



LITHUANIAN UNIVERSITY
OF HEALTH SCIENCES



LITHUANIAN HERITAGE - ŽEMAITUKAI: BRIDGING TRADITION AND MODERN USE

ERFP ad-hoc action: Northern European Native Horse Network meeting
Native horse in the North and Baltic region
October 17, 2024. Baisogala, Lithuania

Alma Račkauskaitė

NATIVE HORSE BREEDS OF LITHUANIA



ŽEMAITUKAI

6-7th centuries
SMALL HORSES
(poni) type
Universal



LARGE TYPE ŽEMAITUKAI

19th century
MEDIUM SIZE
Carting, work,
riding, transport



LITHUANIAN HEAVY DRAUGHT HORSES

19th century
DRAUGHT
Carting, draught
power, meat, riding
(work)

ŽEMAITUKAI HORSES

FOUR CRITICAL STAGES OF NEAR EXTINCTION

1. 19th Century:

Crossbreeding with other breeds led to a decline in pure Žemaitukai numbers.

2. World War I:

60-70% of horses were lost; many Žemaitukai taken abroad.

3. World War II:

Occupying forces took most of the remaining horses, pushing the breed to the brink.

4. 1990s Transition:

Economic changes led to the dispersal of breeding stock, reducing numbers to critical levels.

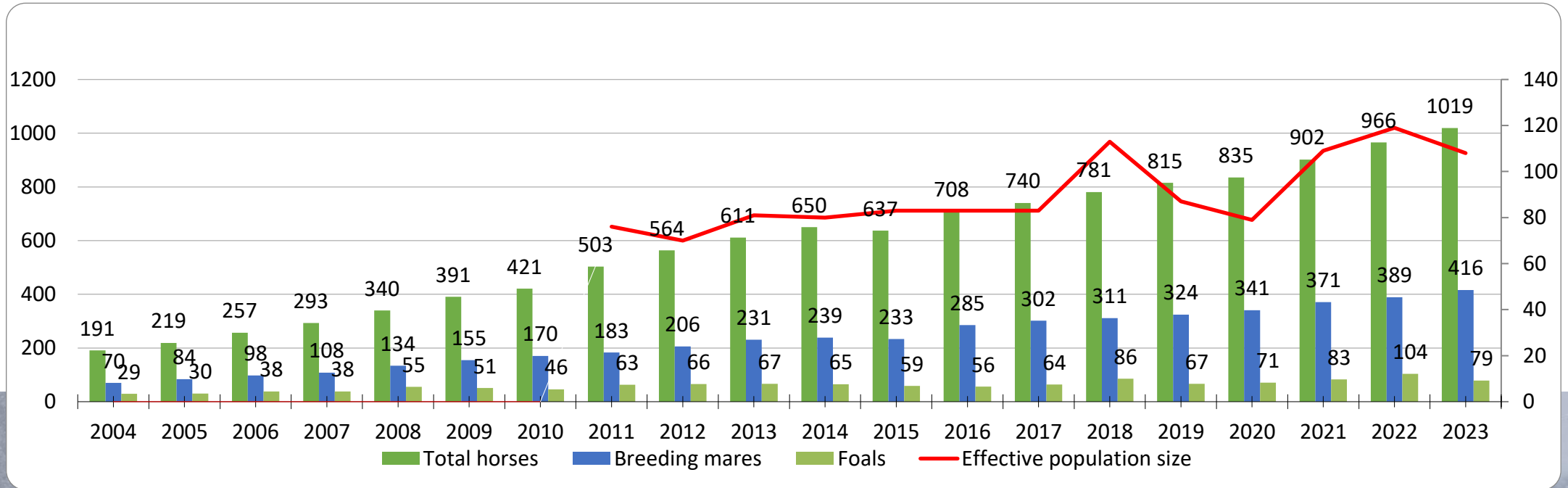


ERELIS (born 1933)





