

American Cream News E-Letter

Volume 24 No.1 Spring 2014



Sign up NOW for the 2014 Meeting

Celebrate 70 years of ACDHA



Pictured: Karen Smith, Supervisor Barn Operation at Coach & Livestock Dept., Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

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ACDHA members and registered American Cream Draft Horse owners, come join the association in celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the American Cream Draft Horse Association. This is also our annual meeting and we would like to see any present, past and future members who own registered horses to join in the discussions and comradery of a dedicated group of people that would like to see these horses to someday become as common as the Belgian and Percheron horses. Proud owners of the only draft horse born and bred in the United States.

70th Annual Meeting of the American Cream Draft Horse Association

Tuesday June 17th arrival day - Check in at Clarion Hotel after 4pm. 6-7 pm reception at stables light snacks and drinks. 7-8 pm Elaine Shirley Supervisor of Rare Breeds who has been with CW for 30 years will talk on the "Importance of Heritage/ Rare Breeds". After Elaine's talk we head back to hotel for sharing pictures and stories.

Wednesday June 18th- 9 am a room at the hotel has been reserved for a discussion with Dr. Phillip Sponenberg from Virginia Tech and The Livestock Conservancy. Dr. Sponenberg last spoke to us in 2004 here at Williamsburg at the 60th meeting. Buffet lunch is going to be catered at the hotel. Then off to meet Ed Schultz Historic Farming Supervisor for "Get up, Whoa, Haw, and Gee: Oxen in the 18th Century Virginia" around 2 pm. Ed promises this to be hands on fun time!! Dinner will be at the Whaling Company restaurant at 6:30pm.

Thursday June 19th- 9 am the 70th annual ACDHA meeting will be held at the hotel. Again a different buffet lunch be will catered by the hotel. After lunch we hope to have a presentation from Clair Rierson (Grandson of C.T. Rierson); Clair spoke to us in 2011 at the annual meeting in Pennsylvania. Dinner will be on your own or we can discuss going as a group to a Colonial Williamsburg tavern or local restaurant.

Friday 20th – meet at stables at 9:00 – 10:00 am Mark Schneider Character Actor for 17 years at CW will talk and demonstrate "The Horse at War During The American Revolution" (he has portrayed Napoleon all over the world), 10:00 – 11:00am meet Mr. Purity editor of the Virginia Gazette (Dennis Watson) and Benedict Arnold (Scott Green) as they portray their characters and explain how they use the horses in their programs. At 11:00 am there will be a Costume Design tour for only 18 members on a first serve basics (please if you have done this tour let new members sign up first and then we fill up available spaces). Lunch on your own perhaps a Colonial Williamsburg Tavern or Merchant Square. Then off to explore on your own -

TICKETS

It was decided it would be too complicated to do tickets since we are not staying at a CW hotel this year. So if members want to actually go into a building they will have to choose which ticket they want. Karen Smith can get some members a discount ticket, but not all. With everything we scheduled at the meeting some members are going to Busch Gardens or shopping over the weekend. If you want tickets just let me know when you get here. Tickets have to be used on the day they are purchased or buy a yearly pass.

Cost for tickets are

Single day – Adult \$26.00

Youth \$13.00

Multi day – Adult \$33.00

Youth \$17.00

Annual pass – Adult \$65.00

Youth \$33.00

Good Day Fellow Creamers, **Letters of Intent for ACDHA Directorship**

Kerrie and Timex

I would like to submit this letter to announce my intention to run for a position on the ACDHA Board of Directors. Serving the ACDH Association as a director is a fantastic opportunity to serve you the membership and our magnificent American Cream Draft breed. I wrote an article for the ACDHA Newsletter a few months back. I provided my thoughts about the Annual Association Meeting (Sacramento), and the importance of not just becoming a member of the ACDHA, but a member becoming involved and participating in the Association.



I am Kerrie Beckett, and I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I am an animal scientist and ecotoxicologist (I evaluate the effects and consequences of environmental pollution and chemicals on organisms and the environment). When I am not at the office, I also run an animal rescue including horses, Great Danes, and anyone else in need of some spoiling. I was first introduced to Creams when I got Timex (the gelding of Mike and Nancy McBride). I then added Princess Buttercup, a Cream mare found at New Holland horse auction in the kill pen. Following Buttercup's arrival, Dolly, from the Michigan horse rescue, made her way into my mix. And the Cream doesn't stop there ...

