

Prince and Princess, twin foals are Percheron royalty

BY SHEILA MILLER

SPRING MILLS — Just a little over a month before Mother's Day, a Percheron mare beat the odds in the draft horse motherhood world.

At 9:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 2, Duke's Miss Patsy, a 13-year-old mare in the stable of Abe Allebach, Centre County, gave birth to two healthy foals.

The twins, a filly and a colt with a combined weight of 135 pounds (one draft horse foal normally weighs about that), overcame the tremendous odds stacked against them and are frisking around their attentive mother, today.

According to the Allebachs, who raise the massive drafts along with milking 65 grade Holsteins and operating a 442 acre farm, the chances of the twins both surviving were slim. They said the University of Pennsylvania's veterinary school told them the chances for even one of the foals surviving was 1:20,000.

But, with the Allebach's round-the-clock concern, Windermere's Prince and Princess have made draft horse history.

Remembering the all-night vigil when the twins were born, Abe smiled and said:

"My wife, Mary, babied those foals to get them started. We stayed up with them all night, taking turns catching some sleep.

"The foals were so small — they didn't stand up for almost two hours after they were born.

"We tried to get them to nurse, but they just couldn't. Because we wanted them to get the mare's colostrum right away, we decided to milk her and feed them with a stomach tube.

"It was vital for the foals to get the antibody-rich colostrum immediately — we've found if they don't get it into their systems, they just don't make it.

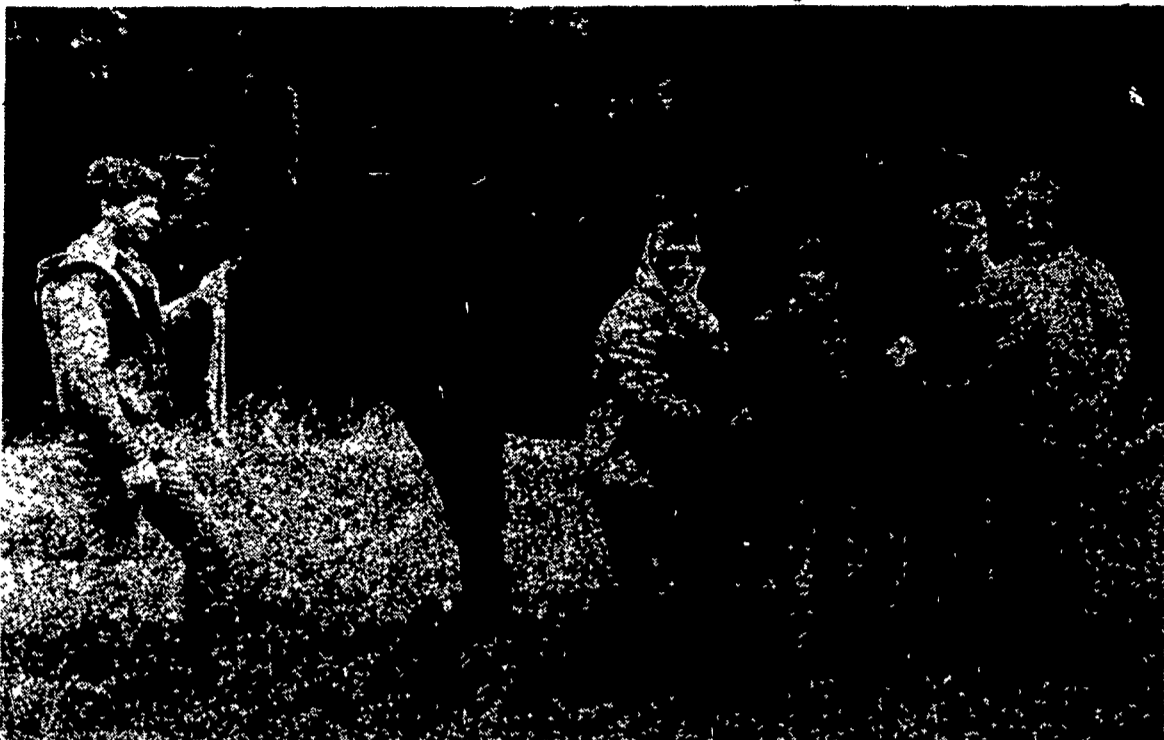
"We make it a practice to milk some of the colostrum from our mares for emergencies — we freeze it in plastic containers. That way we always have some on hand to feed the foals, no matter what happens.

"In the case of the twins, we tubed them three times. By 3 o'clock the next day, the one foal decided to nurse, and it wasn't long before the other one did too."

Being a loving mother, the mare accepted both foals without any upset. And, said Allebach, the 2000-pound mare painstakingly sets each hoof as if she's treading on egg cartons to be sure she doesn't step on her babies' 'toes' as they lay sleeping in the straw.

Needless to say, the Allebachs are quite proud of their first Percheron twins.

