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AGA 263 01

Andalusians

Russell

02/06/2018

Andalusians

Andalusian horses originated on the Iberian Peninsula and descended from Barb and Iberian horses brought to Spain by invading Moors. The Andalusian’s name originates from the Province of Andalucía in Spain. Cave paintings that date back to 20,000 years ago depict a similar horse to the Andalusian. There are even mentions of Andalusians in Homer’s *Iliad*. The Andalusian later influenced Lippizano, Lusitano, Paso Fino, Peruvian, and a handful of other breeds.

When Napoleon invaded Spain in the 1800s, the horse almost had a sudden end. The French invader stole many of the horses, but luckily for the breed, Carthusian monks had been breeding them since at least the 1400s, which is when studs were founded in monasteries in Terez, Seville, and Cazallo. Luckily, because of the Carthusian monks, one herd was hidden and used to renew the breed. The stolen horses were bred to different breeds of horses, causing all descendants of those horses to no longer be purebred. The hidden herd was used exclusively to restore the bloodlines and population of Andalusians. Because of this depletion, no Andalusians were exported from Spain until 1942. The first Andalusian did not appear in the United States until 1964.

Because of Napoleon, the population of the breed dropped extensively. Today, there are only approximately 20,000 Andalusians worldwide, most of which still reside in Spain or Portugal. Only 3,000 Andalusians are in the United States, half of which are in California and Texas alone. The rest of the 48 states have less than 100 horses of the breed each. The horse, however, is progressively growing in population because of its athletic ability.

Andalusians have extremely recognizable features, which they mainly inherited from Iberian horses. Andalusians are usually grey in color with a grey mane and tail. They can, however, be bay, black, dun, or palomino. The breed ranges from 15 hands to 16.2 hands high at the withers. They generally have a long neck with a broad forehead and convex profiles, a long-arched neck, abundant mane, a short body with powerful hindquarters and strong fine limbs, high knee action, and short striding.

Andalusians have the ability to bring its haunches underneath its body to elevate the forehand, which makes it extremely talented in the upper movements of dressage, such as the piaffe, passage, and airs-above-the-ground. It has distinct upright steps in the trot and the canter. They are a fairly intelligent, docile, and calm horse, which was beneficial in its original use, which will be stated later in this report.

The Andalusian heavily varies in cost. An unregistered Andalusian can be sold for $2,000 to $4,000 while a registered horse can be sold for $28,000 to $35,000 on the high end. The average price found was around $10,000, but again, it depends on if the horse is registered with the association and if it has won shows or competitions.

Andalusians were once used as war horses in cavalries, which is why it was bred to be docile and calm. They were the preferred mount for Spanish kings and queens in the middle ages and were first used for dressage by Spanish and Portuguese kings who recognized the horse’s potential in the classical riding style. Today, the horse is used as a general riding horse and for competitions. Andalusians are used in Spain today for bullfighting and other traditional Spanish pursuits. The horse is also used mainly for classical riding, dressage, and show jumping. Some western riding competitors use Andalusians for reigning, cutting, and western pleasure competitions. Many ranch owners today also use the horse for traditional ranch work.

The breed association, located in Birmingham, Alabama, has an extensive history, beginning in 1964 when the first Andalusian arrived in the United States. Around the same time, the American Andalusian Horse Association (AAHA) was formed and they began a studbook for the Andalusian. In 1977, a separate group of horse breeders met and developed a new organization and a new studbook: the International Andalusian Horse Association (IAHA). During the 1990s, efforts began to merge the two organizations and separate studbooks. In this time, the AAHA changed its name to the American Andalusian and Lusitano Association (AALA). In 1995, both the AALA and IAHA merged and formed the International Andalusian and Lusitano Horse Association (IALHA).

The early years were spent defining registry rules to ensure the horses accepted for registration could be traced in lines to the studbooks of Spain and Portugal. In 1993, a studbook was added for half-Andalusians with the only requirement of one parent being a purebred Andalusian. By 2000, full DNA parent verification was required. The mission of IALHA is to “Preserve, Protect, and Promote the Andalusian, Half-Andalusian, and Lusitano Horse.”

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