

= Selle Français =

The Selle Français (SF) is a breed of sport horse from France . It is renowned primarily for its success in show jumping , but many have also been successful in dressage and eventing . An athletic horse with good gaits , it is usually bay or chestnut in color . The Selle Français was created in 1958 when several French riding horse breeds were merged into one stud book . The new breed was meant to serve as a unified sport horse during a period when horses were being replaced by mechanization and were transforming into an animal used mainly for sport and leisure .

Bred throughout France , the Selle Français has been exported worldwide , with additional stud books formed in Great Britain and the United States . Horses registered with the stud books must undergo inspections which judge their conformation , gaits and performance . Horses of other breeds who pass the inspections , including those of Thoroughbred , Arabian , Anglo @-@ Arabian and French Trotter bloodlines , may be used for breeding , with the progeny able to be registered as Selle Français . Selle Français have proven successful at the international level of competition in many equestrian disciplines . They are most commonly seen in show jumping , eventing and dressage , although they are also seen in combined driving , equestrian vaulting and competitive trail riding competitions . Selle Français and their riders have won numerous medals in the Summer Olympics and World Equestrian Games , including making up the entire gold @-@ medal French teams in show jumping at the 2002 World Equestrian Games and eventing at the 2004 Summer Olympics .

= = Breed characteristics = =

Because of the diversity of the breeds that contributed to the Selle Français , there are not set breed standards . It can range from 15 @. @ 1 to 17 @. @ 3 hands (61 to 71 inches , 155 to 180 cm) , although , because they are used as sport horses , most Selle Français usually stand a relatively tall 16 @. @ 1 to 16 @. @ 3 hands (65 to 67 inches , 165 to 170 cm) . It is an athletic horse with balanced , harmonious and powerful gaits . Some morphological traits remain the same throughout the breed . The forehead is broad , and the facial profile is straight or convex . The neck is strong and rather long , well connected to the withers , and the back straight . The croup is elongated , muscular and slightly oblique , and the powerful hindquarters are an asset in show jumping . The chest is deep , and the shoulders long and sloping . The legs are strong and muscular with wide joints and hard hooves .

The Selle Français is generally bay or chestnut in color , the latter being a legacy of its origins in the Anglo @-@ Norman breed . Gray is much less common , with its origins in the Thoroughbred and Anglo @-@ Arabian horses that contributed to the breed . White markings , such as white on the lower legs , are fairly common within the breed , and are again inherited from its Norman ancestors . The temperament of the Selle Français is highly variable from one horse to another . This is due to the selection criteria for breeding stock , which since the beginning of the breed have been based on physical ability . In recent years , however , the ANSF and breeders have been working to create selection criteria that focus on temperament . The vast majority of Selle Français have good temperaments , quiet but energetic , patient and friendly . The breed is reputed to be intelligent and quick to learn .

= = History = =

The origins of the Selle Français begin with native French horses . In 19th century Normandy , native mares were crossbred with Thoroughbred or Norfolk Trotter stallions . The most common crosses were between native mares used by the military , or those bred for pulling carriages , and Thoroughbred stallions . In 1914 these types were recognized as demi @-@ sang or " half @-@ blood " horses . Half @-@ blood horses were found in many French regions , and different types were usually named after the regions in which they were bred . The three main types of French saddle horses were the Anglo @-@ Norman (bred around Caen) , the demi @-@ sang du Centre (

bred around Cluny) and the Vendéen (bred around La Roche @-@ sur @-@ Yon) .

In 1958 , " Selle Français " or French Saddle Horse was created by merging the all of the regional half @-@ blood horses in France under one name . The merged types included the Anglo @-@ Norman , the Charolais (from the Charolles region) , and the Vendéen . The merger was done to create a sport horse that would meet the needs of a mechanized society where horses were used for leisure and sport . The first Selle Français were not homogeneous in type , but offered a wide genetic diversity , due to the wide variety of local horses crossed with Thoroughbreds , Anglo @-@ Arabians and French Trotters . Norman origins , however , were the most widely represented , as the Anglo @-@ Norman had been used for breeding throughout France .

