Canadian horse

The Canadian horse is a horse breed from Canada . It is a strong , well @-@ muscled breed of horse , usually dark in colour . The horses are generally used for riding and driving . Descended from draft and light riding horses imported to Canada in the late 1600s , it was later crossed with other British and American breeds . During the 18th century the Canadian horse spread throughout the northeastern US , where it contributed to the development of several horse breeds . During the peak popularity of the breed , three subtypes could be distinguished , a draft horse type , a trotting type and a pacing type . Thousands of horses were exported in the 19th century , many of whom were subsequently killed while acting as cavalry horses in the American Civil War . These exports decreased the purebred Canadian population almost to the point of extinction , prompting the formation of a studbook and the passage of a law against further export .

Experimental breeding programs in the early 20th century succeeded in re @-@ establishing the breed to some extent , but mechanization , combined with two world wars , again resulted in the breed almost becoming extinct . In the 1980s , concerned with the declining population numbers , interested breeders undertook a promotional program , which resulted in renewed interest in the breed . By the 1990s , population numbers were higher , and genetic studies in 1998 and 2012 found relatively high levels of genetic diversity for a small breed . However , livestock conservation organizations still consider the breed to be at risk , due to low population numbers .

Breed characteristics

Most Canadian Horses are dark coloured : black , bay , or brown . A few chestnuts are found , occasionally with flaxen manes and tails , and the cream gene appears in the breed as the result of the genetic influence of one stallion . While some sources state that the gene for gray is no longer found in the breed , after the genetic bottleneck of the late 20th century , the preservation society for the breed states that they can be " rarely grey " . Their height averages 14 to 16 hands (56 to 64 inches , 142 to 163 cm) and stallions average 1 @,@ 050 to 1 @,@ 350 pounds (480 to 610 kg) in weight , while mares weigh 1 @,@ 000 to 1 @,@ 250 pounds (450 to 570 kg) .

The Canadian horse has a rather short , high @-@ set head with a broad forehead . The neck is arched and graceful , and the chest , back and loins broad and strongly muscled . The shoulders and croup are sloping , with a relatively high @-@ set tail . Overall , the breed gives the impression of strength and agility . Their heavy and wavy mane and tail , arched necks and finely boned heads are all reminiscent of Andalusian and Barb ancestry . Their trot is described as flashy . They are hardy horses and easy keepers . Today , most Canadian horses are used as riding and driving horses , and are known for their jumping ability . They are seen in competition in almost every discipline , as well as for leisure riding . They can also be found in light draft work , trail riding , and working as a stock horse .

Unlike most breeds , there is a set naming system that is used to identify individuals based on the registration format employed by the Canadian Livestock Records Corporation . First comes the prefix , the farm or breeding establishment of which the foal was born into , followed by the sire 's name , and lastly the given name for the foal . Each year a different letter is assigned to begin the given name for the foal , and it is by the year 's letter that the foal is named . Some older horses do not fall under this naming strategy , but it is now mandatory in naming registered offspring coming from purebred Canadian lines . Originally , horses were tattooed with identification numbers , but now microchipping is the identification technology chosen by the breed registry .

History

The Canadian Horse descended from the French stock Louis XIV sent to Canada in the late 17th century . The initial shipment , in 1665 , consisted of two stallions and twenty mares from the Royal Stables in Normandy and Brittany , the center of French horse breeding . Only 12 of the 20 mares survived the trip . Two more shipments followed , one in 1667 of 14 horses (mostly mares , but with

at least one stallion) , and one in 1670 of 11 mares and a stallion . The shipments included a mix of draft horses and light horses , the latter of which included both pacing and trotting horses . The exact origins of all the horses are unknown , although the shipments probably included Bretons , Normans , Arabians , Andalusians and Barbs .

