

= Newfoundland pony =

The Newfoundland pony is a breed of pony originating in Newfoundland , Canada . They are sturdy and muscular ponies , found in many colors , including the relatively rare white coloration . The Newfoundland developed from a mix of English , Irish and Scottish pony breeds brought to Newfoundland by settlers over a period of four centuries . Initially free @-@ roaming , they crossbred to produce the modern type . They were used by settlers as draft and multi @-@ purpose ponies until the mid @-@ 20th century , when they were brought almost to the point of extinction by mechanization and slaughter . The population rebounded slightly after the formation of a breed registry in 1980 , but still remains low . In 1997 , the Newfoundland pony was declared a heritage breed of Newfoundland and Labrador , which afforded it protection under the law , but the breed has not yet been recognized under the Canadian federal Animal Pedigree Act . As of 2008 , there were 248 registered ponies of breeding age , out of a total population of 361 . In 2013 , the widely dispersed breeding population is still estimated at between 200 and 250 animals .

= Physical Characteristics =

Newfoundland ponies are usually 11 to 14 @. @ 2 hands (44 to 58 inches , 112 to 147 cm) tall and weight 400 to 800 pounds (180 to 360 kg) . They are often black , bay or brown in color . Roan , chestnut , gray and dun are also seen . White coloration is occasionally found in the breed , though white in horses is very rare . Gray horses , whose hair coats become white as they age , are much more common . Grays are born dark colored with dark skin and lighten in color as they age , retaining the dark skin . White horses are born and remain white in color , and have pink skin . Pinto color patterns are not eligible for registration . White markings are minimal , and seasonal color changes are often drastic .

The head is small , with thickly @-@ furred ears that are small and quite pointed at the tips . Overall , the body is stocky and muscular , with a deep , narrow chest , short back , sloping croup and low @-@ set tail . The coat and mane are thick , especially in winter . In order to be registered with the Newfoundland Pony Society , ponies must " [have] a good temperament and [be] docile and easy to work with . " They are generally used as family horses for pleasure riding and driving , although they are also seen at horse shows .

= History =

The ancestors of the Newfoundland pony arrived in Newfoundland from the British Isles , brought there by settlers between 1611 and the mid @-@ 1900s . Dartmoor ponies formed the initial shipment , imported by John Guy , the first Proprietary Governor of Newfoundland . Lord Falkland imported additional animals soon after , and these were followed by a spate of pony shipments from England , Ireland and Scotland . Additional breeds found in the shipments included the now @-@ extinct Galloway pony , as well as Connemara , Dartmoor , Exmoor , Fell , Highland and New Forest ponies . Beginning with the first imports , the breeds crossbred , eventually forming the modern Newfoundland pony .

In the past , the Newfoundland pony was used for ploughing , assisting with gardens , hauling kelp from the beaches , gathering hay , and carrying wood , and they were also used for transportation . They were successfully used and bred to withstand the hard climate , and by 1935 there were over 9 @, @ 000 ponies on the island . During the mid @-@ 20th century , however , increasing mechanization and a ban on free @-@ roaming ponies contributed to a decline in the population , and increased exports to France for horse meat in the 1970s almost led to the extinction of the breed .

Shortly before the breed would have become extinct , several interested breeders came together and formed the Newfoundland Pony Society in 1980 . The group was formed to gather the remaining free @-@ roaming herds , register the horses and breed them in captivity , and was successful in locating around 300 animals . In 1997 , the Government of Newfoundland and

Labrador passed the Heritage Animals Act , which made the Newfoundland pony the first (and , so far , only) heritage animal of Newfoundland and Labrador . A subsequent order designated the Newfoundland Pony Society as " the group which will maintain the registry of ponies and otherwise act for the preservation of the animal . " In part , this Act required anyone wishing to export ponies from Newfoundland to first acquire a permit ; this ensured that ponies were going to private homes instead of slaughterhouses . Also in 1997 , the Newfoundland Pony Breed Association was formed . This group sought to have the Newfoundland pony recognized under the Canadian Animal Pedigree Act , which may have given it additional protection and recognition . In March 2014 , the Newfoundland Pony Society stated that they believed the breed should not have federal recognition , believing that the " federal act is meant for farm stock and breeding animals " , not heritage breeds . Members of the society also fear that protection of the breed may be lessened under federal law when compared with current provincial regulations . However , the provincial government will make the final decision on whether to move forward with the process for federal recognition .

In a study of mitochondrial DNA published in 2012 , the Newfoundland pony and Canadian horse 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 . When an estimation was made using microsatellite loci , the Newfoundland was found to have high autosomal diversity and a high number of haplotypes , some of which overlapped with the mountain and moorland pony breeds (historically documented as the ancestors of the Newfoundland) , Nordic breeds and a feral population at Saint @-@ Pierre et Miquelon . Overlapping haplotypes also suggested a relationship with the Standardbred and Clydesdale , suggesting possible crossbreeding at some point , although previous studies using microsatellite markers had not come to this conclusion . Although the microsatellite loci showed a relationship between the Newfoundland and the Sable Island horse , the study did not find overlapping haplotypes that would support this , possibly due to the population bottleneck in the 1980s that may have resulted in such haplotypes being lost . In order to be registered with the Newfoundland Pony Society , ponies must undergo DNA testing to verify Newfoundland parentage .

In 2011 , The Livestock Conservancy (TLC) added the Newfoundland pony to their Conservation Priority List in the " study " category , as it worked to verify the breed 's history and population numbers . In 2012 , with studies completed , the breed was moved to the " critical " category , meaning that the breed has a global population of less than 2 @, @ 000 and annual registrations in the US of less than 200 . Rare Breeds Canada also considers the breed critically endangered , with fewer than 15 annual registrations of purebred female breeding stock . As of 2008 , there were 248 registered ponies of breeding age , out of a total registered population of 361 ponies . The largest populations were in the provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador and Ontario , with smaller populations in seven other Canadian provinces and the United States . As of 2013 , TLC estimates that the widely dispersed breeding population consists of between 200 and 250 ponies .