



Anne Rawle directs Valentino, a thoroughbred gelding, through a dressage movement known as a fully extended trot.

Breeding of sport horses occupation of Rawle family

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Feature Writer

Spring is nature's season for birth. It is a refreshing experience to catch a glimpse of mares and their foals as they walk across a green meadow two by two. The attentive foals follow their mother like small shadows, never straying very far from their mothers' sides.

Such a sight is not simply a sign of the season or a chance to see nature at work for Anne Rawle at Watermark Farm, Oxford R1. The equestrian offspring at her homestead are the fruition of such specialized management and breeding.

Anne and her husband Bill are in partnership with Al Steiert, Valley Forge, Pa., breeding what Anne described as warm-blooded sport horses. On their 70 acre farm, about 10 miles northwest of Oxford, Chester County, the Rawles manage Steiert's West-German Hanoverian stallion named Abundance. At any one given time there may be as many as 15 brood mares - five of their own and the remainder outside mares (ones owned by other individuals) - and four or five horses in training for show competition under the Rawles' care.

To the novice, a visit with the Rawles is especially informative. Anne's and Bill's accomplishments in equestrian competition reflect their dedication to the training and breeding of animals of exceptional quality.

In a most convincing and straightforward manner, Mrs. Rawle explained specific details about the Hanoverian breed, her past experience with horses, and how their "small business", as she described it, operates.

Anne's interest in horses began with a backyard pony when she was six years old. At the time she lived 30 miles outside Milwaukee, Wis. When she was 13 she started four years of riding lessons from Jan Jansen, a native of Holland who once trained for Queen Wilhelmina. Jansen instructed Mrs. Rawle in basic classical dressage (pronounced *dre ssage*). According to Mrs. Rawle, dressage is a French word for "training". The animal is obedient to very subtle commands - quiet aids such as hand movement, weight, and pressure. The horse becomes a gymnast, a dancer obeying very simple, very subtle commands.

During her college years while she studied in liberal arts with an English major, Anne continued instruction in dressage under Klaus Albin, chief rider for the Temple Lippizan Farms outside Chicago.

While editing an insurance company magazine in Philadelphia after graduation from college, Mrs. Rawle pursued her training, or, as she explained, "I worked to support my horse and lessons!" She boarded her animal at Far Hills, N.J., the training home of the U.S. Olympic Equestrian Team. There she trained with the coach of the Olympic dressage team, Hector Carmona, a former

Olympic athlete from Chile. At that time she was working with a thoroughbred, more commonly identified by novices as the American racing horse.

In 1968 Anne competed with the thoroughbred for screening to go to the Olympics in Mexico. She explained, "The horse was pushed to a mental breaking point. The commands and moves were too frustrating for him. His temperament was too tense for such intensive concentration and training. That is why I enjoy the temperament of this Hanoverian Cross. The horses have fantastic movement, they are very obedient, very calm and have great gymnastic capability and maintain a competency on the Olympic level."

The Rawles moved to Watermark Farm in March, 1971, and maintained a small boarding and training operation. Their daughters Emily, now four, and Eleanor, 14 months, were born. Two years ago the Rawles shifted their emphasis from boarding to breeding and selling offspring from Abundance.

Abundance, a 12-year-old German-born Hanoverian stallion imported to America, is the son of one of the three top sires in Germany. Germany has discontinued further exportation of these stallions in order to keep the prestigious pedigree confined primarily to its nation. Because the pedigree denotes exceptional quality in its offspring, Abundance claims a \$550 stud fee through private contract only. Consequently, Abundance is a stud for the serious horse owner, one who is willing to commit considerable time, training, and money to the rearing and training of the offspring. A six-year-old Abundance foal sold for \$65,000 last year and a three-year-old brought \$13,000. Anne quickly added, "It's not the breeder, though, who gets the profits; it's the dealer." Mrs. Rawle stated by way of clarification, "Abundance's offspring are for

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the select, not the big breeder."

"It can take five to 10 years to train and develop such a horse for quality international competition," Bill added. Such an animal requires dedication along with a large financial investment. It takes \$100 a month to board him, and that is just a start of what it costs to keep and train an animal for that many years."

Anne's husband Bill is also well acquainted with the quality and training required for international competition. In 1960 he competed in the Olympics on the Nordic Combined Team. The U.S. and North American cross country-skiing and jumping team) and participated

in 1964 and 1968 Olympic pre-trials in the pentathlon and three-day teams.

The Rawles pointed out the American thoroughbred reach their peak of performance at three to five years of age while the Hanoverian cross becomes a better performer with age and mental maturity, as much as 12 to 20 years of age.

Rather than being destroyed by a racing career at the age of five because of the painkilling drugs which allow the horses to incur irreparable damage at the track, the young animals from Watermark Farm are likely to be groomed for show performances 10 or even 20 years from now. The mares brought to the Rawles are special animals and are given special attention and care.

Mrs. Rawle was quick to give credit for their effective breeding program to their veterinarian, Dr. Robert Bergman, from the Londonderry Veterinary Clinic in Cochranville.

"It takes a good vet to make a good breeding program," Mrs. Rawle cited. Examinations for soundness before breeding and pregnancy checks alike benefit such a program. Good brood mares usually should have foals without complications every year, Mrs. Rawle explained.

The natural breeding season for horses is from mid-March through mid-July. Mares come into heat for five days every 21 days. Pregnancy can be detected from 30 days after conception. Gestation is slightly more than 11 months or 345 days.

Mrs. Rawle explained race horse breeders force nature's clock to produce animals a few months older and larger by racing eligibility cutoff dates than those produced by nature's timing. Mrs. Rawle emphasized, "We work with nature's ways because nature's ways are best." Mares hard to breed are generally not worth the trouble; there is usually a naturally selective reason for failure to conceive that should be respected. According to the Rawles, horses are pasture-bred with a stallion because research has found that artificial insemination is ineffective. Unlike cattle semen, horse semen does not remain vital even with freezing procedures.

Mares are very secretive about foaling, according to Mrs. Rawle. "They like to be by themselves and seem to foal in the middle of the night - for instance four o'clock in the morning!" She explained that mares give birth very quickly. Unlike many animals, the foal is cut off from the supply of oxygen when in the birth canal and therefore must be born quickly. Mrs. Rawle corrected a general misconception with the statement that 75 per cent of the mares foal while standing up rather than lying down.

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