The horses were leased to gentleman farmers or religious orders for money or in exchange for a foal , and they remained the property of the king for three years . Despite poor conditions and hard work , the horses thrived in Canada , and were given nicknames that included " the little iron horse " and " the horse of steel " . Population numbers rose quickly from the early stock , with 148 horses by 1679 , 218 horses by 1688 , 684 by 1698 , and by 1709 , enough that the government limited farmers to owning two horses and a foal , with additional horses to be slaughtered , although this law was a failure in terms of enforcement . During the 1700s , the " French Canadian Horse " spread through what is now eastern Michigan and Illinois in the United States , and lived a generally feral existence , with many escaping human control completely . During the Expulsion of the Acadians in the mid @-@ 18th century , the English seized the livestock of the Acadians , including horses . Some of these animals were transported to Sable Island , where their descendents became the Sable Island horse . In the late 18th century , imported horses from the US and the British Isles were crossbred with existing Canadian stock . By the 19th century , they were found performing light draft work , as well as riding and driving duties . Cornelius Krieghoff , a 19th @-@ century Canadian painter , was known for his works featuring the Canadian horse , who he usually showed in association with the French habitants , as opposed to the English settlers in the area . His paintings generally portrayed the Canadian horse in a utilitarian , workhorse role , often in winter scenes .

In 1849 , there were estimated to be more than 150 @,@ 000 Canadian horses , and many were exported from Canada annually . Some were shipped to the West Indies , where they possibly contributed to gaited breeds such as the Paso Fino . By the middle of the 19th century , Canadian horses had spread through the northeastern US , where they were used for racing , as roadsters , and , due to their stamina , to pull freight wagons and stagecoaches . Many played a role in the development of other breeds , including the Morgan horse , the American Saddlebred and the Standardbred . Although used extensively in the US , no efforts were made to establish a purebred population , studbook , or breed association in that country . Thousands of horses imported to the US from Canada were used as artillery and cavalry horses in the American Civil War , where many were killed . One equine historian states that " The Canadian horse played a major role in the history of that war ; it has even been said that the North won simply on the fact that its soldiers had the better horse ? the Canadian . "

By 1880 , through exports and war casualties , Canadian horses had almost become extinct . In 1885 , the Canadian Horse Breeders Association was formed to inspect and approve breeding stock with the aim of creating a studbook for the breed , and in 1886 , further export from Canada was forbidden by Quebec law . In 1913 , an experimental breeding program was begun at Cap @-@ Rouge by the Canadian government . The program 's goal was to breed larger horses that retained the endurance and vitality for which the breed was known , and succeeded in increasing the size of stallions to 15 @.@ 2 to 16 hands (62 to 64 inches , 157 to 163 cm) high and 1 @,@ 200 to 1 @,@ 500 pounds (540 to 680 kg) in weight , with mares slightly smaller . However , mechanization , combined with World War I and World War II , ended the federal breeding program , and in 1940 all breeding stock was sold at auction . However , the province of Quebec re @-@ established the program at Deschambault . The program lasted there until 1979 , when the herd was again disbanded and sold at auction .

= = = 1970s to present = = =

By the 1970s , the popularity of the breed had decreased significantly , and there were approximately 400 Canadian horses worldwide , with only around five annual registrations between 1970 and 1974 . Several interested breeders began a campaign of preservation and promotion , which resulted in a Canadian team winning the 1987 North American Driving Championships . Popularity began to increase , and by the mid @-@ 1990s population numbers were between 2

@,@ 500 and 3 @,@ 000 , and The Livestock Conservancy , which had classified the breed as " critical " , changed its designation to " rare " . With the increase in popularity came pressure for the breed standard to change to meet modern show and market trends , by breeding for taller horses with more refinement . In 2002 , the Canadian Horse Heritage and Preservation Society was formed in response to these pressures , with a goal of preserving the original Canadian horse type . The Canadian Horse Breeders Association remains the official registering body for the Canadian horse , as governed by the Canadian federal Animal Pedigree Act , with the responsibility to " monitor registration , identification , and the keeping of the stud book for Canadian horses " . It is also responsible for inspecting breeding stock before they are registered with the studbook . The studbook is maintained by the Canadian Livestock Records Corporation . Since the beginning of the studbook , there have been over 13 @,@ 600 horses registered . In 2012 , 208 new horses were registered , mainly in Quebec . The Livestock Conservancy still considers the breed to be threatened , a designation given to breeds with a global population of less than 5 @,@ 000 and annual US registrations of fewer than 1 @,@ 000 . Rare Breeds Canada considers the breed to be at risk , with fewer than 500 annual registrations of female breeding stock .

