

Windermere Farm's Percherons

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carefully at the animal's siblings "to see how they turned out," said Allebach.

"We're tough about our mare families. When we look at a pedigree, we're looking sometimes clear off the back of the paper. We don't want to produce any one-hit wonders — they have to be the real thing to go on with."

"Magnificent"

In the Percheron show ring, "the bigger the better," said Allebach.

The horses should also carry their heads high and proudly, have long necks, and trot high — all contributing toward the look that Melissa sums up as "magnificent," said Allebach.

"We've watched the Percheron breed go from a nice sound, quality horse to a very exciting show horse."

Although they display the steady temperament that is characteristic of draft horses, Percherons "are spirited," he said, which may lend to their popularity as show animals.

In the show ring sound conformation, large size, spirit, and front- and hind end action are a part of a judge's evaluations.

The Allebachs may show their horses in a 6-horse harness hitch. The purchased a handmade harness and built their own wagon that features a flashy patent leather and chrome finish.

Again, "it's a team effort to train and fine-tune the horses," said Allebach.

Although the Allebachs have, of late, favored black horses for their show ring string, traditionally the breed has been dominated by greys, as confirmed by old paintings and crude drawings.

For example, many European knights portrayed in paintings are often riding a gray or white horse, according to information from the Percheron Horse Association of America.

When the war horse no longer became necessary, the French began to look toward their draft horses to pull heavy stage coaches. The light colored greys and whites were preferred because of their visibility at night.

Breed Origins

According to the Percheron Horse Association of America, the breed derives its name Le Perche, an old province of France.

From the time of a war horse, to a stage coach horse to an animal used to pull "omnibuses," the public transport of the day, the breeders of Le Perche bred their horses to fit the need.

Later the design of the breed changed as horses were called on to move heavy loads from docks and railheads.

On the American front, after the Civil War was over and the country began to grow, strong horses again proved to be in de-

mand. Consequently Americans began to visit Europe to buy seed stock, and began importing animals from Normandy in 1839.

As importations grew, buyers looking for the best horses found the horses of Le Perche.

In the 1880s almost 5,000 stallions and more than 2,500 mares were imported to America from France, mostly from Le Perche.

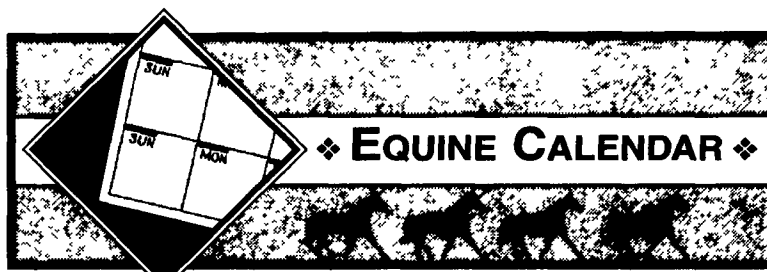
Because of changing economics in America, and as machines replaced draft horses, the low point in Percheron registrations came in 1954 when just 85 head were recorded.

It was a relative handful of people dedicated to the breed that kept the Percheron alive. They were aided in this by the thousands of Amish farmers throughout the country who stuck with the draft horse as their source of power.

Registrations totaled 1,088 in 1988, ten years later that had grown to 2,257, according to the Percheron Horse Association of America.

The association recorded 2,337 Percherons during fiscal year 2002, consisting of 791 stallions, 1,410 mares and 136 geldings. Registrations were received from 45 states and Canada.

Additionally, the organization added 440 new members during the year for a total of 3,441 members at the end of fiscal 2002.



◆ EQUINE CALENDAR ◆

To submit a date of an event for your organization, e-mail farming@lancasterfarming.com.

Monday, August 11

Regional 4-H Horse Production Show, Mercer County 4-H Park, Mercer, 10 a.m.

Tuesday, August 12

Regional 4-H Horse Production Show, Winterfield Farm, Indiana, Indiana County, 10 a.m.

Wednesday, August 13

Regional 4-H Horse Production Show, Williamsport Riding Club, Lycoming County, noon.

Thursday, August 14

Regional 4-H Horse Production Show, Shippensburg Fairgrounds, Cumberland County, 10 a.m.

Friday, August 15

Regional 4-H Horse Production Show, Romano 4-H Center, Honey Brook, Chester County, 10 a.m.

Saturday, August 16

Lancaster Polo Club versus Tincum.

Tuesday, August 19

Pa. Equine Council Meeting, Rocksprings.

Thursday, August 21

4-H Equine Skillathon, Rocksprings.

August 19-21

Ag Progress Days, Equine Experience, Rocksprings.

Saturday, August 23

Lancaster Polo Club versus Strasburg.

Sunday, August 24

Lancaster Polo Club versus Philadelphia (MG Cup).

Sunday, August 31

Lancaster Polo Club versus Rabbit Hill.

September 11-14

Virginia State 4-H Horse Show, Horse Center, Lexington.

September 12-13

State 4-H Trail Ride, Bob Evans Farms, Dr. Robert Kline, (614) 292-2625.

Saturday, September 13

Lancaster Polo Club. Forney Cup.

Sunday, September 14

Lancaster Polo Club, Porche Cup.

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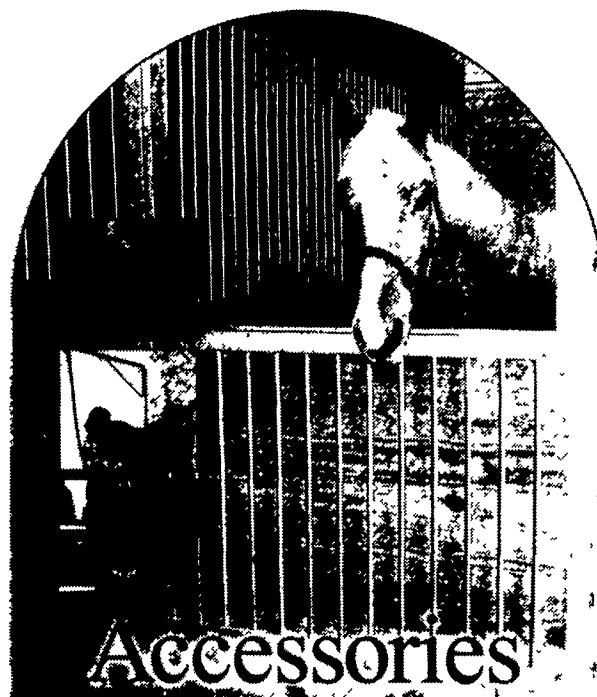
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