I find there is grand value in creating true fans of the American Cream Draft Horse, and building a network of supporters that can broaden the views and importance of saving the Creams. Creams are magnificent work and pleasure horses, and their identity should include both their beauty and the strength they possess. Capturing the history and significant milestones, saving individual horses (rescue), and being diligent about identification and tracking Creams are critical components to the overall survival of the Creams. If elected to the board, I would pursue these issues, as well as wherever the journey may take us, to ensure the long-term future of the breed.

Thank you kindly for your consideration,

Kerrie Beckett
MerEquus Farm & Rescue
Poland Spring, Maine

ACDHA Statement of Fees
updated January 1, 2005

MEMBERSHIPS (Due by June 30th)

Full Membership:	
One Time Fee	\$30
Annual Dues	\$25
Associate Membership:	
One Time Fee	\$30
Annual Dues	\$25

REGISTRATIONS

Up to one (1) year of age:	
Members	\$25
Non-Members	\$40
Over one (1) year of age:	
Members	\$50
Non-Members	\$80

TRANSFERS

Within fourteen (14) days of sale:	
Members	\$20
Non-Members	\$30
After fourteen (14) days of sale:	
Members	\$40
Non-Members	\$60

Address all correspondence to:
American Cream Draft Horse Association
193 Crossover Road • Bennington, VT 05201

American Cream News is a newsletter for the membership of the American Cream Draft Horse Association, published quarterly, as of 2005. American Cream News welcomes articles, pictures, letters, and classified ads dealing with American Creams and equipment and events dealing with draft horses from our members. Members can enjoy their newsletter electronically, published to our ACDHA website. It is published publically with the intent of educating others about our horses and creating a true interest in there existence.

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Hello ACDHA Members,

The nature of this letter today is to let you know that I'm interested in serving this organization as a director. I would also like to ask for your consideration to this position. Now, for a little background on me: I grew up on a farm where we used draft horses to raise field corn, grow a large garden, haul wood & mow, rake, and haul hay. When I say grew up, I mean I cannot remember NOT using Belgian horses for these tasks. My introduction to the nostalgic Cream Draft, was in an article in one of the draft publications in the late 80's. I was immediately enamored with this majestic breed. At that point I determined in my mind that I would one day raise these beautiful horses. I wanted to immediately go purchase some, however, we were raising registered Belgians at the time. Not to mention my Father was still running the farm and breeding operations at that time. Now, fast forward over 20 years, I have 2 very nice Cream Draft mares and recently acquired a magnificent young stallion of which all are registered.



Michael's Creams: Molly, Mae and Little John

Being elected to this position will allow me to help with many aspects of this organization, including, keeping this horse pure and true to type. I am very much in touch with draft horses and draft owners as it relates to farming with horses, that which this horse was bred for. With that being said we, in the American Cream Draft, have something to offer every draft owner from farmer to the show ring.

Through the medium of Facebook alone, I have been contacted by numerous horse owners who are interested in the Cream breed and are desperately in search of information on these beautiful and loving creatures. It has been my privilege to direct them to the information they desire. I am also thrilled to connect more great people to this wonderful organization. Together, I am certain that we can grow the ACDHA to an awesome level of dominance and gain tremendous recognition for our beloved Creams.

I look very forward to helping with the propagation of this breed.

Many Blessings,

Michael Bradford
TN

Visit the ACDHA store at zazzle.com
 Follow the link on our web page at
www.ACDHA.org and earn an extra
 15% for the association.
 You will find shirts, calendars, gifts
 and more.



ACDHA Members,

This letter is written for consideration to be a candidate for Director of the ACDHA .

My qualifications to fill the position of Director have been established by promoting the American Cream Draft Horse breed at public and private events throughout California since joining the Association in 1995, and during a previous term as Director/VP of the ACDHA . The Greenwood Ranch "Creams" are still busy at work representing the Calif. Fire Service, the Native Sons of the Golden West, and Reno Rodeo in parades and events during the year. Awareness of the challenges that still confront the future growth of this breed, help my resolve to work toward helping this horse achieve a safe population level. It would be a privilege to serve once again on the ACDHA Board of Directors.