In a study of mitochondrial DNA published in 2012 , the Canadian horse and the Newfoundland pony were found to be the most genetically diverse of the Canadian breeds studied , which also included the Sable Island horse and the Lac La Croix pony . The Canadian horse showed high haplotype diversity , sharing haplotypes with all Canadian populations , as well as draft breeds , Nordic pony breeds and British mountain and moorland pony breeds also tested in the study . The Canadian horse had been shown to be related to draft horse breeds , including the Percheron , Belgian and Clydesdale , in previous microsatellite loci studies . This relationship was supported by findings in the 2012 study . The high levels of diversity in the Canadian horse supported the conclusions of a 1998 study , which determined that the small population size and historical genetic bottlenecks had not resulted in a significant loss of genetic variation . The 1998 paper also stated that the Canadian horse did not show inbreeding any more significant than other , more popular , breeds .

The Canadian horse is a common animal symbol of Canada . In 1909 , the Canadian Parliament declared it the national breed of the country , and in 2002 was made an official animal symbol of Canada by Parliamentary Act . In 2010 , the provincial legislature of Quebec named it a heritage breed of the province .

= = Sub @-@ types = =

During the peak popularity of the breed , three main types could be distinguished . All three are now considered extinct , having disappeared or been merged back into the main Canadian horse population . The first , the Canadian Heavy Draft or St. Lawrence , which disappeared by the late 1700s , probably developed from Shire and Clydesdale crosses . They were probably a popular export to New England , which bred large numbers of horses for Caribbean plantations . The second , the Frencher , sometimes also called the St. Lawrence , was a trotting horse known for its power and speed , resulting from crosses with Thoroughbreds . Mixed with French trotting lines , they played a role in the development of the US trotting horses .

= = = Canadian Pacer = = =

The third type was the Canadian Pacer , which was historically better documented than the other two types . Canadian Pacers were likely the result of breeding pacing horses imported from France with Narragansett Pacers from New England . The resulting horses were known for their ability to race on ice . From there , they were exported to the United States , where North Carolina became a breeding center , later exporting them to Tennessee in the late 1700s . Pedigrees were not maintained , so early breeding histories are often impossible to trace . The Canadian Pacer influenced the Tennessee Walker , the American Saddlebred and the Standardbred .

Commonly called " Canucks " , the fastest members of the breed came from Quebec near the St.

Lawrence River . Racing began in this area during the long , severe winters , when Sunday races after attending church for Mass became common . Eventually these races became large enough to endanger the church @-@ going populace , and races were banned within a certain distance of churches . They instead moved to local rivers , whose smooth , frozen surfaces provided useful raceways , and the resulting contests drew attention to the pacers from Quebec .

Several horses imported to the United States from Canada had a lasting impact on American horse breeding . In the early 1800s , a roan @-@ coloured stallion named Copperbottom was imported to Lexington , Kentucky from Quebec , through Michigan . He began to be offered for stud service in 1816 , and his progeny spread throughout the eastern US . Known mainly as saddle stock , they also included several pacing horses . Another roan stallion , Tom Hal , a successful pacer in his own right , founded an important family of pacers in the US . Appearing in Kentucky in 1824 , he was offered for stud , and his offspring (many of whom carried on the family name , being differentiated only by the name of the owner) began the family of Standardbreds that included Little Brown Jug , Brown Hal , Star Pointer , Adios and Good Time , all champion harness racing horses . Another pacing import to the US was a black stallion named Old Pilot , said to have been bred near Montreal , who originated the Pilot family of trotting horses . Old Pilot produced a son , also named Pilot , who was acclaimed as a sire of trotting horses , as well as being a successful harness horse himself .