

## = Dales pony =

The Dales pony is one of the United Kingdom 's native mountain and moorland pony breeds . The breed is known for its strength , hardiness , stamina , courage , intelligence , and good disposition . The history of the modern Dales pony is strongly linked to the history of lead mining in the Dales area of England , and it was originally a working pony descended from a number of breeds . A breed registry was created in 1916 , and the breed was used extensively by the British Army in both world wars . The Dales pony almost became extinct during the Second World War , but post @-@ war conservation efforts have had some success in rebuilding the population . Today it is used for many different activities , but population numbers are still low and this has led to it being considered " critical " by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust and " threatened " by The Livestock Conservancy .

## = = Breed characteristics = =

The Dales pony is ideally 13 to 14 hands ( 52 to 56 inches , 132 to 142 cm ) . The head is straight , neat , and broad between the eyes , with a fine muzzle and incurving ears . The body is fairly short in the back , with a broad and deep rib cage , long , broad and well @-@ muscled quarters , a well @-@ muscled neck of a good length joining neatly into strong withers and strong sloping shoulders . The legs are very muscular , with hard , dense bone , clearly defined tendons , flexible pasterns , and large round hooves with open heels . The mane , tail and leg feathers are straight , silky and abundant .

The majority of Dales ponies are black , though brown , bay , grey and roan colours are also acceptable . The only white markings permitted on the head are a star and / or a snip ; stripes , blazes , and white muzzles are not allowed . The hind legs may have a small amount of white , not extending above the fetlock joint , though ponies with excess white markings may be registered in the B register of the stud book . A Dales pony should move with a great deal of energy and power , lifting the hooves well clear of the ground . The over @-@ all impression should be of an alert , courageous but calm and kind animal . Ponies which do not meet the physical standard set by the breed registry may be registered as " B @-@ status " , meaning that they are of Dales Pony bloodlines but do not have the proper appearance or gaits . Foals by Dales stallions and non @-@ Dales mares may be registered as part @-@ breds . Foals out of Dales mares and non @-@ Dales stallions may not be registered , as the stud book wishes to promote breeding of purebred ponies to maintain the current population levels .

## = = History = =

Horses have been present and used in the Dales area from early times . Horse remains dating to Roman times were found in the Ribchester area of the Dales , during North Pennines Archaeology 's excavations at land behind the Black Bull Inn in 2009 . The Romans themselves named an ancient British tribe to the east of the Pennines the Gabrantovici , or ' horse @-@ riding warriors ' . The history of the modern Dales pony is strongly linked to the history of lead mining in the Dales area of England , which stretches from the Derbyshire peaks to the Scottish borders . Lead has been mined in this area since Roman times , and Richard Scrope , then Chancellor of England , owned lead mines at Wensleydale in the 14th century . Iron ore , fuel for smelting , and finished lead were all carried on pack ponies , with each pony carrying up to 240 lb ( 110 kg ) at a time . Pack pony trains of up to 20 ponies worked ' loose ' ( not led ) , under the supervision of one mounted train leader .

The modern Dales pony is descended from a number of breeds , with the original working ponies being bred by crossing the Scottish Galloway pony with native Pennine pony mares in the Dales area in the late 1600s . A century later Norfolk Cob bloodlines were brought into the breed , which traced back to the Darley Arabian , and most Dales ponies today have pedigrees which can trace back directly to this influential horse ( one of the foundation sires of the modern Thoroughbred ) . Clydesdale , Norfolk Trotter , and Yorkshire Roadster blood was added to improve the trotting ability of the Dales . The bloodline of the Welsh Cob stallion Comet was also added during the 19th

century to increase the size of the Dales ponies , leaving a lasting resemblance between the two breeds . With their agility , power and speed , the Dales had great success in trotting races of the 18th century and were also used in organized hunts . The Fell pony continued to intermingle with the Dales into the early 20th century . In 1912 , Dalesman was chosen as a Fell premium stallion by the Board of Agriculture . In 1924 , he was re @-@ registered as a Dales pony .

The Dales pony stud book was opened in 1916 , with the formation of the Dales Pony Improvement Society , after the introduction of Clydesdale blood threatened to affect the quality of the Dales ponies . Stallion premiums were awarded first by the Board of Agriculture , and later by the War Office , to ensure that stallions displaying the best of the breed characteristics were used for breeding . Members of the breed served with the British army in Europe during the First World War . In the early 1920s , 200 Dales ponies were purchased by the British army . The army took only the finest stock , with the least amount of draft blood . The specifications for the purchased ponies were very specific : all were older than five years , stood 14 @. @ 0 to 14 @. @ 2 hands high , weighed at least 1 @, @ 000 pounds ( 450 kg ) with a girth measurement of 68 inches ( 170 cm ) , and were able to pack at least 294 pounds ( 133 kg ) in mountainous terrain .

The breed almost disappeared during the Second World War as ponies were taken for breeding vanners ( animals which pulled commercial wagons ) , for work in towns and cities , and for use by the British Army as pack and artillery ponies . Many ponies used by the military in Europe were left behind after the war , and in many cases they were slaughtered for food . The population declined during the war to such an extent that only four new fillies were registered in 1955 . However , the post @-@ war future of the Dales pony was preserved by a small group of breeders , who began to search for unregistered ponies of the proper type . The 1960s saw three Fell pony stallions interbred with Dale mares , to help save the breed . In 1964 the Dales Pony Society underwent reorganisation . At the same time , a " Grading @-@ Up Register " was developed , with the aim of identifying and breeding ponies with characteristics of the original Dales type . The grading @-@ up program was successful , and by 1971 , populations had been rebuilt to the point that the program was discontinued . By the 1990s , the population had grown enough to allow some ponies to be exported ? twelve to Canada in 1991 and four to the US in 1994 . By 1999 , there were 60 registered ponies in North America , and an estimated 800 worldwide . In the same year , the Dales Pony Society of America was formed as the official US sub @-@ registry of the UK breed registry .

The Dales pony has moved to " critical " status with the Rare Breeds Survival Trust , meaning there is a United Kingdom population of fewer than 300 registered breeding females . The US @-@ based Livestock Conservancy lists the breed as " threatened " , meaning that population numbers worldwide are sub @-@ 5 @, @ 000 and annual US registrations are less than 1 @, @ 000 .

= = Uses = =

Dales ponies today compete in show jumping , cross @-@ country , dressage , driving , and eventing . Their calm , kind temperament , combined with their ability to carry heavy weights for long distances , has made them an ideal pony for endurance riding and trekking holidays , as they can carry novice or experienced riders , adults or children alike , over all kinds of terrain and for long distances . Small herds still roam free in the eastern Pennines , and in 2007 there were estimated to be around 30 mares of breeding age in feral herds .