Respectfully,

John Schwartzler
Owner - Greenwood Ranch
2299 Sliger Mine Rd.
Greenwood, Calif. 95635
johngfd@csfa.net



*John and his team at Old
Sacramento Gold Rush Days 2013*

FROM THE DRIVERS SEAT

Dear ACDHA Members,

As I sit here writing this it is the first week of April. We are finally seeing signs of Spring but a few days ago I was in touch with a member in the far North East who still had 4' of snow! For us in Maryland it was a wild cold snowy Winter.

The nominating committee has presented a slate for you to consider. I would personally like to thank Linda Corson who chaired this committee, Sue Engel, Connie Purchase and Terry Precord for taking on this important task. Years ago the Board of Directors hardly ever communicated with each other between meetings. As the Association becomes more involved with issues like rescues, ownership and registrants the roll of the Board members becomes more important. This past year we exchanged hundreds of emails as we sought solutions to a lot of situations and problems. I believe the Board is an excellent cross section of the membership coming from all area of the Country with a lot of different philosophies. Please take the time to cast your vote by mail if you are unable to attend the meeting in person.

Karen Smith has done an excellent job of planning activities, securing the host hotel, arranging meals and tours. Doctor Phillip Sponenberg is scheduled to give a presentation. Afterward he will take questions. We will also have a presentation by Clair Rierson, grandson of C T. Rierson, one of our founders. Clair will speak about his grandfathers farming operation using their Creams.

Recently I received a request from a college student in Springfield, Missouri. Her college professor had stated to her class that there were no native American draft horses. I sent her a number of our brochures for her to show him that he was wrong. As I was looking the brochure over I realized our 70 the Anniversary date is July 11. Our meeting will almost coincide with the date of our founding.

Remember, at this year's meeting we have to decide where we go next year. Any proposals?

I will end with my usual plea, reports are due - stallion breeding, foaling and deaths of registered Creams. Without your reports we have no idea what is happening to our breed. Are we moving forward or declining? Membership Dues are due and the newsletter editor needs pictures and articles.

Hope to see you in Williamsburg. Let's set a record for attendance.

Frank Tremel
President

MEETING COUPON

Name of attending member(s): _____

Dinner Tuesday evening at CW Coach & Livestock building. How many in your party? _____

Dr. Sponenberg Lunch on Wednesday is \$13.00 inclusive per person. How many for lunch? _____

Meeting Lunch on Thursday is \$13.00 inclusive per person. How many for meeting lunch? _____

(optional)

Sign up for Costume Design tour on Friday at 11:00am. Name _____

Total money enclosed for meals: _____

Please send above form to Nancy Lively no later than May 15th

This will also be the count of people attending the meeting, if you do not intend to have the lunch at the meeting but will be attending please indicate so our secretary/treasurer will have the meeting materials available for you.

ACDHA Dues for 2014

Due by June 30th

Voting Member: \$25.00

Associate Member: \$25.00

Number of Voting Members: _____

Amount: \$ _____

Number of Associate Members: _____

Amount: \$ _____

Make check payable to ACDHA

Check # _____

Amount Enclosed _____

Mail to:

ACDHA

193 Crossover Road * Bennington. VT 05201

Update e-mail address for ACDHA records

_____ @ _____

Attention registered American Cream Draft Horse Stallion Owners

An effort to update our official web page is underway. One of the first steps toward that end is to add a stallion page. This will give interested parties an easier way to search for available studs. The information we will post is the name of the horse, registry number, year of birth, sire and dam, and your preferred way of contact (phone, e-mail, mailing address). We also could post a picture of your animal if you would like to submit one.

If you approve of us including your horse on our official web page, www.acdha.org then please verify;

Horse name-

Registry number-

Year of birth-

Sire and dame-

Your preferred contact information-

And include any other information you would like.

Also please feel free to include a photo.

Thank you for participating.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Connie Purchase 2120 177th Ave Milford, IA 51351

By-Law Motion from 2013 Meeting Postponed for 2014 Meeting

Motion # 14

Moved by Betsy Ziebell and Wendell Lupkes in Betsy's absence.

I move a new ARTICLE X and moving X to XI; XI to XII; XII to XIII; XIII to XfV; XrV to XV; and XV to XVI.

ARTICLE X. UPGRADING FROM TRACKING REGISTRY TO CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION.

