

= Missouri Fox Trotter =

The Missouri Fox Trotter is a horse breed from the state of Missouri in the United States . It was developed in the Ozark Mountains by settlers in the early 19th century , and quickly developed into a gaited breed appreciated for its stock horse abilities , stamina and smooth gaits . It performs an ambling gait known as the " fox trot " , a four @-@ beat broken diagonal gait in which the front foot of the diagonal pair lands before the hind , eliminating the moment of suspension and increasing smoothness . The main breed registry was begun in 1948 and as of 2012 registers almost 100 @,@ 000 horses . A European registry was begun in 1992 , and as of 2009 recognizes around 600 Fox Trotters living in Europe . In 2006 , a smaller registry , focused on the preservation of the original , historic type , was begun in the United States . The Fox Trotter is a mid @-@ sized , muscular breed , used mainly for trail riding and ranch work .

= Breed characteristics =

Missouri Fox Trotters stand 14 to 16 hands (56 to 64 inches , 142 to 163 cm) high , and weigh between 900 and 1 @,@ 200 pounds (410 and 540 kg) . Begun in 2004 , the Missouri Fox Trotting Horse Breed Association also maintains a separate registry for fox trotting ponies standing between 11 and 14 hands (44 and 56 inches , 112 and 142 cm) . Fox Trotters may be any solid color or pinto . White facial and leg markings are common . The facial profile is straight , set upon a neck of medium length than ends in pronounced withers . The breed is muscular , with sloped shoulders , a short back and sturdy legs .

The Missouri Fox Trotter performs an ambling gait known as the " fox trot " , which replaces the trot seen in many other breeds . The fox trot is a four @-@ beat broken diagonal gait in which the front foot of the diagonal pair lands before the hind , eliminating the moment of suspension and giving a smooth , sure @-@ footed ride . The gait is sometimes described as having the horse walk with the front feet and trot with the back . In a fox trot , the horse must keep one front foot on the ground at all times and display a sliding motion with the hind legs . The fox trot and the regular trot are both at a speed between a walk and a canter or gallop ; ambling gaits are four @-@ beat gaits , whereas the trot is a two @-@ beat gait . The extra footfalls provide additional smoothness to a rider because the horse always has at least one foot on the ground . This minimizes movement of the horse 's topline and removes the bounce of a two @-@ beat gait , caused by a moment of suspension followed by the jolt of two feet hitting the ground as the horse shifts from one pair of legs to the other . The value of an intermediate speed is that the horse conserves energy . More than thirty horse breeds are " gaited , " able to perform a four @-@ beat ambling gait ; some can also trot . A Missouri Fox Trotter , with rider , can maintain a speed of 5 to 8 miles per hour (8 @.@ 0 to 12 @.@ 9 km / h) while using the fox trot , and can cover short distances at up to 10 miles per hour (16 km / h) . In comparison , the average medium trot speed is 6 to 8 miles per hour (9 @.@ 7 to 12 @.@ 9 km / h) .

= History =

The Missouri Fox Trotter was developed from equine stock , including gaited horses , brought to Missouri by settlers from Tennessee , Kentucky and Virginia . Breeds that contributed to the Fox Trotter included the Arabian , Morgan , American Saddlebred , Tennessee Walking Horse and Standardbred . By the time of Missouri 's statehood in 1821 , the horses of the state were known for their unique gait , which was useful in the rocky terrain of the Ozark Mountains . The breed became popular with cattlemen for their smooth gaits and ability to work with cattle . In 1948 , the Missouri Fox Trotting Horse Breed Association (MFTHBA) was founded in Ava , Missouri , with an open stud book that registered all horses with the fox trot gait and other specified physical characteristics . The first Fox Trotters were exported to Europe in the 1950s , when the Queen of England imported several palomino @-@ colored horses .

In 1982 , the stud book was closed , allowing only horses from registered parents to be entered .

The Fox Trotter became the official state horse of Missouri in 2002 . Missouri Fox Trotters are seen throughout the United States , as well as in Canada and several European countries , and as of 2012 the MFTHBA had registered over 97 @, @ 000 horses and counts over 8 @, @ 000 current members .

In 1992 , the European Missouri Fox Trotting Horse Association (EMFTHA) was formed as the Fox Trotter association for Europe and an affiliate of the MFTHBA . The first European Championship Show for the breed took place in 1996 , and in 2010 the EMFTHA and the Free University of Berlin began working together to start a European stud book for the breed . As of 2009 there were approximately 600 Missouri Fox Trotters in Europe , with around 350 of these living in Germany .

In 2006 , a new registry , the Foundation Foxtrotter Heritage Association (FFHA) , was formed with a goal of preserving and promoting the original heritage type of Fox Trotter that was seen in the first 20 years of the MFTHBA registry , in large part through reducing the amount of Tennessee Walking Horse blood . The Tennessee Walker did not figure prominently in original Missouri Fox Trotter pedigrees , and so the FFHA , by restricting the amount of Walker blood , is attempting to develop horses that more closely resemble the original Fox Trotter type .

= = Uses = =

Missouri Fox Trotters are used extensively by trail riders , who appreciate their gaits , stamina and weight @-@ carrying abilities . They are also used in handicapped riding programs , and their smooth gait has proven useful for riders with minor physical disabilities . Crosses between Fox Trotter mares and donkey jacks are often made , creating mules with the fox trot gait that are used to carry hunters and trail riders , especially in the western United States . The US Forest Service also employs Fox Trotters for their speed , stamina and gait , and members of the breed were used to make the first horse @-@ back descent of the north rim of the Grand Canyon .