

= Auxois =

The Auxois is a horse breed from eastern France . It is a large breed , with some individuals weighing over 910 kilograms (2 @, @ 010 lb) , bred for horse meat , agricultural work and leisure pursuits . Overall , members of the breed are solid and muscular in appearance . They are usually bay or bay roan in color , although some other colors are accepted by the breed registry , and are known for their power and docility .

The Auxois is a direct descendant of the Bourguignon of the Middle Ages . In the 19th century , blood was added from other French draft breeds before the creation of a stud book in 1912 . After the creation of the stud book , only purebred Auxois or Ardennais and Trait du Nord crosses could be registered . World War I interrupted efforts to set the breed standard , but testing resumed in 1920 , and between then and World War II the Auxois was the pride of regional farmers . The breed reached its peak in the 1930s , but by the 1960s began to decline with the advent of mechanization .

By the 1970s , the Auxois had almost become extinct , and the French government began pushing the breeding of all native draft horses for meat production , as opposed to agricultural usage . However , the meat of the Auxois was not considered high quality , and this , combined with a lower @-@ than @-@ expected market for meat , led to a continued decline in French draft horse populations . In the 1990s , the French government reversed its position on breeding for meat , and began promoting draft breeds for leisure pursuits . The Auxois continues to be rare , having the eighth @-@ smallest population numbers of the nine native French draft breeds . An annual breed show is held in Semur @-@ en @-@ Auxois , and the Auxois is frequently seen at the Paris International Agricultural Show .

= = Breed characteristics = =

The Auxois is a horse of great size , larger than the Ardennais and almost as large as the Trait du Nord . It is massively muscular in build , built for heavy pulling . The average height is 15 @. @ 3 to 16 @. @ 3 hands (63 to 67 inches , 160 to 170 cm) , with an ideal height of 16 @. @ 1 hands (65 inches , 165 cm) to 16 @. @ 3 3 ? 4 hands (67 @. @ 75 inches , 172 cm) for stallions and 16 to 16 @. @ 3 hands (64 to 67 inches , 163 to 170 cm) for mares . They weigh from 700 kilograms (1 @, @ 500 lb) to more than 910 kilograms (2 @, @ 010 lb) , depending on whether an individual horse is bred for meat , agricultural work or leisure pursuits .

The head is relatively short , with a wide forehead . The neck is also relatively short and muscular , the shoulders long and sloping and the chest wide and deep . The body is solid , with a broad , short back and loins . The hindquarters are well @-@ muscled . The legs are robust , although they can appear small in relation to the mass of the body . They usually have less feathering on the legs than other French draft horse breeds . Horses registered with the studbook may be branded on the left side of the neck with the letters " TX " . This brand is generally applied during breed competitions , and only after the age of two .

Auxois horses are usually bay or bay roan in color , although they can also be chestnut or red roan , similar to the Ardennais. gray and seal brown (the latter called black pangaré by the breed registry , although these horses are genetically brown , not black with pangaré markings) are also accepted for registration ; all other colors are excluded . The Auxois is known for its power and docility , having a calm and gentle temperament . Like the Ardennais , it is an easy keeper , able to survive outdoors in all seasons , even in the harsh climatic conditions sometimes seen in Morvan and Nievre .

The majority of Auxois are still bred for meat production , and in 2001 , 50 % of the horses bred were intended for slaughter . However , the power and gaits of the breed make them valued for competitive and leisure driving , as well as equestrian tourism . The smaller horses of the breed are used for milk production . The Auxois is used for celebrations , such as weddings , and historical reenactments . It is also used for logging , and in recent years , has been increasingly used in agriculture , being found in vineyards , gardens and farms . The use of them for the maintenance of

rural roads is also in planning .

