

= American Cream Draft =

The American Cream Draft is a rare draft horse breed , the only such breed developed in the United States that is still in existence . It is recognized by its cream color , known as " gold champagne " , produced by the action of the champagne gene upon a chestnut base color , and by its amber eyes , also characteristic of the gene ; the only other color found in the breed is chestnut . Like several other breeds of draft horses , the American Cream is at risk for the autosomal recessive genetic disease junctional epidermolysis bullosa .

The breed was developed in Iowa during the early 20th century , beginning with a cream @-@ colored mare named Old Granny . The Great Depression threatened the breed 's existence , but several breeders worked to improve the color and type of the breed , and in 1944 a breed registry was formed . The mechanization of farming in the mid @-@ 20th century led to a decrease in the breed 's population and the registry became inactive for several decades . It was reactivated in 1982 and population numbers have slowly grown since then . However , population numbers are still considered critical by The Livestock Conservancy and the Equus Survival Trust .

= = Characteristics = =

American Creams have refined heads , with flat facial profiles that are neither concave nor convex . They have wide chests , sloping shoulders and short , strong backs . Their ribs are well sprung , and they are short @-@ coupled with well @-@ muscled hindquarters and with strong well @-@ proportioned legs set well apart . They are sure @-@ footed with strong hooves , and their movement is free and easy . According to enthusiasts , the breed has a calm , willing temperament , particularly suited for owners who are new to handling draft horses . Mares stand 15 ? 16 hands (60 ? 64 inches , 152 ? 163 cm) high and weigh 1 @, @ 500 ? 1 @, @ 600 pounds (680 ? 730 kg) , while stallions and geldings stand 16 ? 16 @. @ 3 hands (64 ? 67 inches , 163 ? 170 cm) and weigh 1 @, @ 800 pounds (820 kg) or more .

The ideal coat color for the breed is a medium cream with pink skin , amber eyes and a white mane and tail . The characteristic cream color of the breed is produced by the champagne gene . Recognized colors include light , medium and dark cream , with amber or hazel eyes . A cream mare with dark skin and a light mane and tail may be accepted by the registry as foundation stock , while stallions must have pink skin and white manes and tails to be registered . Purebred American Cream foals that are too dark to be accepted into the main breed registry may be recorded into an appendix registry . The appendix will also accept half @-@ bred Cream Draft horses crossed with other draft bloodlines if they meet certain requirements , and the registry provides an upgrade system that uses appendix horses to strengthen genes , increase breed numbers , and allow more diversified bloodlines .

= = = Color genetics = = =

The champagne gene produces diluted color , and the gold champagne body color , light skin , light eyes , and ivory mane and tail associated with the American Cream Draft are produced by the action of the champagne gene on a chestnut base coat . In the adult horse , the skin is pink with abundant dark freckles or mottling , and the eyes are hazel or amber . The eyes of champagne foals are blue at birth , darkening as they age , and a foal 's skin is bright pink . The breed registry describes foals ' eyes as " almost white " , which is consistent with the nature of the champagne blue foal eye , which is creamier than other types of blue eye .

Champagne is a dominant trait , based on a mutation in the SLC36A1 gene . The mapping of the gene was announced in 2008 , and the American Cream Draft cross was among the breeds studied . The authors of this study noted that it was difficult to distinguish between homozygous and heterozygous animals , thus distinguishing champagne from incomplete dominant dilutions such as the cream gene . However they noted that homozygotes may have less mottling or a slightly lighter hair color than heterozygotes . Anecdotal reports also note mild differences , including lighter

freckling , skin and hair coat , though eye color remains the same .

Dark @-@ skinned American Cream Draft horses are actually chestnuts , as the breed is not homozygous for the champagne gene ; only one allele is needed to produce the proper color . Champagne dilutes any base coat color , and in the American Cream Draft , the underlying genetic base color is chestnut . As of 2003 , scientists have not found the breed to carry the cream gene , even though breeders refer to the desired color as " cream " . The American Cream Draft is never cremello or white , and though the gold coat color with a white mane and tail resembles palomino , the breed 's defining characteristics are the result of the champagne gene .

= = = Junctional epidermolysis bullosa = = =

The autosomal recessive genetic disease junctional epidermolysis bullosa (JEB) has been found in some American Cream Drafts . This is a lethal genetic disorder that causes newborn foals to lose large areas of skin and have other abnormalities , normally leading to euthanasia of the animal . It is most commonly associated with Belgian horses , but is also found in other draft breeds . A DNA test was developed in 2002 , and JEB can be avoided as long as two carriers are not bred to one another . The American Cream registry states that it has " been pro @-@ active in testing its registered animals since JEB was discovered " .