Since its creation as a breed , the Selle Français has been selected solely as a sport horse . Because of this , the breed has homogenized and refined , and since its creation has been a successful competitor in international equestrian sport . In July 2003 , the Association nationale du selle français (ANSF or National Association of French Saddle Horses) was approved as the breed association . The ANSF plays an advocacy role with stakeholders and partners in the equine world and ensures a proper orientation of selection and genetic improvement within the breed . Breeding of Selle Français is centered in Normandy , mainly due to its origins in Norman @-@ related bloodlines . As of 2009 , there were 7 @, @ 722 farms that reported breeding activity of Selle Français , although the vast majority (around 77 percent) were very small operations with only one mare . In 2008 , there were 7 @, @ 638 Selle Français foals born , which made up 57 percent of the total saddle horses bred in France . In 2009 , over 13 @, @ 500 Selle Français mares were bred , of which 11 @, @ 830 were mated to approved stallions to produce Selle Français offspring . In the same year , there were 505 active Selle Français stallions .

The Selle Français is bred throughout France and abroad , and artificial insemination plays an important role in the dissemination of the breed . The Selle Français has also contributed to several other breeds in Europe , including the Holsteiner , Zangersheide and Oldenburg warmblood breeds . The ANSF has branches in several countries . The United Kingdom organization , called Equicours , led to the opening of a British stud book for the Selle Français , and the ANSF @-@ US manages the stud book for the breed in the United States . Brazil , Argentina and Morocco have agreements with the French stud book to register horses bred in those countries .

= = Registration and stud book selection = =

The Selle Français stud book has long allowed crossbreeding with four other breeds : the Thoroughbred , Arabian , Anglo @-@ Arabian and French Trotter . Today , restrictions exist to harmonize the stud book with directives for other European warmblood breeds . For a Selle Français to be registered , it must be from two registered Selle Français parents or from a cross between a Selle Français and a facteur de selle français (non @-@ Selle Français horse that has passed stud book selection procedures) . Stallions must pass through a selection process before their progeny is allowed to be registered as Selle Français . The process involves an approval committee that judges stallions on criteria based on the age , breed and nationality of the horses . The qualification criteria involve the conformation , gaits , performance and are scored against national indices .

Mares can be of several origins and be listed as facteur de selle français . Thoroughbred , AQPS , pure or crossbred Anglo @-@ Arabians and French Trotting horses may also qualify under this designation , as do mares that are the product of two facteur de selle français horses . Mares belonging to other saddle horse breeds recognized by the European Union (EU) are also listed in this category . Pure and crossbred Arabians , saddle breeds not recognized by the EU and some other mares may be listed on an individual basis by performing at a high level in show jumping , three @-@ day eventing or dressage competition . If mares come from countries or territories that do not have access to high @-@ level competitions , they may be granted special listing status .

In 2003 , the stud book was divided into two parts : a section for pure Selle Français from two registered parents and a section for horses with one facteur de selle français parent . In 2009 , this distinction was abandoned and the two sections were recombined into a single stud book .

= = Uses = =

The Selle Français is a French sport horse , now recognized internationally as a top breed for show jumping and three @-@ day eventing . Selection criteria for breeding stock focuses on their jumping abilities . Show jumping is a technical sport , calling for lively and responsive yet powerful horses . Horses with more Thoroughbred blood in them have also been very competitive in three @-@ day eventing , where speed and stamina are needed to be successful in all three portions (dressage , three @-@ day eventing and show jumping) of the event . Thanks to these qualities , the Selle Français is seen on international show jumping and three @-@ day eventing teams , both in France and elsewhere . In dressage , the Selle Français has gradually improved , but has faced stiff competition from northern European breeds , which often have more active gaits . In addition , many French breeders guide their horses to the more popular and profitable sport of show jumping , which sometimes deprives the dressage system of good horses . The World Breeding Federation for Sport Horses (WBFSH) ranks warmblood stud books based on their success in eventing , show jumping and dressage . In 2013 , the ANSF was ranked as the 3rd best show jumping stud book in the world , topped only by the Dutch Warmblood and Belgian Warmblood breeds , and a Selle Français horse was ranked first in the world . The stud book was ranked at 6th in the world in eventing , with the top horse placed at 25th . The ANSF was ranked 19th in dressage , beaten by many of the more popular dressage breeds , including Dutch Warmbloods , Hanoverians and Westphalians .

