

= Nokota horse =

The Nokota horse is a feral and semi @-@ feral horse breed located in the badlands of southwestern North Dakota in the United States . The breed developed in the 19th century from foundation bloodstock consisting of ranch @-@ bred horses produced from the horses of local Native Americans mixed with Spanish horses , Thoroughbreds , harness horses and related breeds . The Nokota was almost wiped out during the early 20th century when ranchers , in cooperation with state and federal agencies , worked together to reduce competition for livestock grazing . However , when Theodore Roosevelt National Park was created in the 1940s , a few bands were inadvertently trapped inside , and thus were preserved .

In 1986 , the park sold off a large number of horses , including herd stallions , and released several stallions with outside bloodlines into the herds . At this point , brothers Leo and Frank Kuntz began purchasing the horses with the aim of preserving the breed , and in 1999 started the Nokota Horse Conservancy , later beginning a breed registry through the same organization . Later , a second , short @-@ lived , registry was begun by another organization in Minnesota . In 2009 , the North Dakota Badlands Horse Registry was created , which registers the slightly different type of horses which have been removed from the park in recent years . Today , the park conducts regular thinning of the herd to keep numbers between 70 and 110 , and the excess horses are sold off .

The Nokota horse has an angular frame , is commonly blue roan in color , and often exhibits an ambling gait called the " Indian shuffle " . The breed is generally separated into two sections , the traditional and the ranch type , which differ slightly in conformation and height . They are used in many events , including endurance riding , western riding and English disciplines .

= = Breed characteristics = =

The Nokota horse has an angular frame with prominent withers , a sloped croup , and a low set tail . Members of the breed are often blue roan , which is a color rare in other breeds , although black and gray are also common . Other , less common , colors include red roan , bay , chestnut , dun , grullo and palomino . Pinto patterns such as overo and sabino occur occasionally . There are two general types of the Nokota horse . The first is the traditional Nokota , known by the registry as the National Park Traditional . They tend to be smaller , more refined , and closer in type to the Colonial Spanish Horse , and generally stand between 14 and 14 @.@ 3 hands ( 56 and 59 inches , 142 and 150 cm ) high . The second type is known as the ranch @-@ type or National Park Ranch , more closely resemble early " foundation type " Quarter Horses , and generally stand from 14 @.@ 2 to 17 hands ( 58 to 68 inches , 147 to 173 cm ) . Members of the breed often exhibit an ambling gait , once known as the " Indian shuffle . " Nokota horses are described as versatile and intelligent . Members of the breed have been used in endurance racing and western riding , and a few have been used in events such as fox hunting , dressage , three @-@ day eventing and show jumping . Sources vary on the etymology of the breed 's name , with one source stating that the Nokota derives its name from the Nakota people who inhabited North and South Dakota , while another says that the name was a combination of North Dakota created by the Kuntz brothers .

= = History = =

The Nokota horse developed in the southwestern corner of North Dakota , in the Little Missouri River Badlands . Feral horses were first encountered by ranchers in the 19th century , and horses from domestic herds mingled with the original feral herds . Ranchers often crossbred local Indian ponies , Spanish horses from the southwest , and various draft , harness , Thoroughbred and stock horses to make hardy , useful ranch horses . Theodore Roosevelt , who ranched in the Little Missouri area between 1883 and 1886 , wrote :

In a great many ? indeed in most ? localities there are wild horses to be found , which , although invariably of domestic descent , being either themselves runaways from some ranch or Indian outfit , or else claiming such for their sires and dams , yet are quite as wild as the antelope on whose

domain they have intruded .

In 1884 , the HT Ranch , located near Medora , North Dakota , bought 60 mares from a herd of 250 Native American @-@ bred horses originally confiscated from the Lakota leader Sitting Bull and sold at Fort Buford , North Dakota in 1881 . Some of these mares were bred to the Thoroughbred racing stallion Lexington , also owned by the HT Ranch .

