

= American Saddlebred =

The American Saddlebred is a horse breed from the United States . This breed was referred to as the " Horse America Made " . Descended from riding @-@ type horses bred at the time of the American Revolution , the American Saddlebred includes the Narragansett Pacer , Canadian Pacer , Morgan and Thoroughbred among its ancestors . Developed into its modern type in Kentucky , it was once known as the " Kentucky Saddler " , and used extensively as an officer 's mount in the American Civil War . In 1891 , a breed registry was formed in the United States . Throughout the 20th century , the breed 's popularity continued to grow in the United States , and exports began to South Africa and Great Britain . Since the formation of the US registry , almost 250 @,@ 000 American Saddlebreds have been registered , and can now be found in countries around the world , with separate breed registries established in Great Britain , Australia , continental Europe , and southern Africa .

Averaging 15 to 16 hands (60 to 64 inches , 152 to 163 cm) in height , Saddlebreds are known for their sense of presence and style , as well as for their spirited , yet gentle , temperament . They may be of any color , including pinto patterns , which have been acknowledged in the breed since the late 1800s . They are considered a gaited breed , as some Saddlebreds are bred and trained to perform four @-@ beat ambling gaits , one being a " slow gait " that historically was one of three possible ambling patterns , and the much faster rack . The breed does have a hereditary predisposition to lordosis , a curvature of the spine , as well as occupational predispositions to upper respiratory and lameness issues .

Since the mid @-@ 1800s , the breed has played a prominent part in the US horse show industry , and is called the " peacock of the horse world " . They have attracted the attention of numerous celebrities , who have become breeders and exhibitors , and purebred and partbred American Saddlebreds have appeared in several films , especially during the Golden Age of Hollywood . Saddlebreds are mainly known for their performance in the show ring , but can also be seen in competition in several other English riding disciplines and combined driving , as well as being used as a pleasure riding horse . American Saddlebreds often compete in five primary divisions : Five @-@ Gaited , Three @-@ Gaited , Fine Harness , Park and Pleasure . In these divisions they are judged on performance , manners , presence , quality and conformation

= = Characteristics = =

American Saddlebreds stand 15 to 17 hands (60 to 68 inches , 152 to 173 cm) high , averaging 15 to 16 hands (60 to 64 inches , 152 to 163 cm) , and weigh between 1 @,@ 000 and 1 @,@ 200 pounds (450 and 540 kg) . Members of the breed have well @-@ shaped heads with a straight profile , long , slim , arched necks , well @-@ defined withers , sloping shoulders , correct leg conformation , and strong level backs with well @-@ sprung ribs . The croup is level with a high @-@ carried tail . Enthusiasts consider them to be spirited , yet gentle , animals . Any color is acceptable , but most common are chestnut , bay , brown and black . Some are gray , roan , palomino and pinto . The first @-@ known pinto Saddlebred was a stallion foaled in 1882 . In 1884 and 1891 , two additional pintos , both mares , were foaled . These three horses were recorded as " spotted " , but many other pinto Saddlebreds with minimal markings were recorded only by their base color , without making note of their markings . This practice continued into the 1930s , at which time breeders came to be more accepting of " colored " horses and began recording markings and registering horses as pinto . The Saddlebred has been called the " world 's most beautiful horse " by admirers , and is known as the " peacock of the horse world " . The United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) describes the Saddlebred as follows : " He carries himself with an attitude that is elusive of description ? some call it " class " , presence , quality , style , or charm . This superior air distinguishes his every movement . "

Saddlebreds are popularly known as show horses , with horses being shown saddle seat in both three @-@ gaited and five @-@ gaited classes . The former are the three common gaits seen in most breeds , the walk , trot and canter . The latter includes the three regular gaits , plus two four

@-@ beat ambling gaits known as the slow gait and the rack . The slow gait today is a four @-@ beat gait in which the lateral pairs of legs leave the ground together , but strike the ground at different times , the hind foot connecting slightly before the forefoot . In the show ring , the gait should be performed with restraint and precision . The rack is also a four @-@ beat gait , but with equal intervals between each footfall , making it a smooth gait to ride . In the show ring , the gait is performed with speed and action , appearing unrestrained . Historically , the slow gait could be either a running walk , the stepping pace , or the fox trot , however , the modern five @-@ gaited Saddlebred usually performs the stepping pace .