= = Breed history = =

The American Cream is the only breed of draft horse developed in the United States that is still in existence today . The breed descends from a foundation mare named Old Granny . She was probably foaled between 1900 and 1905 , and was first noticed at an auction in Story County , Iowa , in 1911 and purchased by Harry Lakin , a well known stock dealer . She was eventually sold to Nelson Brothers Farm in Jewell , Iowa . Her breeding is not known , but she was cream @-@ colored and many of her foals were as well ; they sold for above @-@ average prices because of their color . Her cream @-@ colored coat , pink skin and amber eyes are defining standards for the breed , and the color is now known as gold champagne . In 1946 , two years after the breed registry was formed , 98 percent of the horses registered could be traced back to Old Granny .

In 1920 , a colt of Old Granny 's named Nelson 's Buck No. 2 impressed veterinarian Eric Christian to the point that Christian asked the Nelsons not to geld him . They agreed to let him remain a stallion , and he sired several cream @-@ colored foals , though only one was registered : a colt named Yancy No. 3 , whose dam was a black mare of Percheron breeding . Yancy sired Knox 1st , born in 1926 to an unregistered bay mare of mixed Shire ancestry . From this sire line , in 1931 , a great @-@ great @-@ grandson of Nelson 's Buck was born , named Silver Lace No. 9 . Silver Lace was to become one of the most influential stallions of the American Cream breed . His dam was a Belgian mare with light chestnut coloring , and she is credited with Silver Lace 's size ? at 2 @,@ 230 pounds (1 @,@ 010 kg) he weighed considerably more than most of his bloodline . Silver Lace quickly became a popular stallion in Iowa . However , stallions standing for public stud service in Iowa were required to be registered with the Iowa Department of Agriculture , and this agency only allowed horses of recognized breeds . As Silver Lace was not registered with any breed registry , his owners created a breeding syndicate , and mare owners who bought shares in the " Silver Lace Horse Company " could breed their mares to him . However , his main breeding career coincided with the economic struggles of the Great Depression , and Silver Lace was at one point hidden in a neighbor 's barn to prevent his sale at auction . Another significant foundation stallion was Ead 's Captain , whose bloodlines appear in about one @-@ third of all American Cream Drafts .

Around 1935 , despite the Depression , a few breeders started to linebreed and inbreed cream @-@ colored horses to fix their color and type . In particular , C.T. Rierson began buying cream @-@ colored mares sired by Silver Lace and developing the American Cream breed in earnest . In 1944 , a breed association , the American Cream Association , was formed by 20 owners and breeders and granted a corporate charter in the state of Iowa . In 1950 , the breed was finally

recognized by the Iowa Department of Agriculture , based on a 1948 recommendation by the National Stallion Enrollment Board .

The mechanization of farming in the mid @-@ 20th century led to a decrease in the overall draft horse population , and with Riersen 's death in 1957 , American Cream Draft numbers began to decline . By the late 1950s there were only 200 living American Creams registered , owned by only 41 breeders . The registry became inactive until 1982 , when three families who had retained their herds reactivated and reorganized the registry . In 1994 , the organization officially changed its name to the American Cream Draft Horse Association (ACDHA) .

= = = 1990s to the present = = =

In 1982 , owners began blood @-@ typing their horses , and by 1990 , genetic testing found that " compared with other draft breeds and based upon gene marker data , the Creams form a distinct group within the draft horses . " The American Cream Draft was found to have a genetic relationship with the Belgian breed that was no closer than the ones it had with the Percheron , Suffolk Punch and Haflinger breeds . Registry records dating to the early 20th century show no bloodlines other than draft breeding . As of 2000 there were 222 registered horses , a number that increased to 350 as of 2004 . Of these , 40 were " tracking horses " ? either purebred American Creams that did not meet color requirements or crossbred horses that mix American Cream and other draft blood , but still meet the physical requirements for the registry . These tracking horses are allowed by certain regulations to be used as breeding stock , with the resulting foals able to be registered as purebred American Creams . Around 30 new horses are registered each year . The Livestock Conservancy considers the breed to be at " critical " status , meaning that the estimated global population of the breed is less than 2 @, @ 000 and there are less than 200 registrations annually in the US . The Equus Survival Trust also considers the population to be " critical " , meaning that there are between 100 and 300 active adult breeding mares in existence today . To help replenish numbers , the ACDHA has developed regulations to permit foals to be registered when produced via methods such as artificial insemination and embryo transfer . Careful use of the appendix registry also allows numbers to increase .

The American Creams that live in Colonial Williamsburg have been called " the most famous of all American Cream Draft horses " . In the village they are used for wagon and carriage rides , and as of 2006 there is a breeding program run by Colonial Williamsburg that is working to increase breed numbers .