

= Norman Cob =

The Norman Cob or Cob Normand is a breed of light draft horse that originated in the province of Normandy in northern France . It is a mid @-@ sized horse , with a range of heights and weights , due to selective breeding for a wide range of uses . Its conformation is similar to a robust Thoroughbred , and it more closely resembles a Thoroughbred cross than other French draft breeds . The breed is known for its lively , long @-@ striding trot . Colors accepted by the breed registry include chestnut , bay and seal brown . There are three general subsets within the breed : horses used under saddle , those used in harness , and those destined for meat production . They are popular for recreational and competitive driving , representing France internationally in the latter , and are also used for several riding disciplines .

The Normandy region of France is well known for its horse breeding , having also produced the Percheron and French Trotter . Small horses called bidets were the original horses in the area , and these , crossed with other types , eventually produced the Carrossier Normand , the immediate ancestor of the Norman Cob . Although known as one of the best carriage horse breeds available in the early 20th century , the Carrossier Normand became extinct after the advent of the automobile , having been used to develop the French Trotter , Anglo @-@ Norman and Norman Cob . In its homeland , the Norman Cob was used widely for agriculture , even more so than the internationally known Percheron , and in 1950 , the first studbook was created for the breed .

The advent of mechanization threatened all French draft breeds , and while many draft breeders turned their production towards the meat market , Norman Cob breeders instead crossed their horses with Thoroughbreds to contribute to the fledgling Selle Francais breed , now France 's national saddle horse . This allowed the Norman Cob to remain relatively the same through the decades , while other draft breeds were growing heavier and slower due to selection for meat . Between the 1970s and 1990s , the studbook went through several changes , and in the 1980s , genetic studies were performed that showed the breed suffered from inbreeding and genetic drift . Breed enthusiasts worked to develop new selection criteria for breeding stock , and population numbers are now relatively stable . Today , Norman Cobs are mainly found in the departments of Manche , Calvados and Orne .

= = Characteristics = =

The Norman Cob is a mid @-@ sized horse , standing between 15 @. @ 2 1 ? 4 hands (62 @. @ 25 inches , 158 cm) and 16 @. @ 3 1 ? 2 hands (67 @. @ 5 inches , 171 cm) and weighing 550 to 900 kilograms (1 @, @ 210 to 1 @, @ 980 lb) . The large variations in height and weight are explained by selection for a variety of uses within the breed . The Norman Cob is elegant and closer in type to a Thoroughbred @-@ cross than other French draft breeds . Its conformation is similar to a robust Thoroughbred , with a square overall profile and short back . Selective breeding has been used to develop a lively trot , with long strides .

The head is well @-@ proportioned and similar to that of the Selle Francais , with wide nostrils , small ears and a straight or convex facial profile . The neck is thick , muscular and arched . The mane is sometimes roached . The shoulders are broad and angled , the chest deep and the withers pronounced . The body is compact and stocky , with a short , strong back . The hindquarters are powerful , although not so much as in heavy draft breeds , and the croup muscular and sloping . The legs are short , muscular and strong , with thick bone , but less massive than most draft breeds . The feet are round , wide and solid .

Colors accepted by the breed registry include chestnut , bay and seal brown (the latter called black pangaré by the breed registry , although these horses are genetically brown , not black with pangaré markings) . Bays with white markings are the most popular . Norman Cobs are known as calm , willing horses with strong personalities . The breed 's Thoroughbred ancestry gives them energy and athleticism , and makes them mature faster than other draft breeds . They show great endurance when ridden , and are relatively hardy , accepting outdoor living and changes in climate . Traditionally the Norman Cob had its tail docked , a practice that continued until January 1996 ,

when the practice became illegal in France .

There are three general subsets within the breed : horses used under saddle , those used in harness , and those destined for meat production . Horses may be automatically registered if at least 87 % 5 percent of their ancestors (seven out of eight) were registered Norman Cobs . Purebred stallions may not be bred more than 70 times per year . Foals produced through artificial insemination and embryo transfer may be registered , but cloned horses may not . In general , breeders look to produce horses with good gaits and an aptitude for driving , while keeping the conformation that makes the Norman Cob one of nine French draft breeds .