1. The First generation Registered Tracking female when mated to a Registered American Cream stallion produces an offspring which is one-half cream. If it is a female and meets the Requirements for Tracking, it is recorded as one-half cream.

2. The Second generation Registered Tracking female (one-half cream) when mated to a Registered American Cream stallion produces an offspring which is three-fourths cream. If it is a female and meets the Requirements for Tracking it is recorded as three-fourths Cream.

3. The Third generation Registered Tracking female (three-fourths cream) when mated to a Registered American Cream stallion produces an offspring which is seven-eighths cream. If it is a female and meets the Requirements for Tracking, it is recorded as seven-eighths cream.

4. The Fourth generation Registered Tracking female (seven-eighths cream) when mated to a Registered American Cream stallion produces an offspring which is fifteen-sixteenths cream. If it is a female and meets the Requirements for Tracking, it is recorded as purebred.

5. The Fifth generation REGISTERED female (fifteen-sixteenths cream) when mated to a Registered American Cream stallion produces an offspring either MALE OR FEMALE meeting requirements for Registration is recorded as PUREBRED.

Reasoning: See Articles by D. Phillip Sponenberg, DVM, Phd. "My Take on Cream Draft Horse Issues: 2002" and "2013 Thoughts on American Cream Draft Horse Conservation"

Discussion and questions ensued on how this promotes breed improvement, do we have enough animals to start this now, etc. Also, Dr. Sponenberg may be at our 2014 meeting so we could discuss this with him in person.

John Schwartzler moved and Linda Corson seconded to table Motion #14 until the 2014 meeting. The motion carried unanimously.



Karen Smith on the job at Colonial Williamsburg



My Take on Cream Draft Horse Issues: 2002

D. Phillip Sponenberg, DVM, PhD

Importance of the Breed

The American Cream Draft Horse is an important breed for a number of reasons. The breed has been determined, by blood typing, as being a genetically distinct breed of draft horse. In addition to that, they are the only heavy draft breed in existence today that originated in North America. Thirdly, they are a unique color that is otherwise rare in horses of any type.

The importance of breeds is that they are consistent genetic packages. Obviously, some "breeds" with studbooks have departed from that concept, so that Pinto horses (for example) come in all shapes and sizes, with only the color unifying them into an identifiable genetic package. The determination of "what is a breed" therefore becomes partly political and partly biological, and only the breeders of a specific breed (American Cream Draft Horses in this case) can decide whether color alone should drive the identity of the breed, or whether the balance of the conformational, historical, and color package should drive it. The underlying philosophies behind this decision are all important, for they determine the future of the breed and the success of its conservation.

The question of "what is this breed?" is the all important question for the American Cream Draft Horse, and the answer to that question is going to drive all the other decisions. At one extreme the answer could be "The American Cream Draft Horse is any heavy draft horse of an acceptable Cream color." The other extreme is something like "The American Cream Draft Horse is a distinctive, compact, heavy draft horse from Midwest origins that is unique by virtue of history, breeding, and color." No one answer is necessarily "right," but each breeder as well as the group needs to answer the question of "what is this breed?" in order to proceed forward as a reasonably unified group effort.

Type

The issue of breed definition becomes extremely important to the American Cream. This is especially true because the breed and the color can be easily confused. Most American Creams tend to have a "middle of the road" useful heavy draft body size and conformation. This is a type that was much more common several decades ago, and has become more rare as draft horses largely went from field work to show and parade work. While exceptions to this rule do occur within the breed, to my understanding this is a reasonably accurate generalization.

The type is somewhat variable, and along with type, the color is also somewhat variable. It is easy with the American Cream to concentrate totally on the color, and less on the conformational type. My opinion is that the uniqueness of the breed consists in type, color, and history, and breeders must be acutely aware of each if this breed is to maintain its unique character into the future.

Color

The color of the breed is, logically, cream. This simple statement glosses over a host of interesting genetic and philosophic questions which are important to the breed. The whole array of ideal characteristics for the American Cream Draft Horse include cream color, pink skin, and amber eyes. This trio of characteristics is sometimes disrupted, so that some have dark skin, some have dark eyes, some have blue eyes. The reason for this variability is that several different genetic mechanisms can and do lead to a fairly decent creamy color.