Lordosis , also known as swayback , low back or soft back , has been found to have a hereditary basis in Saddlebreds and a recessive mode of inheritance . The precise mutation has not yet been located , but researchers believe it to be somewhere on horse chromosome 20 . Researching this condition may help more than just the Saddlebred breed as it may " serve as a model for investigating congenital skeletal deformities in horses and other species . " Due to the head position common in the show ring , Saddlebreds can have impairments to the upper respiratory system , while the shoeing and movement required of the horses can cause leg and hoof injuries and increased lameness . A swayback is penalized as a fault at shows , in addition to other conformation flaws .

= = History = =

The Saddlebred has origins in the Galloway and Hobby horses of the British Isles , animals sometimes called palfreys , which had ambling gaits and were brought to the United States by early settlers . These animals were further refined in America to become a now @-@ extinct breed called the Narragansett Pacer , a riding and driving breed known for its ambling and pacing gaits . When colonists imported Thoroughbreds to America , beginning in 1706 , they were crossed with the Narragansett Pacer , which , combined with massive exports , ultimately led to the extinction of the Narragansett as a purebred breed . To preserve important bloodlines , Canadian Pacers were introduced instead . By the time of the American Revolution , a distinct type of riding horse had developed with the size and quality of the Thoroughbred , but the ambling gaits and stamina of the Pacer breeds . This animal was called the American Horse . Its existence was first documented in a 1776 letter when an American diplomat wrote to the Continental Congress asking for one to be sent to France as a gift for Marie Antoinette .

= = = 19th century = = =

Other breeds which played a role in the development of the Saddlebred in the 19th century include the Morgan , Standardbred and Hackney . The Canadian Pacer had a particularly significant impact . The breed , originally of French origin , was also influential in the development of the Standardbred and Tennessee Walking Horse . The most influential Canadian Pacer on Saddlebred lines was Tom Hall , a blue roan stallion foaled in 1806 . After being imported to the United States from Canada , he was registered as an American Saddlebred and became the foundation stallion of several Saddlebred lines .

The American Horse was further refined in Kentucky , where the addition of more Thoroughbred blood created a taller and better @-@ looking horse that became known as the Kentucky Saddler . There were originally seventeen foundation stallions listed by the breed registry , but by 1908 the registry decided to list only one and the remainder were identified as " Noted Deceased Sires . " Today , two foundation sires of the breed are recognized , both Thoroughbred crosses . The first was Denmark , son of an imported Thoroughbred , who for many years was the only recognized foundation stallion . His son , Gaines ' Denmark , was in the pedigrees of over 60 percent of the horses registered in the first three volumes of the breed 's studbook . A second foundation sire was recognized in 1991 , Harrison Chief . This sire was a descendent of the Thoroughbred Messenger , who is also considered a foundation stallion for the Standardbred breed .

During the American Civil War , American Saddlebreds were commonly used by the military , and

known for their bravery and endurance . Many officers used them as mounts , and included in their numbers are General Lee 's Traveller , General Grant 's Cincinnati , General Sherman 's Lexington , and General Jackson 's Little Sorrell . Other generals who used them during the conflict include John Hunt Morgan and Basil W. Duke during his time with Morgan 's Raiders . Kentucky Saddlers were used during brutal marches with the latter group , and the historical record suggests that they held up better than horses of other breeds .

The American Saddlebred Horse Association was formed in 1891 , then called the National Saddle Horse Breeders Association (NSHBA) . Private individuals had produced studbooks for other breeds , such as the Morgan , as early as 1857 , but the NSHBA was the first national association for an American @-@ developed breed of horse . A member of Morgan 's Raiders , General John Breckinridge Castleman , was instrumental in forming the NSHBA . In 1899 , the organization name was changed to the American Saddle Horse Breeders Association , clarifying the breed 's name as the " American Saddle Horse , " not simply " Saddle Horse . "

= = = 20th century to present = = =

After World War I , the American Saddlebred began to be exported to South Africa , and it is now the most popular non @-@ racing breed in that country . Saddlebred horse show standards continued to evolve through the 1920s , as the popularity of the breed grew . The Saddlebred industry slowed during World War II , but began to grow again post @-@ war , with Mexico , Missouri earning the title " Saddle Horse Capital of the World " . Exports continued , and though attempts to begin a South African breed registry had started in 1935 , it was not until 1949 that the Saddle Horse Breeders ' Society of South Africa was formed . The 1950s saw continued growth of the Saddlebred breed , and The Lemon Drop Kid , a fine harness horse , became the first , and only , Saddlebred to appear on the cover of Sports Illustrated . In the late 1950s , the Saddle Horse Capital became centered in Shelby County , Kentucky , largely due to the success of breeders Charles and Helen Crabtree , the latter a renowned equitation coach . Although individual Saddlebreds had been exported to Great Britain throughout the breed 's history , the first breeding groups were transported there in 1966 . For the next three decades , enthusiasts worked to establish a breeding and showing platform for the breed in the UK .