The Institut français du cheval et de l'équitation (French Institute of Horse Riding) , the École nationale d'équitation (National Riding School) and the Cadre Noir all use mainly Selle Français . Young horses are selected according to their skills and are trained by students within the schools . Horses representing the Cadre Noir are selected at the age of three and are trained according to their abilities , with some reaching the highest levels of haute école dressage . Selle Français are also used for combined driving , equestrian vaulting and competitive trail riding , and have competed at the international level in all three sports .

Selle Français are also used for the production of race horses in France . By crossbreeding them with Thoroughbred and Anglo @-@ Arabians , horses are produced which are competitive in steeplechase (racing over obstacles) . These horses are generally registered as AQPS (meaning " other than Thoroughbred ") in France . The AQPS studbook in France was created in 2005 ; before this , some successful French racehorses , especially those raced in steeplechase races , were registered as Selle Français . These include Neptune Collonges , winner of the 2012 Grand National race , and Quevega .

= = International success = =

Many Selle Français compete each year in international competitions in many equestrian disciplines . Some have been particularly successful :

Almé Z (1966 ? 1991) , while not a successful international competitor himself , was a sire of huge importance to the international show jumping world . Among his numerous successful progeny was I Love You (a World Cup winner) and Galoubet A (1972 ? 2005) , part of the gold @-@ medal winning French show @-@ jumping team at the World Championships in 1982 . Galoubet A , in turn , is known for both his competition career and the success of his offspring . He is the sire of Baloubet du Rouet (b . 1989) , who with rider Rodrigo Pessoa won the gold medal at the 2004 Summer Olympics and was a three @-@ time winner of the World Cup .

Flambeau C (b . 1971) became a pillar of the French show jumping team in the 1980s . He participated in the 1984 Summer Olympics , where he took 7th individually , and the 1988 Summer Olympics , winning the bronze medal with the French team . The 1980s also saw the rise of Jappeloup (1975 ? 1991) , a small black horse with a conformation and gaits that were considered disadvantageous for show jumping . Despite this , he had an impressive jumping style , and won two French championships in 1982 and 1986 , a European championship in 1987 , several team medals at the European and World Championships , and a gold medal at the 1988 Summer Olympics with rider Pierre Durand , Jr .

In the 1990s , several Selle Français rose to prominence in international competition . Quidam de Revel (b . 1982) , was on the French bronze medal winning show jumping team at the 1992 Summer Olympics , ridden by Hervé Godignon , and Quito de Baussy (b . 1982) was a European champion , world champion and another member of the French team in 1992 , ridden by Éric Navet . Rochet Rouge (1983 ? 2008) was a show jumping European champion in 1999 and an individual bronze medalist at the 1996 Summer Olympics . The 2000s saw Selle Français among the world leaders in both show jumping and three @-@ day eventing . Four stallions made up the champion show jumping team at the 2002 World Equestrian Games , while four more Selle Francais made up the winning three @-@ day event team at the 2004 Summer Olympics . In 2003 , a Selle Francais became the European champion in vaulting , and another was named the world champion in competitive trail riding . The Selle Français continued to lead international show jumping competitions in the 2010s , with Swiss rider Steve Guerdat riding a member of the breed to individual gold at the 2012 Summer Olympics .