Cream color, especially with the details desired by the American Cream Draft Horse standard, is most reliably achieved by the champagne gene working on a sorrel or chestnut background color. Part of the problem with the champagne gene is that it is dominant, so that horses with one dose look remarkably like horses with two doses. The inability to detect the difference between horses with one dose and horses with two doses by visual inspection alone means that many horses within the breed are capable of producing non-Cream (generally sorrel) offspring, whether mated to other creams or to sorrels. This can be confusing and unsettling to breeders.

Against the background of the champagne gene are a few other genetic mechanisms that can produce a cream colored horse either occasionally or routinely. One of these is the gene causing palominos. This gene, especially on a pale sorrel background color, can easily produce creams. Most of these will be light, and most will have dark skin and dark eyes. But some will have reasonably light skin, and many will also have amber eyes.

This is not an immense problem, but when horses with the palomino gene are mated together they produce, a portion of the time, horses that are off-white with pink skin and pale blue eyes. These, due to the very light color and the blue eyes, are off-standard for the American Cream Draft Horse.

Another genetic mechanism that can lead to cream colored horses is not a simple, single gene. Selection for very, very pale sorrels can produce cream colored horses, although these are generally somewhat dark cream, and nearly always have dark skin along with dark eyes.

Tile various sorts of creams, resulting from the three main genetic mechanisms for producing creams, can confusing and have contributed to the annoying persistence of "off color" foals in breeding programs. Some of this is inevitable from the usual "champagne" genetic mechanism for producing creams, and this is only compounded by the other mechanisms that are thrown into the equation.

What to do with "off color" foals (and horses)

The production of horses of non-cream color is nearly inevitable for a long time into the future, and the elimination of these from the breeding population has very profound consequences for a rare breed. The question of what to do with these horses very quickly becomes one of philosophy and reflects back to the "what is a breed" issue described in the opening paragraphs of this essay.

If the American Cream Draft Horse is only a color variety of heavy draft horse, then these "off color" foals can be eliminated from registration. That said, it will still be important, for a long time into the future, for the breed to allow outcrosses to bring in fresh vigor into the stock. This strategy is perfectly acceptable for a group of horses whose identity is based only on color.

On the other hand, if the entire genetic package (type, history, color) is of interest to conservation, then the issue of these "off color" foals must be very carefully considered. My own opinion is that the type of the American Cream is just as important as the color, and securing both the type and the color are going to take years of dedication and work. I therefore favor keeping track of the dark foals, whether these be sorrel or dark cream. If they have Cream background, and if they have appropriate type, then these horses have a great deal more to offer the conservation of this important breed than do any horses from other breeds that could be used as outcrosses.

My own strategy (with the realization that only the breeders of the breed can make the final decision) would be to register and carefully track the dark foals and horses that are produced from cream matings. The overall strategy for conserving the breed would then become something like this.

Creams would be registered on the basis of background, color, and type. That is, a "found" cream horse should qualify for registration on the basis of color and correct type, and ideally would also have some historical or pedigree connection to the breed.

Dark horses would be registered only if they were the result of registered cream mated to registered cream, or registered cream mated to registered dark horse coming from cream parentage.

A final detail is that the dark horse registrations should be limited to females only, and only those that come from registered parents. This would eventually result in four basic types of foals.

1. Creams produced by cream to cream mating (fillies and colts registerable).
2. Dark horses produced by cream to cream matings (only fillies registerable),
3. Creams produced by cream stallion to dark mare matings, with the dark darn registered in Cream registry - not an outcross to another breed (fillies and colts registerable).
4. Dark horses produced by cream stallion to registered dark mare matings (only fillies registerable).

As time proceeds it will become likely that a greater and greater percentage of foals are "type 1" foals (cream from cream to cream). Until the registered population reaches something on the order of 1000 living mares, though, it makes very little conservation sense to discard the dark horses that are of cream heritage. They should have the correct history and type, and all that is lacking is the cream color, which the stallions can provide to foals.

Closing the books

Closing the books becomes a very contentious and very interesting issue. This issue has no single answer, and quickly becomes one of philosophy. My own philosophy on this is that (in general) rare breed books should desire to include all pure examples of the breed, while including none that are not pure. This is a tricky balance to achieve.

In that the American Cream is a combination of type, heritage, and color, and so would limit the inclusion of horses from non-registered parents to only those horses that satisfy all three factors.