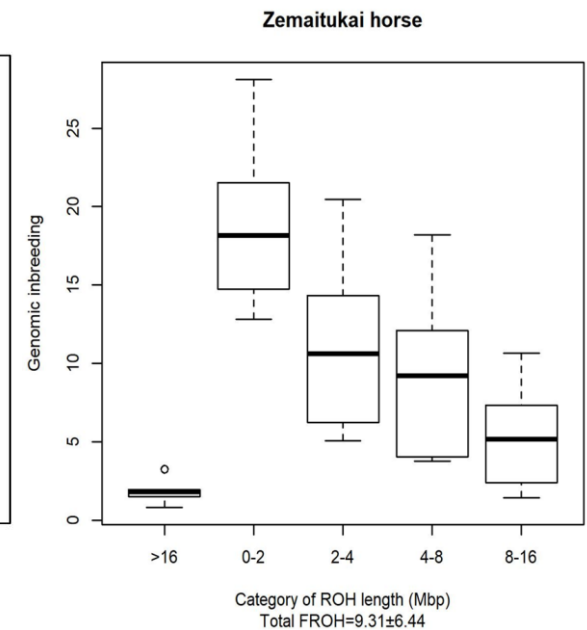
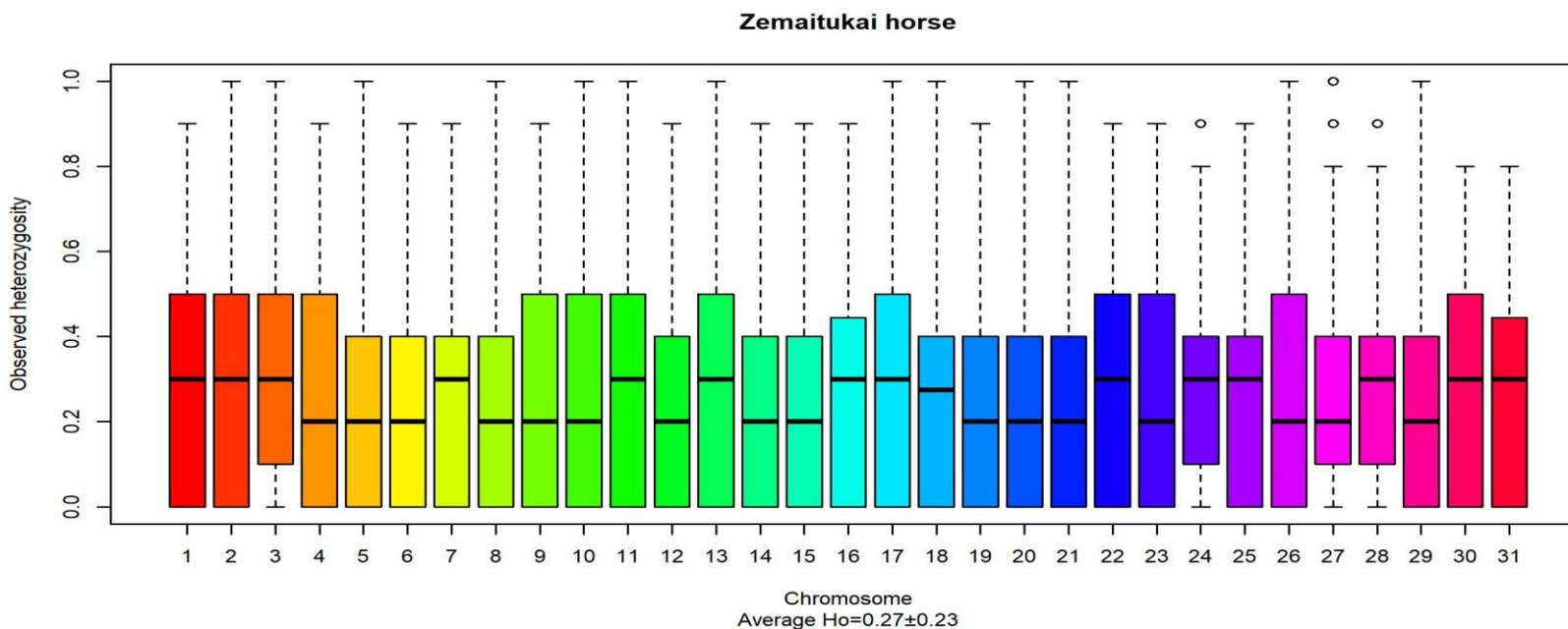
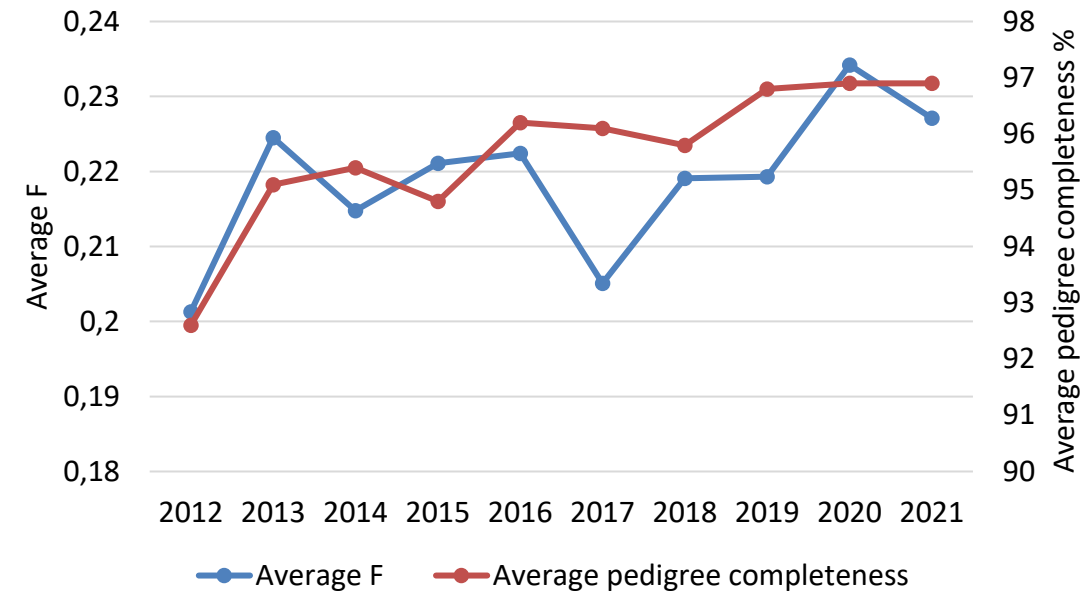
POPULATION





PRESERVATION

- Genetic preservation
- Population growth
- Awareness and education
- Collaboration





ŽEMAITUKAI HORSE BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

- **Established:**

1997, with the goal of coordinating efforts to preserve the Žemaitukai breed and bringing together breeders and enthusiasts.

- **Main Activities:**

- ✓ Genetic Diversity Preservation
- ✓ Education and Awareness
- ✓ Promotion

- **Achievements:**

Breed Revival





USE - JUMPING



USE - ENDURANCE



80 KM



100 KM



82 KM



USE – CARRIAGE DRIVING





USE – MANY OTHER



SAME ŽEMAITUKAS HORSE IN 2024





CONCLUSIONS

- The Žemaitukai are an integral part of Lithuania's cultural heritage.
- Modern uses of Žemaitukai, such as sports, tourism and therapy, provide new opportunities for the breed in today's world.
- Collaboration among researchers, breeders, and institutions is essential to ensure the genetic stability, population growth, and adaptation of the Žemaitukai to modern market needs, securing their place in both history and the future.



THANK YOU
FOR YOUR
ATTENTION