse that can be defined by majority of potential users simply as a horse standard. Respondents chose Malopolska breed geldings with a height at the withers above 160 cm, at the age of eleven to fifteen years old, bay or chestnut, sanguine characterized as "friendly", "submissive", and "energetic", with excellent health, and good feed utilization. It was also important that his riding quality developed at least at moderate level. The horse should be broken well enough to move easily, not only in the basic gaits. Its suitability for jumping should allow for overcoming single obstacles or the whole parkour of 100 cm height. The possibility of using it for tourist rally or short walks is also indicated. Górecka [2008] also described most of these traits. However, it is noteworthy that this publication includes only a general description of desirable properties of leisure horse that seems to be insufficient during selection of animals characterized by various combinations of these characteristics. Therefore, here proposed formula may be useful, because it may help future owners of leisure horses in the proper selection of particular animals.

## CONCLUSIONS

Results achieved in the present survey allowed for drawing the following conclusions:

1. There is a significant mismatch of the facts with the needs of potential riders referring to some traits that describe the leisure horses. The deficiencies relate primarily to horse breed, age, and level of riding quality.

2. Health, feed utilization, mental traits, as well as riding quality and usefulness for dressage are characterized by the highest importance factors describing the utility value of leisure horses.

3. Based on achieved results, it is possible to describe a horse having the traits close to the most desirable ones to use in riding centers. Quite large, medium aged Malopolska geldings being in good condition, preferably bay or chestnut, are preferred in this case. Good riding quality as well as usefulness for dressage and jumping that allow to learn the riding skills at the moderate level, are utility qualities.

4. The formula proposed in present paper and aiming at assessing the leisure horses may become helpful at selecting appropriate animals for this type of performance.

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**Streszczenie.** Rekreacja i turystyka konna cieszy się w ostatnich latach coraz większą popularnością. Niesie to za sobą wzrastające zapotrzebowanie ośrodków na konie, które byłyby najlepsze do tego typu użytkowania. Nie stworzono jednak dotychczas żadnego sposobu oceny umożliwiającej pomoc w wyborze odpowiednich zwierząt. W odniesieniu do opisanego problemu praca miała na celu porównanie faktycznego stanu koni w ośrodkach z zapotrzebowaniem potencjalnych jeźdźców na osobniki rekreacyjne oraz ustalenie wag znaczeniowych wybranych cech, które posłużyły ocenie tychże osobników. Następnym zagadnieniem było stworzenie opisu „idealnego” konia rekreacyjnego i zaprojektowanie formuły wzoru służącego ocenie tego typu osobników. Została stworzona ankieta, w której zawarte były pytania na temat najistotniejszych cech charakteryzujących konie rekreacyjne. Odpowiedzi udzieliło 6 właścicieli ośrodków i 37 jeźdźców rekreacyjnych. Analizy statystycznej dokonano w programie PQStat, natomiast istotność różnic między średnimi określono za pomocą testu t-Tukeya. Na podstawie uzyskanych wyników odnotowano, iż idealny koń rekreacyjny powinien być wałachem rasy małopolskiej, o wysokości w kłębie powyżej 160 cm, w wieku od 11 do 15 lat, maści gniadej lub kasztanowatej, w typie sangwinika, o cechach charakteru opisanych jako przyjazny, uległy i energiczny, o doskonałym zdrowiu i dobrym wykorzystaniu paszy. Ważne jest również, aby jego jezdność kształtowała się przynajmniej na poziomie średnim. Powinien być na tyle dobrze ujeżdżony, aby poruszać się bez problemu nie tylko w chodach podstawowych. Wartościowa jest także jego przydatność skokowa pozwalająca na pokonywanie parkuru o wysokości przeszkód do 100 cm oraz możliwość wykorzystania go do rajdów turystycznych lub przejażdżek w teren. Stwierdzono także, iż zaproponowany w niniejszej pracy wzór może być pomocny w wyborze koni przeznaczonych do tego rodzaju użytkowania.

**Słowa kluczowe:** konie, rekreacja, cechy osobnicze, metody oceny