

= Marwari horse =

The Marwari or Malani is a rare breed of horse from the Marwar (or Jodhpur) region of India . Known for its inward @-@ turning ear tips , it comes in all equine colours , although pinto patterns tend to be the most popular with buyers and breeders . It is known for its hardiness , and is quite similar to the Kathiawari , another Indian breed from the Kathiawar region southwest of Marwar . Many breed members exhibit a natural ambling gait . The Marwari are descended from native Indian ponies crossed with Arabian horses , possibly with some Mongolian influence .

The Rathores , traditional rulers of the Marwar region of western India , were the first to breed the Marwari . Beginning in the 12th century , they espoused strict breeding that promoted purity and hardiness . Used throughout history as a cavalry horse by the people of the Marwar region , the Marwari was noted for its loyalty and bravery in battle . The breed deteriorated in the 1930s , when poor management practices resulted in a reduction of the breeding stock , but today has regained some of its popularity . The Marwari is used for light draught and agricultural work , as well as riding and packing . In 1995 , a breed society was formed for the Marwari in India . The exportation of Marwaris was banned for decades , but between 2000 and 2006 , a small number of exports were allowed . Since 2008 , visas allowing temporary travel of Marwaris outside India have been available in small numbers .

= = Characteristics = =

The Marwari averages between 15 and 16 hands (60 and 64 inches , 152 and 163 cm) high . Horses originating in different parts of India tend to be of different heights , with the breed having an outside range of 14 to 17 hands (56 to 68 inches , 142 to 173 cm) high . They can be bay , grey , chestnut , palomino , piebald , or skewbald . Although white horses are bred specifically for religious use in India , they are generally not accepted into Marwari stud books . Gray horses are considered auspicious , and tend to be the most valuable , with piebald and skewbald horses the second @-@ most favoured . Black horses are considered unlucky , as the colour is a symbol of death and darkness . Horses that have the white markings of a blaze and four white socks are considered lucky .

The facial profile is straight , and the ears are pointed with inward turning tips . The neck is slender , running into pronounced withers , a deep chest , and fairly straight shoulders . Marwaris generally have a long back and sloping croup . The legs tend to be slender and the hooves small but well @-@ formed . Members of the breed are hardy and easy keepers , but they can also be of tenacious and unpredictable temperaments . They are quite similar to the Kathiawari horse , another breed from India , having much of the same history and physical features . The main difference between the Marwari and the Kathiawari is their original geographic origin ? Marwaris are mainly from the Marwar region while Kathiawaris are from the Kathiawar peninsula . Kathiawaris tend to have slight facial differences from the Marwari , and are slightly taller in general .

The Marwari often exhibits a natural ambling gait , close to a pace , called the revaal , aphcal , or rehwal . Hair whorls and their placement are important to breeders of Marwaris . Horses with long whorls down the neck are called devman and considered lucky , while horses with whorls below their eyes are called anusudhal and are unpopular with buyers . Whorls on the fetlocks are thought to bring victory . The horses are expected to have correct proportions , based on the width of a finger , said to be the equal of five grains of barley . For example , the length of the face should be between 28 and 40 fingers , and the length from the poll to the dock should be four times the length of the face .

= = History = =

The Marwari is descended from native Indian ponies crossed with Arabian horses . The ponies were small and hardy , but with poor conformation ; the influence of the Arabian blood improved the appearance without compromising the hardiness . The Arabians possibly came ashore from a cargo

ship wrecked off India 's west coast . Legend in India states that the Arabian ship , containing seven Arabian horses of good breeding , was shipwrecked off the shore of the Kachchh District . These horses were then taken to the Marwar district and used as foundation bloodstock for the Marwari . There is also the possibility of some Mongolian influence from the north . The breed probably originated in northwest India on the Afghanistan border , as well as in Uzbekistan , Kazakhstan , and Turkmenistan , and takes its name from the Marwar region (also called the Jodhpur region) of India .

The Rathores , rulers of Marwar and successful Rajput cavalry , were the traditional breeders of the Marwari . The Rathores were forced from their Kingdom of Kanauj in 1193 , and withdrew into the Great Indian and Thar Deserts . The Marwari was vital to their survival , and during the 12th century they followed strict selective breeding processes , keeping the finest stallions for the use of their subjects . During this time , the horses were considered divine beings , and at times they were only allowed to be ridden by members of the Rajput families and the Kshatriyas warrior caste . When the Moguls captured northern India in the early 16th century they brought Turkoman horses that were probably used to supplement the breeding of the Marwari . Marwaris were renowned during this period for their bravery and courage in battle , as well as their loyalty to their riders . During the late 16th century , the Rajputs of Marwar , under the leadership of Moghul emperor Akbar , formed a cavalry force over 50 @, @ 000 strong . The Rathores believed that the Marwari horse could only leave a battlefield under one of three conditions ? victory , death , or carrying a wounded master to safety . The horses were trained to be extremely responsive in battlefield conditions , and were practised in complex riding maneuvers . Over 300 years later , during the First World War , Marwar lancers under Sir Pratap Singh assisted the British .