= = History = =

The Norman Cob comes from the Normandy region of France , an area known for its horse breeding . Normandy is also the home of two other breeds , the Percheron and the French Trotter . Both of these breeds are better known than the Norman Cob , although the latter is popular in its home region . The name " cob " comes from the English and Welsh cobs that it resembles , with the addition of " Norman " to refer to the area in which it originated . Although generally considered a member of the draft horse group , the Norman Cob is special among French draft breeds . It has been used almost exclusively for the production of sport horses , and has not been extensively used for the production of meat , unlike many other French draft breeds . This means that its conformation has remained relatively unchanged , as opposed to being bred for heavier weights for butchering .

The original horses in Normandy and Brittany were small horses called bidets , introduced by the Celts . The Romans crossed these horses with larger mares , and beginning in the 10th century , these " Norman horses " were desired throughout Europe . During the 16th century , Norman horses were known to be heavy and strong , able to pull long distances , and used to pull artillery and diligences . Barb and Arabian blood was added during the reign of Louis XIV . The Norman Cob is descended from this Norman horse , called the Carrossier Normand . It was also influenced by crossing with other breeds including the Mecklenburger , the Gelderland horse and Danish horses . By 1840 , the Carrossier Normand had become more refined , due to crosses with imported British Norfolk Trotters , as well as gaining better gaits , energy , elegance , and conformation .

The Haras National de Saint - Lô (National Stud of Saint - Lo) was founded in 1806 by Napoleon . This stud and the Haras du Pin (Stud of Pin) became the main production centers for the Carrossier Normand . The Norman horse Thoroughbred crossbreeds produced at these studs were divided into two groups . The first were lighter cavalry horses , and the second were heavier horses , called " cobs " , used for draft work in the region . At this time , there was no breed registry or studbook ; instead , selective breeding was practiced by the two studs , and farmers tested the capabilities of young horses to select breeding stock .

= = = Early 20th century = = =

At the very beginning of the 20th century , the Carrossier Normand was considered the best carriage horses available . The arrival of automobiles , and corresponding decline in demand for carriage horses , coincided with a split in the breed . A distinction was made between the lighter , faster horses in the breed , used for sport , and larger horses , used for agricultural work . The lighter horses eventually became the French Trotter (for driving) and Anglo - Norman (for riding and cavalry) , while the heavier horses became the Norman Cob . In 1912 , when French horse populations were at their highest , there were 422 stallions at the Saint - Lo stud , mainly cobs and trotters . When the original Carrossier Normand became extinct in the 1920s , breeding focused on the two remaining types , with the Norman Cob continuing to be used for farming and the Anglo - Norman being used to create the Selle Français , the national French sport horse .

In the regions of Saint - Lo and Cotentin , the Norman Cob was widespread in agricultural uses until 1950 , and the population continued to increase in the first half of the 20th century , even through the occupation during World War II . Even the Percheron , which was internationally recognized as the Norman draft horse , was not as popular in the homeland of the Norman Cob

breed . In 1945 , Norman Cob stallions accounted for 40 % of the conscripted horses , and in 1950 a studbook was created for the breed .

Like all French draft breeds , the Norman Cob was threatened by the advent of mechanization in farming . The only option left to many breeders was to redirect their production to the meat markets . However , the Norman Cob avoided this , through the efforts of Laurens St. Martin , the head of the Saint @-@ Lo stud in 1944 and the developer of the Selle Francais . He began crossing Thoroughbred stallions with Norman Cob mares to produce Selle Francais horses , and the success of this program allowed a reorientation of the Cob breeding programs . Although population numbers continued to decline until 1995 , the physical characteristics of the breed remained much the same , not growing heavier and slower as many of the French draft breeds did due to breeding for the production of meat . Even today , some Selle Francais from Norman bloodlines are similar to the Norman Cob in appearance .