That is, I would restrict registration of horses from unregistered parents to those that were very typical, and also those with no history of outcrossing from other breeds. Any horse included should also have the correct color, skin, and eye characteristics.

Benefits/losses from closed book

If the book is closed too soon, then the result is that horses that are indeed members of the breed are left out. If the book is closed too late, then the risk of including nonrepresentative horses becomes greater.

The basic risk of a closed book is that the breed is very small, and if there were no way to include "found" horses of the right type and history, then the breed lost out on the genetic breadth those horses offer. The risk of a totally open book is that the breed could easily be swamped by horses that are of incorrect type or breeding, and the basic character of the breed would then change.

The main advantage of a closed book is that the genetics of the breed become isolated from other breeds. Over several generations of breeding within the population, and selecting for the unique type and color of the breed, the result will be a genetically predictable population that is reproducing American Cream type and color consistently.

Grading up

Related to the issue of closing the books is the issue of upgrading. Upgrading is a very useful exercise, and can be a lifeline to a numerically small breed such as the Cream. The goal of an upgrading program is largely numerical - to provide an avenue for increased numbers. A related issue is the incursion of outside genetic material into the breed.

This is not all bad, but is only good if the basic, predictable, breed package is maintained.

A recognized upgrading program has another advantage, which is the tracking of crossbred and early grade animals so that they are identified and located. This avoids the issue of these appearing at some future date as bona fide purebreds.

The basic strategy for upgrading is to use a sequence of registered horses for mating to succeeding generations until the type and predictability of the American Cream are achieved. The mechanics could work something like this.

The first generation an outside mare (and I would be pretty lenient on the mare, that is, I would not require that she be registered as another Draft breed) is mated to a Cream stallion. The offspring are 1/2 Cream. The fillies are retained for breeding, and registered or recorded as 1/2 Cream.

The 1/2 Cream fillies are then mated to Cream stallions. The resulting foals are 3/4 Cream, and at this point these probably start to closely resemble Creams in type and probably color. The fillies are again registered.

The 3/4 fillies are then mated to Cream stallions, and the result is a 7/8 Cream foal crop. Type and color are probably just about right at this point. I would still argue that one more generation is necessary, to 15/16, before colts should also be registered and allowed for breeding, and in general I prefer to limit registration of colts of 31/32 which would be yet one more generation.

The value of an upgrading program is partly genetic and partly numerical. The grades are bringing numbers and vitality to the breed. They are also allowing more breeders to participate than could if only fully registered mares could be used. This should have a beneficial spin-off in that those grade mares need registered stallions for mating, and this should help the stallion market.

After years of pondering grading programs, I fully believe that they have a place in any breed (even Thoroughbred Horses and Holstein Cows!). Each program must be tailored to the breed in question, and needs to be consistent with its background history and type. In the case of the American Cream Draft Horse I feel that it would be safe to consider the 15/16 level as essentially purebred.

A well-organized and documented grading program could be of great benefit to the American Cream and its breeders.

*Spring has sprung
Has the fun begun?
Happy Spring
To everyone!*



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DNA testing

DNA testing will only be of benefit to the breed if it is important to verify parentage. It tells very little on top of verifying parentage. This could be especially important if upgrading becomes common or popular. It does add expense and effort to horse breeding, although this is less cumbersome now than it would be with blood typing. The results of DNA testing and blood typing are slightly different. DNA testing works very well for parentage verification, and if this is viewed as important to the breeders, then a program could easily be instituted.

Type - one for show, one for work

The issue of type is all-important for the American Cream Draft Horse. This is the most important question to address. If the American Cream is not unified by type, then it is a "color only" breed, and type will then be variable. This can have an advantage in that those interested in show can participate in the breed, as can those interested in work. This does, however, take a great deal away from the breed in terms of its status as a genetic package.

Breeds that focus on a single type and use generally do a good job of persisting in the marketplace. This is going to be a tough issue for Creams and their breeders. My bias is that the traditional work type is the more unique of the types, and therefore the more worthy of conservation. Smaller work-type breeds seem to be undergoing a real surge in popularity, and this can greatly benefit the American Cream Draft Horse.