= = = 1900s to today = = =

The period of the British Raj hastened the Marwari 's downfall , as did the eventual independence of India . The British occupiers preferred other breeds , and tried to eliminate the Marwari , along with the Kathiawari . The British instead preferred Thoroughbreds and polo ponies , and reduced the reputation of the Marwari to the point where even the inward @-@ turning ears of the breed were mocked as the " mark of a native horse " . During the 1930s the Marwari deteriorated , with breeding stock diminishing and becoming of poorer quality due to poor breeding practices . Indian independence , along with the obsolescence of warriors on horseback , led to a decreased need for the Marwari and many animals were subsequently killed . In the 1950s many Indian noblemen lost their land and hence much of their ability to take care of animals , resulting in many Marwari horses being sold as pack horses , castrated , or killed . The breed was on the verge of extinction until the intervention of Maharaja Umaid Singhji in the first half of the 20th century saved the Marwari . His work was carried on by his grandson , Maharaja Gaj Singh II .

A British horsewoman named Francesca Kelly founded a group called Marwari Bloodlines in 1995 , with the goal of promoting and preserving the Marwari horse around the world . In 1999 , Kelly and Raghuvendra Singh Dundlod , a descendant of Indian nobility , led a group that founded the Indigenous Horse Society of India (of which the Marwari Horse Society is part) , a group that works with the government , breeders , and the public to promote and conserve the breed . Kelly and Dundlod also entered and won endurance races at the Indian national equestrian games , convincing the Equestrian Federation of India to sanction a national show for indigenous horses ? the first in the country . The pair worked with other experts from the Indigenous Horse Society to develop the first breed standards .

The government of India had originally banned the export of indigenous horse breeds , although not polo ponies or Thoroughbreds , in 1952 . This ban was partially lifted in 1999 , when a small number of indigenous horses could be exported after receiving a special license . Kelly imported the first Marwari horse into the United States in 2000 . Over the next seven years , 21 horses were exported , until , in 2006 , licenses stopped being granted over concerns that native breeding populations were being threatened . One of the last Marwaris to be exported was the first to be imported to Europe , in 2006 , when a stallion was given to the French Living Museum of the Horse . In 2008 ,

the Indian government began granting licenses for " temporary exports " of up to one year , to allow horses to be exhibited in other countries . This was in response to breeders and the breed society , who felt they were not being allowed a fair chance to exhibit their animals .

In late 2007 plans were announced to create a stud book for the breed , a collaborative venture between the Marwari Horse Society of India and the Indian government . A registration process was initiated in 2009 , when it was announced that the Marwari Horse Society had become a government body , the only government @-@ authorized registration society for Marwari horses . The registration process includes an evaluation of the horse against the breed standards , during which unique identification marks and physical dimensions are recorded . After the evaluation , the horse is cold branded with its registration number and photographed . In late 2009 the Indian government announced that the Marwari horse , along with other Indian horse breeds , would be commemorated on a set of stamps issued by that country .

= = Genetic studies = =

As a direct result of indiscriminate breeding practices , as of 2001 only a few thousand purebred Marwaris existed . Research studies have been conducted to examine the genetics of the Marwari and its relationship to other Indian and non @-@ Indian horse breeds . Six different breeds have been identified in India : the Marwari , Kathiawari , Spiti pony , Bhutia pony , Manipuri Pony , and Zanskari . These six are distinct from each other in terms of unique performance traits and different agroclimactic conditions in the various areas of India where they originated . A 2005 study was conducted to identify past genetic bottlenecks in the Marwari . The study found that , in the DNA of the horses tested , there was no evidence of a genetic bottleneck in the breed 's history . However , since the population has decreased rapidly in past decades , bottlenecks may have occurred that were not identified in the study . In 2007 , a study was conducted to assess genetic variation among all Indian horse breeds except the Kathiawari . Based on analysis of microsatellite DNA , the Marwari was found to be the most genetically distinct breed of the five studied , and was most distant from the Manipuri ; none of the breeds were found to have close genetic ties to the Thoroughbred . The Marwari was distinguishable from the other breeds in terms of both physical characteristics (mainly height) and environmental adaptability . The physical differences were attributed to differing ancestries : the Marwari are closely associated with the Arabian horse , while the four other breeds are supposedly descended from the Tibetan pony .

= = Uses = =

The Marwari is used for riding , packing and light draught , and agricultural work . Marwaris are often crossed with Thoroughbreds to produce a larger horse with more versatility . Despite the fact that the breed is indigenous to the country , cavalry units of the Indian military make little use of the horses , although they are popular in the Jodhpur and Jaipur areas of Rajasthan , India . They are particularly suited to dressage , in part due to a natural tendency to perform . Marwaris are also used to play polo , sometimes playing against Thoroughbreds . Within the Marwari breed was a strain known as the Natchni , believed by local people to be " born to dance " . Decorated in silver , jewels , and bells , these horses were trained to perform complex prancing and leaping movements at many ceremonies , including weddings . Although the Natchni strain is extinct today , horses trained in those skills are still in demand in rural India .