By the early 20th century , the feral horse herds became the target of local ranchers looking to limit grazing competition for their livestock . Many horses were rounded up , and either used as ranch horses , sold for slaughter or shot . From the 1930s through the 1950s , federal and state agencies worked with ranchers to remove horses from western North Dakota . However , when Theodore Roosevelt National Park was established in the 1940s , during construction , a few bands of horses were accidentally enclosed within the Park fence , and by 1960 these bands were the last remaining feral horses in North Dakota . Nonetheless , the park sought to eliminate these horses . The National Park Service was declared exempt from the Wild and Free @-@ Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 that covered free @-@ roaming horses and burros on other federal lands . This allowed them to view the herds as nuisances and deal with them as such , including sending many to slaughter .

In the late 1970s , growing public opposition to the removal of feral horses prompted management strategy changes , and today the herds within the Theodore Roosevelt National Park are managed for the purposes of historical demonstration . However , in 1986 the park added outside bloodlines with the aim of modifying the appearance of the Nokota . Park management felt that the horses created with the outside bloodlines would sell better at subsequent auctions . The dominant herd stallions were removed and replaced with two feral stallions from Bureau of Land Management Mustang herds , a crossbred Shire stallion , a Quarter Horse stallion and an Arabian stallion . At the same time that the stallion replacements took place , a large number of horses from the park were rounded up and sold at auction . At the 1986 auction , concerned about the welfare of the Nokota horse , Leo and Frank Kuntz purchased 54 horses , including the dominant stallion , a blue roan . This was in addition to smaller numbers of horses purchased in 1981 , 1991 and 1997 . After researching the history of the breed , the Kuntzs stated that they had found evidence that the horses in the park were probably related to the remaining horses from the band of 250 Sitting Bull horses , who had been range @-@ bred by the Marquis de Mores , who founded the town of Medora . However , the short @-@ lived Nokota Horse Association claimed that there was no evidence for this claim .

= = = 1990s to today = = =

By 1993 , the Kuntz brothers had a herd of 150 horses , including those purchased from the park over the course of several auctions and their descendants . They used the horses mainly for ranching and endurance races . In 1993 , the Nokota was declared the Honorary State Equine of the state of North Dakota . In 1994 , researchers conducted a study of the horses in the park and on the Kuntz 's ranch , and discovered that none of the horses in the park , and only about 20 on the ranch , had characteristics consistent with the Colonial Spanish Horse . Since then , the horses on the Kuntz ranch have been bred to maintain and improve their Spanish characteristics . In 1999 , the Kuntz brothers founded the Nokota Horse Conservancy to protect and conserve the Nokota horse . The Nokota Horse Conservancy tracks around 1 @,@ 000 living and dead horses , and Nokota horses can be found throughout the United States .

Theodore Roosevelt National Park has continued thinning the herd , with several roundups conducted throughout the 1990s and first decade of the 21st century . In 2000 , the last horses to be considered of " traditional " Nokota type was removed from the wild , with some being purchased by supporters of the Nokota Horse Conservancy . The National Park Service currently maintains a herd of 70 to 110 horses . In 2006 , the breed was chosen to be the beneficiary of Breyer Animal Creations ' annual " Benefit Horse " Campaign for the following year ; a Breyer model was created , manufactured , and marketed in 2007 , with a portion of the proceeds going to the Nokota Horse Conservancy . As of 2006 , the Kuntz family owned approximately 500 Nokota horses , with the

Nokota Horse Conservancy owning an additional 40 . At that point , there were less than 1 @, @ 000 living Nokotas in the world .

The Nokota Horse Registry is the breed registry , organized by the Nokota Horse Conservancy . There was briefly a second registry : a Minnesota @-@ based organization called the Nokota Horse Association . In October 2009 , the two registries disputed which had the right to the Nokota breed name , with the Association claiming that they own the legal trademark to the name . The Registry sued , contending that they created the name and had a longer history with the breed . A US District Court ordered that the Association cease registering horses until the matter was settled , and the association disappeared from public view soon after . In the fall of 2009 , another organization , the North Dakota Badlands Horse Registry , was created . This organization registers horses that have been removed from the park in recent years , stating that these horses are not accepted by the Nokota Horse Registry . As of March 2011 , approximately 40 horses had been registered . These horses tend to be of a slightly different phenotype and genotype than the horses registered by the Nokota Horse Registry due to the additional blood from different breeds released into the park .