2013 Thoughts on American Cream Draft Horse Conservation

D. P. Sponenberg

The breeding and conservation of American Cream Draft Horses can quickly become controversial. The breed has a distinct color, and the color often gets confused with the breed. Breeders, as is appropriate, have strong opinions on the future direction of the breed. Some favor driving, some favor riding, some emphasize color, some emphasize temperament. None of these is a trivial difference. My opinion for future directions is but one of many and is offered in hopes of making a positive contribution to ongoing discussions.

Breeds, to be useful, are reasonably distinct and uniform genetic pools. When they are uniform the result is predictability, so that people interested in a specific package of conformation, health, and performance traits can select an animal from an appropriate breed and be confident that the animal will meet their needs.

One "aha" moment I had about the American Cream Draft Horse came on an airplane flight to an annual meeting. I was to speak at the meeting, and few if any breeders had yet met me. On the flight, two breeders were discussing the breed, and one was distressed that he had mated two Creams and produced "Belgian" foal. The "aha" in this case was that the breeder was confusing the color with the breed, and this can actually help to explain many of the matings in the older years of the studbook. Not all "Belgians" that are listed are actually Belgians, some of them are sorrels from Cream matings. This distinction is important.

The American Cream Draft Horse has been documented as being a breed in the narrow, genetic sense of the word, which is the only really useful meaning of "breed." This was done by Dr. Gus Cothran working with blood types and DNA. His conclusions also, and importantly, reflect the experience of breeders and owners. When asked, they say that it would be easy to pick out the different breed origins of sorrel draft horses if they were all lined up. That is, the one from Cream heritage would look different than the one from Belgian ancestry, and so forth with Percheron, Suffolk, Shire, and Clydesdale. This is an important detail, because it indicates that the essence of an American Cream Draft Horse is much more than its attractive color. It is this "package under the color" that is unique, and that must be conserved. This is all the more difficult and important with a rare breed.

In order to most adequately conserve the "package under the color," matings should ideally only be within the breed, and not outcrosses to other breeds. Every time an outcross foal is produced the result is a dilution of the genetic heritage of the American Cream Draft Horse. Enough of that has gone on in the past, and future breeding should be entirely within the breed. This, of course, raises the question of what this breed is, and in my opinion it is more than color. This has an effect on what horses should be used in making, those next generations of this breed.

The color issue in the breed seems straightforward, but is actually complicated. The ideal cream color is likely a chestnut base with the addition of the champagne gene. Some horses in the breed also add the cremello gene to the mix. It is possible to test for these genes so that breeders know what they are dealing with. The trick here is that the "easy" solution is to test all horses, and eliminate those that have the cremello gene. If this is done quickly and thoroughly the result is to remove other genetic variation (conformation, temperament, health) from the breed that it may well need. Be very careful in legislating the removal of horses based on limited genetic tests, whether for color or for defects. Much more than the single gene will be removed, because culling on this basis removes the entire horse and not just the single gene.

It is possible, in the long run, to have a breed of horses that is completely homozygous (uniform) for the champagne gene on the chestnut base color. That population would always produce "gold champagne" (cream) foals. Reality may be slightly more complicated, because the average horse with two copies of champagne is lighter than the horses that have only one copy. So, if breeders

find the darker creams to be attractive and desirable then it might be wise to have horses with one copy (heterozygous) in the population. The present reality is far from this goal, anyway, but the discussion should at least be started.

The horses that carry cremello will likely be a bit too pale for most breeders. In addition, these horses can produce blue-eyed offspring and are frequently blue-eyed themselves. While this is not desirable (per breed standard) fixing this problem should be done slowly rather than quickly, in order to salvage as much other genetic influence from these horses as can be done.

The tracking registry is important to this breed, and can be used to good effect for sorrel as well as for cremello-carrying horses. These horses are much, much more "American Cream Draft Horse" than is any cream colored Belgian crossbred. As a result, they should be carefully tracked and wisely used to bring this breed to a future where they are genetically secure, genetically distinct, and recognizable as a valued and important part of America's breed heritage. The challenge to breeders is to save the entire breed package, and this means the color as well as the rest of the horse. Doing that will be challenging, but insisting on pure breeding within the Cream Draft Horse breed is a logical first step.