= = = 1950 to 2000 = = =

The modern Norman Cob is slightly heavier than it was in the early 20th century , due to lighter horses of the breed being absorbed into the Selle Francais breed . In 1976 , the National Stud at Saint @-@ Lo had 186 stallions , including 60 Norman Cobs . In the same year , the breed registry was reorganized , and the Norman Cob placed in the draft horse category . The reorganization of the breed registry helped to reinvigorate Norman Cob breeding , and to bring attention to the risk of extinction of the breed . In 1980 , the Institut national de la recherche agronomique and Institut national agronomique performed demographic and genetic analysis of threatened breeds of horses within France . In 1982 , researchers concluded that the Norman Cob has been inbred and suffered genetic drift from its original population . The increasing average age of Norman Cob breeders also made the breed 's situation precarious .

Enthusiasts worked to reorient the breed towards driving and recreation pursuits , and since 1982 have again reorganized the breed association . In 1992 , a new studbook was created for the breed , with new selection criteria designed to preserve the quality of the breed , particularly its gaits . The latest editions of the breed registry and studbook are controlled by the Syndicat national des éleveurs et utilisateurs de chevaux Cob normand (SNEUCCN , National Union of Farmers and Users of Normandy Cob Horses) , based in Tessy @-@ sur @-@ Vire . The association works to preserve and promote the breed throughout France , focusing especially on Normandy , Vendee and Anjou . In 1994 , Normandy contained 2000 Percheron and Norman Cob horses , and annually bred around 600 foals of these two breeds . This included approximately half of the Norman Cobs bred in France .

= = = 2000 to today = = =

Today , Norman Cobs are mainly found in the departments of Manche , Calvados and Orne , which form the area where the breed was originally developed . The region of Saint @-@ Lo , which ranks first in the production of Norman Cobs , represents 35 percent of new births . The Norman Cob is also present around the Haras de la Vendee (Stud at Vendee) , which represents 25 percent of births , the Haras du Pin and in central Massif . In 2004 , there were just over 600 French breeders of the Norman Cob , and in 2005 , 914 Norman Cob mares were bred , with 65 stallions recorded as active in France . In recent years , the number of Norman Cobs has remained relatively stable . In 2011 , there were 319 Norman Cob births in France , and numbers of annual births between 1992 and 2010 ranged between 385 and 585 .

Members of the breed are shown annually at the Paris International Agricultural Show . There are fairs held for the breed at Lessay and Gavray , in Manche . The National Stud at Saint @-@ Lo remains involved in the maintenance and development of the breed , and organizes the annual national competition for the breed . The stud also organizes events at which to present the breed to the public , including the Normandy Horse Show . The Norman Cob is beginning to be exported to other countries , especially Belgium . In that country , some are bred pure , while others are crossed

on the Ardennes to improve the latter 's gaits . Approximately 15 horses are exported annually , traveling to Belgium , Germany , Switzerland and Italy for leisure , logging and agricultural uses .

= = Uses = =

A multi @-@ purpose breed , the Norman Cob was formerly used wherever there was a need . It was utilized in a variety of agricultural and other work by farmers , and was used by the army for pulling artillery . The postal service used it to pull mail carriages , which it was capable of doing at a fast trot over bad roads for long distances . Postal workers appreciated the breed for its willingness to remain calm , stationary and tethered for long periods of time . Due to the modernization of agriculture and transport , it is now used very little in these areas .

The breed is popular for recreational and competitive driving , to which it is well suited in temperament . In 1997 , the rules of driving events in France were modified to take into account the speed of execution of the course , which made lighter , faster horses more competitive . The Norman Cob and the lighter type of Boulonnais were particularly affected . The Norman Cob 's gaits , calm temperament and willingness to master technical movements make it an excellent competitor , and in 2011 , more than a third of the horses represented in the French driving championships were Norman Cobs . Many Norman Cobs represent France in driving events at the international level .

The Norman Cob is also used for riding , and may be used for most equestrian disciplines . It is particularly well suited for vaulting . Elderly and nervous riders often appreciate the breed 's calm temperament . Lighter Cobs can be used for mounted hunts . Crosses between the Norman Cob and Thoroughbred continue to be made to create saddle horses , generally with 25 to 50 percent Cob blood . Some Norman Cobs are bred for the meat market . The breed is sometimes preferred by butchers because of the lighter carcass weight and increased profitability over the Thoroughbred , while at the same time retaining meat similar in flavor and appearance to that of the Thoroughbred .