= = History = =

The history of the Auxois is closely tied to its homeland , for which it is named . The rich pastures of the Auxois area , including the French Gold Coast , parts of Yonne , the Saône @-@ et @-@ Loire and northern Nièvre , are conducive to the breeding of large draft horses . The recognition of the Auxois dates back to the early 20th century , making it relatively new compared to other French draft breeds .

The Auxois is a direct descendant of the Bourguignon of the Middle Ages , a small , robust , tough horse used for riding and driving . A now @-@ discredited theory once held that the Auxois was a descendant of the even older Solutre horse , the bones of which were found in the area where the breed was developed . Originally the Morvan horse also existed in the same area , but was absorbed into the Auxois after extensive crossbreeding . During the 1840s , Percheron blood was introduced to the breed , followed by Boulonnais blood in the 1860s and Ardennais and possibly Nivernais blood in the late 19th century . Care was not taken to fix a specific breed type , though , and so the physical characteristics were variable .

Breeders introduced foreign stallions before creating a stud book for the breed . The breed took its name from the " rich valley of Auxois " , where the crossbreeding and selection for the new breed took place . The local mares created from 19th century breeding were crossed with Ardennais and Trait du Nord stallions , sought after for their large size and power , which made them valuable for agricultural work . The birthplace of the breed is around the Cluny Stud , and it was originally considered to be a sub @-@ type of the Ardennais breed .

The first attempts to create a breed registry in 1903 and 1904 failed . In 1912 , another attempt was made , this time successful , and a stud book was created in Dijon in 1913 . With the creation of the stud book , only purebred Auxois or Ardennais and Trait du Nord crosses could be registered . However , by 1917 , the physical characteristics of the breed were still not fixed , and leaders of the equine community were critical , and doubtful of whether the Auxois was a breed in its own right or still merely a subtype of the Ardennais . They were also unsure whether it was a good idea to accept the recognition of another regional breed , of which France had many .

= = = World War I and World War II = = =

World War I interrupted the efforts to secure a breed standard , with stud book selection not resuming until 1920 . Within a few years , the ideal height was set around 15 @.@ 3 hands (63 inches , 160 cm) , and its breeding spread throughout Auxois and neighboring regions .

Between World War I and World War II , the Auxois was the pride of regional farmers . Before the advent of motorization , it was the preferred pulling animal , even for slow work , winning out over the local Charolais cattle breed used as oxen . The Auxois was bred solely for agricultural work , and used exclusively for this purpose . The strongest horses were used for multi @-@ horse hitches in the fields and for logging . The Auxois competed in popularity with the Nivernais horse , and it was not uncommon for farmers in the region to have both the black @-@ coated Nivernais and the red @-@ coated Ardennais and Auxois to satisfy the color preferences of all potential buyers .

In the early 1930s the Auxois reached the peak of its physical development . It was described , like the Ardennais and the Trait du Nord , as a born plowhorse , with a neck naturally held so low that the nose almost touched the ground . It was developed entirely for traction , and its conformation allowed it to move huge weights over short distances . At the same time , it became more popular than the Nivernais , and was considered a southern representation of the Ardennais breed . Merchants visiting Burgandy horse fairs appreciated the breed , and deemed its bay coloration better able to hide dirt than that of the light gray Percheron or black Nivernais . The peak populations and usage of the Auxois and other French draft horses was short due to the advent of mechanization in the 1960s .

== Post @-@ war to 1990s ==

During World War II , fuel stocks were used by the armies , and were unavailable to farmers . This allowed horses to remain a key aspect of agriculture and transportation until the end of the war . After the war , farmers rapidly mechanized their operations . The Auxois and other draft breeds were quickly abandoned in favor of machines , and population numbers began to fall in the early 1950s and collapsed completely in the 1960s . By the 1970s , the Auxois had almost disappeared , although many villages in the breed 's homeland retained a small number of mares for traditional competitions .