Effective use of the tracking registry can be imagined as a dynamic process. In thinking of the situation presently within the breed, there is the main registered portion, and the tracking portion. Each of these encompasses a certain number of horses. As time goes on the goal is to increase the main portion, and decrease the tracking portion. This change in relative proportions should be done by breeding, and not entirely by culling. The desired result is that the tracking horses do indeed contribute to that main portion of the breed in order to offer it a secure future. One strategy to do that is to wisely mate the tracking horses so that their foals qualify for the main register. For example, sorrel tracking horses can be mated to homozygous champagne horses to provide for 100% dark cream foals, thereby changing the tracking status in a single generation, but without losing the genetic strength those tracking horses bring to the breed.

The American Cream Draft Horse is a uniquely American product, and needs to be valued and carefully stewarded. Ideally this means pure breeding strategies, rather than crossbreeding strategies. And, this means breeders must be clear-headed about what horses get registered, what horses get tracked, and each horse's role in the breed making progress towards excellence and survival.



Dennis on Cavallier

A.I. Revisited.

A number of years ago there was a lot of discussion about A.I. By law changes were made and member Carol Pshigoda had her stallion available. Karen Smith of Colonial Williamsburg wrote an article for the newsletter detailing CW's experience with doing this. Recently there has been very little discussion about this.

On the East Coast we now have 3 stallions standing but they are all directly related. Ackerman's Danny Boy Jack, owned by Marilyn and Terry Precord, West River, Md. his son Rose Hill ADBJ 463 Lincoln, owned by Roy and Cheryl Martin of Dillwyn, Va. and his grandson Rose Hill Sandy's Quigley now located with Nancy and Dave Lively, Bennington, Vermont. The other situation we have is that almost all of the young mares in Maryland are out of Ackerman's Danny Boy Jack.

Technology has changed sufficiently over the past ten years and the success rate for using A. I. with equines has greatly improved.

Over a year ago Wendell Lupkes and I had a casual conversation about A.I. and the possibility that he might go through the procedure to have his stallion Forevergreen Clayton available if there was enough interest to make this financially possible. At least 3 mares were needed to offset the cost. This led to a number of conversations with my Vet who was very supportive and interested in doing this. So I made the decision to go ahead with this project and Wendell made the decision to proceed.

As of this time this is where we are:

1. April 2014, Forevergreen Clayton was sent to Iowa State University for testing, evaluation and is being taught to breed the phantom. The cost for this was \$960.
2. A decision to use chilled or frozen semen has not been made but both ways of shipping are available.
3. Decision was made to A.I. my mares in May after they have had a couple of strong heat cycles. My mares started cycling in February. This would give us April babies which is the perfect time of the year for us. I.S.U. collects from February 1 through June 30.

I plan on writing a short article for each newsletter detailing how this project goes for the next year. If you are interested in participating contact Wendell Lupkes.

Frank Tremel

to be continued



The many costumes of our hostess Karen Smith, an extra in the AMC mini series "Turn"



Registered American Cream Draft Owners (ACDHA Members and Non-Members)

The Association needs your help with records of our horses. Please complete the form and return to:

Nancy Lively
193 Crossover Road
Bennington, VT 05201

Personal:

NAME: _____ TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____

ADDRESS: _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP CODE: _____

Horse Information for Horses You Have:

NAME: _____ NAME: _____

REGISTERED: Yes _____ No _____ REGISTERED: Yes _____ No _____

IF NO, PLANS TO REGISTER? _____ IF NO, PLANS TO REGISTER? _____

NAME: _____ NAME: _____

REGISTERED: Yes _____ No _____ REGISTERED: Yes _____ No _____

IF NO, PLANS TO REGISTER? _____ IF NO, PLANS TO REGISTER? _____

Horse Information for Horses You Have Sold:

NAME: _____ NAME: _____

REGISTERED: Yes _____ No _____ REGISTERED: Yes _____ No _____

TRANSFER DONE: Yes _____ No _____ TRANSFER DONE: Yes _____ No _____

SOLD TO WHOM: _____ SOLD TO WHOM: _____

CONTACT INFO FOR BUYER: _____ CONTACT INFO FOR BUYER: _____

Deceased Horses

NAME: _____ REGISTRATION # _____ DATE OF DEATH _____

NAME: _____ REGISTRATION # _____ DATE OF DEATH _____

NAME: _____ REGISTRATION # _____ DATE OF DEATH _____