In 1980 , the name of the American Saddle Horse Breeder 's Association was changed to the American Saddlebred Horse Association (ASHA) , membership was opened to non @-@ breeders , and the group began to focus on breed promotion . In 1985 , the ASHA became the first breed registry to have their headquarters at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington , Kentucky . A decade later , in 1995 , the United Saddlebred Association ? UK was formed to register Saddlebreds in Great Britain , and acts as the British affiliate of the ASHA . Since the founding of the American registry , almost 250 @,@ 000 horses have been accepted , with almost 3 @,@ 000 new foals registered annually . It is the oldest still @-@ functioning breed registry in the US . Most common in the eastern US , the breed is also found throughout North America , Europe , Australia , and in South Africa .

Located at the Kentucky Horse Park is the American Saddlebred Museum , which curates a large collection of Saddlebred @-@ related items and artwork , as well as a 2 @,@ 500 @-@ volume library of breed @-@ related works . There are many magazines which focus on the American Saddlebred : " Show Horse Magazine " , " Bluegrass Horseman " , " The National Horseman " , " Saddle and Bridle " , and " Show Horse International " .

= = = Show ring history = = =

As a show horse , Saddlebreds were exhibited in Kentucky as early as 1816 , and were a prominent part of the first national horse show in the United States , held at the St. Louis Fair in 1856 . The Kentucky State Fair began running a World Championship show in 1917 , offering a \$ 10 @,@ 000 prize for the champion five @-@ gaited horse . Also in 1917 , the American Horse Shows Association , now the United States Equestrian Federation , formed and began to standardize show

formats and rules . In 1957 , the American Saddlebred Pleasure Horse Association was formed to regulate English pleasure classes . Today , the most prestigious award in the breed industry is the American Saddlebred " Triple Crown " : winning the five @-@ gaited championships at the Lexington Junior League Horse Show , the Kentucky State Fair World 's Championship Horse Show , and American Royal horse show ; a feat that has only been accomplished by six horses .

The breed 's show history also paralleled major historical developments . Heavyweight boxing champion Joe Louis , who owned and exhibited Saddlebreds into the 1940s , organized the first " All @-@ Negro " horse show in Utica , Michigan , allowing greater opportunities for African @-@ American people to exhibit horses at a time when there was significant racial segregation in the United States . Gas shortages in the 1970s and 1980s put pressure on the recreational dollar , and saw the growth of single breed shows at the expense of the multi @-@ breed traditional horse show . At the beginning of the 21st century , the number of women showing Saddlebreds increased , with female competitors winning several world championships .

= = Uses = =

Today , the Saddlebred is exhibited in the United States in multiple divisions , including assorted in @-@ hand classes ; ridden in saddle seat classes for three- and five @-@ gaited horses in both Park and pleasure classes , hunter country pleasure , and western pleasure ; plus pleasure driving , fine harness , roadster harness classes . In five @-@ gaited competition , they are shown with a full tail , often augmented with an artificial switch , and a full mane . Three @-@ gaited horses are shown with a shaved off " roached " mane and with the hair at the top of their tails , an area called the dock , trimmed short . While use of a set tail in certain types of competition was common , today , tailsets are generally not allowed on the show grounds , except for horses in the Park Pleasure division , and horses with unset tails are not penalized in any division . Gingering is prohibited .

Outside of breed @-@ specific shows , the Saddlebred is also promoted as suitable for competitive trail riding , endurance riding , dressage , combined driving , eventing , and show jumping . Some Saddlebreds are also suitable for fox hunting , cutting and roping . Because they are so closely affiliated with their traditional show ring competition , they are sometimes mistaken for warmbloods or Thoroughbred crosses when participating in other equine events . They are also suitable family horses used for trail and pleasure riding and ranch work .

= = = Film and celebrity affiliation = = =

Many film and television horses of the Golden Age of Hollywood were also Saddlebreds , including the horses used in lead roles in My Friend Flicka , National Velvet , Fury and one version of Black Beauty . A half @-@ Saddlebred played the lead role in the TV series Mr. Ed , and a Saddlebred was used in a prominent role in Giant . In the 1990s , William Shatner , an actor and Saddlebred breeder , rode one of his own horses , a mare named Great Belles of Fire , in his role as James T. Kirk in Star Trek Generations . Numerous other celebrities have been owners and exhibitors of the breed , including Clark Gable , Will Rogers , Joe Louis , and Carson Kressley .