In the early 1970s , Henry Blanc was appointed as the new director of the French National Stud , and began the conversion of French draft breeds into animals bred for slaughter into horse meat . The stud encouraged farmers who could no longer find buyers for their animals to fatten them for resale to the slaughter markets . Breeding for the production of meat helped to safeguard the Auxois breed by keeping its gene pool intact , but also transformed the previously powerful breed into one bred solely for weight ? the main consideration in pricing at slaughter . In 1976 , an official French decree changed the name of the category in which the Auxois fit from " draft horses " to " heavy horses " and encouraged farmers to select the heaviest breeding stallions possible , to increase the average weight of the breed . The National Stud approved this change , and between the 1950s and the 1980s , the average weight of the Auxois increased from 650 to 800 kilograms (1 @, @ 430 to 1 @, @ 760 lb) to 800 to 1 @, @ 000 kilograms (1 @, @ 800 to 2 @, @ 200 lb) or more .

The conversion to meat was unfavorable for the Auxois , however . The Percheron was preferred for the quality of the meat and the Ardennais and closely related Auxois were considered to have some of the lowest quality meat . In addition , the promised market for horse meat did not materialize , and French slaughterhouses were overwhelmed by imports of cheap horses from the Americas and Eastern Europe . Because of this lack of profitability , the population of most French breeds , including the Auxois , continued to decline until 1994 . The collapse in prices then forced the National Stud to redirect its draft horse @-@ related activities .

In the early 1990s , recreational riding enjoyed a revival in France , while the consumption of horse meat dropped . In 1991 , the Agricultural College in Semur @-@ en @-@ Auxois began the production of horse milk using Auxois mares in Bierre @-@ lès @-@ Semur . In 1994 , the French Official Journal published a decree restoring the name of " draft horse " from the almost 20 @-@ year use of " heavy horse " . In 1996 , another decree prohibited the docking of tails of all French horses . French farmers moved towards the production of animals for recreation or agricultural uses , and the National Stud began supporting this aim . In July 1998 , a promotional center for the Auxois opened in Bierre @-@ les @-@ Semur , through regional and departmental grants and using the National Stud to promote the breed . It focuses mainly on the training of young horses for riding and driving , and showcases various performances , as well as providing shoeing services and birthing assistance . In 1999 , a study was undertaken of Auxois breeders , which showed opposition to changes in the breed . The author recommended expanding the breed standard to open new markets and save the Auxois from extinction .

== Present ==

As it has been since the creation of the Auxois stud book , only purebred horses and Ardennes and Trait du Nord crosses are allowed to be registered . This is to ensure selection for the desired breed characteristics , which are now a lighter and more active horse than was seen during the time of breeding for horse meat . Horses bred through artificial insemination and embryo transfer are allowed to be registered ; those potentially bred through cloning are not . The Syndicat du Cheval de Trait Auxois (Auxois Draft Horse Association) is the national registry , managing the stud book , breed standard and promotion of the breed . An annual breed competition is held in September in Semur @-@ en @-@ Auxois . The Burgandy region continues to celebrate the breed , and there is a museum dedicated to it in Bierre @-@ les @-@ Semur . The Auxois is also regularly seen at the International Agriculture Show in Paris .

The population of Auxois is very low , and it is one of the rarest of the nine French draft horse breeds . In 2001 , it had the eighth @-@ smallest population of the nine breeds , making the threats of inbreeding and extinction very real . In 2006 , 250 active breeding mares and 32 stallions were reported , with 125 breeders (the term breeder applying to any person owning at least one active breeding mare) . The Auxois represented 1 percent of total French draft horse registrations in 2007 . Burgundy is by far the main breeding area , with a few horses in the Rhône @-@ Alpes and Auvergne regions . There are no known registered Auxois living outside France and it is almost unknown outside of its home region , even within the rest of France . Of the nine French draft horse breeds , the Auxois is the only one that is not exported . Between 1992 and 2011 , between 80 and 146 foals were born each year , with numbers ranging from 105 to 128 between 2007 and 2011 .