

PERCHERON Draft Horses

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HISTORY

The Percheron Horse originated in the province of Le Perche, near Normandy in France. It is widely believed that the Arabian horse played an important part in the development of the Percheron. By the time of the crusades the Percheron was widely recognized as outstanding for his substance and soundness, as well as for his characteristic beauty and style.

By the 17th century horses produced in Le Perche had attained widespread notoriety and were in demand for many different uses. The Percheron of this time showed less scale and easily adapted to pulling the heavy Mail Coaches of France. He stood from 15 to 16 hands high at this time.



Percheron Stallion

In the early 19th century the French government established a stud at Le Pin for the development of army mounts. In 1823, a horse named JEAN LEBLANC was foaled in LePerche and all of today's Percheron bloodlines trace directly to this horse.

Percherons were first imported to the United States in 1839, by Edward Harris of Moorestown, New

Jersey. The stallions, NORMANDY and LOUIS NAPOLEON, were imported to Ohio in 1851. LOUIS NAPOLEON was later sold into Illinois and wound up in the hands of the Dillon family who were instrumental in forming the Percheron Association.

Thousands of Percherons were imported to America in the last half of the 19th century, and importations continued up until World War II. The Percheron quickly became the favorite of both the American farmer and the teamster who moved freight on the nation's city streets. The Percheron was so popular that by 1930, the government census showed that there were three times as many registered Percherons as the other four draft breeds combined.

Following World War II the invent of the modern farm tractor made the breed nearly extinct. As America modernized and mechanized, the Percheron was all but forgotten. However, a handful of farmers, including many Amish, dedicated to the preservation of the breed, kept it alive through the next twenty years of the draft horse depression which lasted through the 1950s, and 1960s.

The late 1960's, saw a renaissance in the draft horse business as Americans rediscovered it's usefulness. Percherons are now

back on small farms and working in the forest. Thousands of Percherons are used for recreation such as hayrides, sleigh rides and parades.

Percherons are shown in competition hitching, halter and riding classes at many state and county fairs across the country. Percherons are used in advertising and promotion of other businesses. They are a common sight on many streets as the carriage business flourishes in many of our larger cities.

DISPOSITION AND CHARACTERISTICS

The Percheron has a very pleasing disposition. He is proud, alert, intelligent and a willing worker.

Percherons are usually black or grey, but there are also sorrels, bays, roans, etc. Many Percherons have white markings on the head and feet, but excessive white is undesirable. Percherons range in height from 15 to 19 hands high, most are between 16.2 and 17.3 hands high. They can weigh up to 2600 pounds with the average around 1900.

Percherons are noted for heavy muscling in the lower thighs and for an aspect of unusual ruggedness and power. Also, characteristic of the Percheron is the clean action and quality conformation of the feet and legs. An ideal horse should have a fairly long level croup with a big round hip. He should be close coupled and wide and deep through the chest, with plenty of back rib. The muscles of the arms, forearms, croup and gaskins are especially emphasized in a good drafter, and ease and balance of gait is essential. He is also expected to be of marked tractability and an easy keeper.

The Percheron head and neck are typical of the most attractive draft horse character. Good Percherons have a large and full prominent eye, a broad and full forehead, and straight face. His strong jaw and refined ears attractively set and carried with animation, suggest his Arabian ancestry. Stallions should have a ruggedness about the head and mares should have a feminine look.



Percherons for pleasure

The Percheron is very versatile. They are readily adapted to varying climates and conditions. They have the strength to pull heavy loads and the graceful style to pull a fine carriage. Percherons can be ridden and some have been known to make fine jumpers.

The Percheron is very handy in saving the young trees in the smaller woodlot operations as they do not need a wide road everywhere, they work. They can get on and work ground where even the most modern tractors fail. Their independent four-wheel drive conquers mud and snow to the shame of all man-made machines. There is a definite place on almost every farm for a team of Percherons horses, whether it be for work or play.

In 1876, a group of Percheron breeders met in Chicago, Illinois, and formed the Norman-Percheron Association and the first stud book was started. This was the first purebred livestock association formed in the United States. The following year the name Norman was dropped.



Percheron Mare

In 1905, Percheron breeders again met in Chicago and formed the Percheron Society of America which continued until 1934, when our present association, the Percheron Horse Association of America was formed as a non-profit organization. At its height, the Percheron Association registered in excess of 10,000 head per year and was the largest draft horse association in the world. Our association set many of the registration standards, most of which are in widespread use in today's many livestock breed registries.



Farm Team

Our present association has nearly 1,800 members representing nearly all 50 states, and the countries of Australia, Canada, Colombia, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, Mexico and the United Kingdom.

The modern association, as in the past, is dedicated to the promotion and preservation of the Percheron horse. Our association office processes all registrations and transfers of ownership, publishes a biannual breed magazine, and maintains an online registry. The Association helps support a National Show and sponsors a World Percheron Congress about every four years. Our association is run by eleven directors elected by the members. We hold an annual meeting for members at various locations around the country, on the typically held in late October. Our association is presently registering approximately 1,000 new horses each year and records over 1,500 changes of ownership each year.

PERCHERON HORSE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

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Youth Team



Eight-Horse Hitch