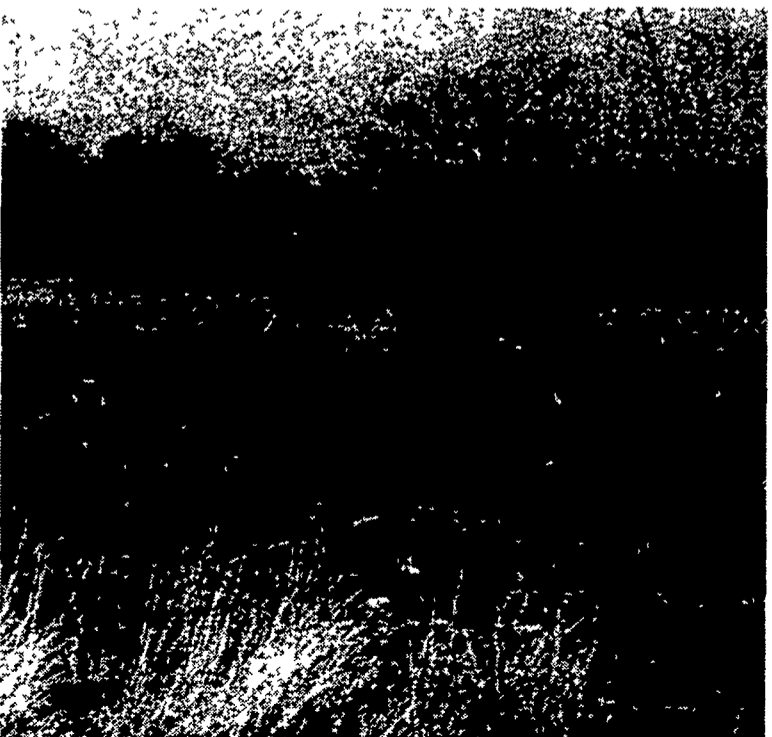
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A FAMILY PORTRAIT — Posing with Duke's Miss Patsy, the 13-year-old Percheron mare and her adorable twins, the Allebachs, Gerald, at halter, Mary, Monica, Abe, and Rodney are rightfully proud of their draft horse's identical miracles.



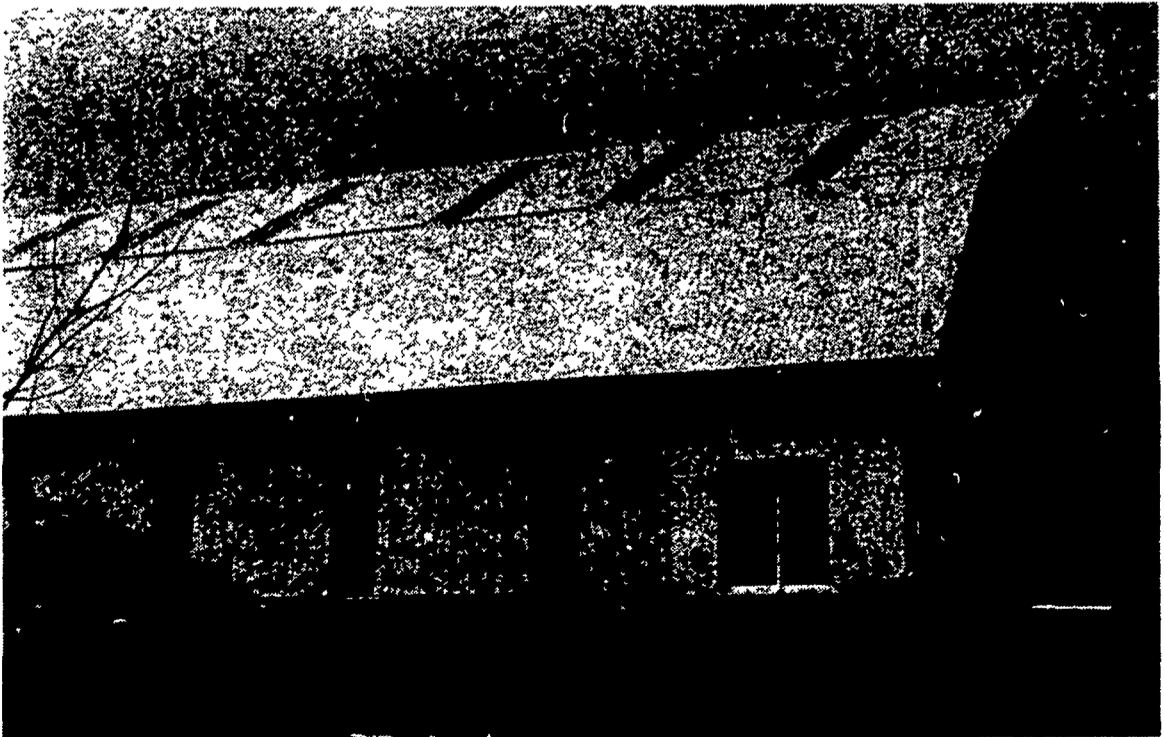
As Princess sneaks a mid-morning snack, Prince realizes he's missing out on some of Mom's 'home-cooking'.



With grace and speed that belie his 2100 pounds, Remington proudly gallops across the pasture at his Centre County home.



Half-brother to the twins is Windermere's Remington, a 6-year-old Percheron stallion that has taken the grand championship title at the Pennsylvania Farm Show for three consecutive years.



The Allebach's new horse barn was designed by Abe to make hitching and caring for the family's 19 head of draft horses a simpler task. The barn features heated water cups and stalls with sliding doors to the outside. This makes manuring out a job that can be done by machine instead of forking by hand. A center aisle with cross-ties lets two people safely hitch six horses to a wagon and drive straight out the center doors on either end of the barn.