

Tadeusz Vetulani

(1897-1952)

Born March 13, 1897 in Sanok he started philosophical studies in Vienna obtaining an engineering degree from the Jagiellonian University in 1922.¹

Prof. Dr. T. Vetulani started his research activities with his first publication in 1925 and continued until the very last moments of his life. In his large scientific production which includes 104 publications one may distinguish two main streams: biological and economic. As a naturalist-biologist he put a lot of effort in the problem of the origins of horses, and in particular the Polish "Konik". His fundamental contribution in this domain is the paper *Badania nad konikiem polskim z okolic Bilgoraja (Research on Polish little horse from Bilgoraj)*, published in 1925. Vetulani claims that the small local Polish horses constitute a primitive form of a horse, belonging to the type of tarpan from the steppes (*Equus cab. gmellini* Ant.). Several further research works resulted in the isolation of a separate zoological form, called forest tarpan (*Equus cab. gmellini* Ant. forma *silvatica* Vet.). This wild predecessor of domestic horses was accepted by many zoologists and equidologists.

As a result of these works and written historical sources he came upon the idea of restoring the forest tarpan. The starting material consisted in typical primitive Polish horses, and Białowieża Forest, as the last historical seat of the tarpan of forests, was chosen as an appropriate environment favorable for regeneration. The reserve created in 1936 in Białowieża, despite the changing situation², permitted Vetulani to make a number of interesting biological observations. Among the most interesting was the appearance of atavistic features as the seasonal bleaching of some horses and the short standing mane. Other interesting observations such as the restoration of the herding instinct, the changing relationship between horse and man and the adaptation to rude living conditions and a difficult environment. In 1938 he was invited to be a co-editor of the research journal "Zeitschrift für Tierzüchtung und Züchtungsbiologie". He did several research journeys, among others to Turkey and Rumania. In 1939 he represented Poland at an international zootechnical congress in Zurich.

Tadeusz Vetulani's works were often at the origin of vital polemics proving their interest and originality. Theoretical considerations, especially concerning the origins of horses gave Vetulani a place in the world of animal breeding literature. Citations from Vetulani may be found in many new foreign publications.

Tadeusz Vetulani died in Cracow, in February 24, 1952, during a research trip.

Jerzy Zwoliński

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¹ In the original wrongly 1925.

² During the II World War almost all horses were stolen by the Nazi researchers and never returned to Poland.