



From pit-ponies to First in Class

Welsh Mountain Ponies strut their stuff

By ANN KORNUA

There is an air of intelligence about a Welsh Mountain Pony, together with a playful personality and an untamed streak. Dallas Sawyer and her family have some of the best international bloodlines in the Welsh Mountain Ponies on their farm, Ridgebrook. Their top mare, Lianna DM Popkiss, handled by Heather Black, has placed first in class for two years running at the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto.

Their six Welsh ponies are typical of this unique breed. Dallas jumped into the pen with them to give a quick demonstration of the Welsh at work and immediately these disciplined animals lined up and with a crack of a whip, they took off in a thud of hooves. Even though the ponies were out in a foot of snow, they handled beautifully and playfully romped around the pen. One rushed past and broke free of the herd, raising her head with pride. "That's Princess!" Dallas yells out, laughing. "The first day we took her out of the barn, she tore about for ten or fifteen minutes around the pen and I thought she was going to die. Her heart was just pounding. She was so happy to be running." Her registered name, "She's Like the Wind" is so appropriate.

The breed has been native to Wales since before the time of the Romans. Historically, this pony has served many purposes, working on farms, coalmines and even pulling chariots. George E. Brown of Illinois, one of the founders on the Welsh Pony and Cob Society of America in 1907, first imported the Welsh to the US in the 1880's. Welsh ponies have a characteristic trait of being trustworthy and their love of people make them a great choice for almost any form of light farm work. They are friendly and have outstanding temperaments.

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The Ridgebrook farm has been in Douglas Sawyer's family for over fifty years and was originally just a little farmhouse cottage tucked away in the escarpment as a weekend getaway. About six and a half years ago, the Sawyers turned their love of Welsh Ponies into a full time passion. They now have six ponies on their farm with one on the way. "When we first got interested in the Welsh, we met Adele and Dick Rockwell, the foremost Welsh breeders in Ontario," Dallas said. "We spent about two years reading up about the bloodlines and were fortunate to get two mares, Popkiss and Desiree." Lianna DM Popkiss's sire was the famed stallion from Great Britain, Twyford Dollar Money. Dollar Money won the US Nationals three years in a row.

For more information you can contact the Sawyers at Ridgebrook by calling 905-854-2618 or the Welsh Pony and Cob Society of Canada in Newmarket, Ontario 905-944-0837.



PHOTOS BY ANN KORNUA

Thundering across the field, these ponies exhibit the best of the Welsh breed.

Horses & Other Animals
By A.W. Finn

Noriker

NORIKER - This horse was bred and developed over several thousand years in the mountain regions of Austria. The Noriker is an attractive looking light draught horse. It is a strong and hardy breed and is noted for its calm temperament, sound limbs and sure-footedness. These attributes make it an ideal all-round workhorse over difficult mountain terrain. Despite its ancient origins there was no formal breeding programme until recent times. Some 400 years ago the Prince - Archbishop of Salzburg is credited with forming the first studbook. It was then that standards were drawn up, for both mares and stallions, and a stud farm established. The toughness and capacity for hard work of the Noriker became popular throughout Europe. Different strains evolved, including the Bavarian, now known as the South German Coldblood. Various colour lines, tracing back to the Andalusian and Neapolitan horses, also had an influence on today's breed. Height of stallions is 16 - 17 hh and mares 15.3 to 17 hh.

Selvakumar, a mongrel dog owned by a family living on the southeast coast of India is credited with saving the life of his young master and playmate. It seems that the dog was responsible for nipping and tugging at the boy till he reached safety. This rescue happened during the tsunami that struck the region on December 26. The interesting fact is that the boy's uncle gave him the mongrel two years before he died in an accident. The dog was given the uncle's name.

Six Thai elephants, who a year ago were stars in battle scenes for the movie *Alexander*, were pressed into service to help clear the debris left after the devastating tsunami that hit Thailand. They are working in the prime tourist areas where massive waves killed 5,000 and left 4,000 homeless.

In the wake of pit bull attacks across the country, especially the latest attack in British Columbia in which a toddler was killed, the New Brunswick provincial government is considering restricting certain breeds in that province.

Global warming in the Arctic is accelerating at an alarming rate. It is happening twice as fast as anywhere else and could cause everything from the extinction of polar bears to the flooding of large parts of Florida. The report by the Arctic Council is a result of a four-year study by 250 scientists from eight countries.

A new Bio-Gas project in Lucan, Ontario is trying cattle manure as a hydro source. The project hopes to produce heat and electricity, reducing farm odours in the process. The McGuinty government is investing \$1.6 million.

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