

## *The Percheron Horse Association of America*

***Our Mission:*** The Percheron Horse Association of America is a volunteer-based, membership-driven organization that is dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the Percheron horse.



# **PERCHERON**

Horse Association of America  
*The do-all draft horse!*

***Am I eligible to be a member of the Percheron Horse Association of America?*** Yes! Anyone can be a member of the Percheron Horse Association of America. You don't have to own a Percheron horse to become a member.

***How do I become a member of the Percheron Horse Association of America?*** Easy! You can find us at the contact information listed below. We are happy to help you join our Percheron family.

***What is the reach of the Percheron Horse Association of America?*** The Association is represented by hundreds of members, throughout the United States, Canada, and many nations worldwide!



The Percheron Horse Association of America

Box 141 Fredericktown, OH 43019

Ph: 1.740.694.3602 Fax: 1.740.694.3604

[www.percheronhorse.org](http://www.percheronhorse.org)



***What does the Percheron Horse Association of America do?*** The primary function of the Percheron Horse Association of America is the registration of purebred Percheron horses. Beyond registration, the Association boasts a variety of committees and initiatives that promotes the Percheron horse, including an annual national show, youth programming and scholarships, the regular publication of the Percheron News, as well as the management of the World Percheron Congress, which takes place every four years.

***Where can I buy a Percheron horse?*** Contact us. We will be happy to put you in touch with Percheron horse breeders that can help you fulfill your Percheron dreams!



The Draft Horse Journal



## ***Tell Me About the Percheron Horse!***

***What is a Percheron?*** Percherons are a breed of draft horse. The Percheron breed is one of the largest-sized members of the world's domestic horse population: *Equus ferus caballus*.

***What does a Percheron look like?*** Most Percherons are entirely black or grey in body color. Percheron horses may have white markings on their foreheads, the front of their faces, or on their lower legs.

***How tall is a Percheron?*** Horses are measured in units called 'hands'. One hand (hh) equals 4 inches. Most mature Percherons range from 16 hh to over 18 hh (64" to 72") at the shoulder.

***How much does a Percheron weigh?*** Percherons can weigh up to 2300 pounds, with the average being around 1900 pounds.

***How will I recognize a Percheron?*** Apart from its usually black or grey color, the Percheron is most noted for its high arching, graceful neck; head, and tail set. An ideal horse should have a fairly long, level back with a big, round hip. The Percheron should be wide and deep through the chest.

***How do I feed a Percheron?*** Depending on their age and regular physical activity; on a daily basis, a mature Percheron will eat 25 to 50 pounds of hay and 2 to 8 gallons of oats, or commercial feed. Easy access to fresh, clean water is mandatory.

***How big are a Percheron's feet?*** Percheron feet can grow to as big as the size of a dinner plate. Some Percherons wear horse shoes made of steel. Shoes are held in place with special nails that are hammered up through the shoe and exit the hoof wall. The shoeing practice does not hurt the horse as the hoof wall is similar in structure to a human fingernail.



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## *The Percheron Horse in Early America*



### *When did the Percheron horse come to America?*

In 1839, Edward Harris of Moorestown, NJ attempted to import the first four Percherons into America. Sadly, only one of the four stallions, namely Diligence, survived the ocean trip. In 1851, two stallions, Normandy and Louis Napoleon, were imported into Ohio.

### *Percherons in growing America*

After the American Civil War, there was a significant demand for large draft horses for the growing cities and the expanding West. American farmers preferred the Percheron for plowing to till the thick sod of the prairie. The need for increased traction in the developing agricultural sector was the driving force behind the development of the Percheron horse in America.

During the 1880's, thousands of European Percheron horses were imported, to power America. Importation continued to escalate up until World War I, when an embargo was placed on French Percherons, banning imports. The embargo prompted a Percheron breeding boom in the United States!



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## *European Roots*

### *Where are Percheron horses originally from?*

During the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the native mares of the Le Perche region, located approximately 50 miles southwest of Paris, France, were mated with Arabian stallions. In 1823, a horse named Jean Le Blanc was foaled in Le Perche. All of today's Percheron bloodlines trace directly back to 'Jean Le Blanc'.

### *The Percheron Horse in Europe*

As primitive warfare became more advanced, traditional French war horses were transitioned to pulling stage coaches through France. The light colored greys and whites were preferred due to their easy visibility at night.

Upon the invention of cross-country railways, Percherons were needed in the cities for public transportation (pulling street trams) and moving freight. At the same time on the farm, the faster and stronger Percheron horse quickly replaced the traditional oxen.



## ***Percherons: the Do-All Draft Horse!***

### ***What do you do with a Percheron horse?***

The Percheron horse is the 'Do-All' draft horse! Percherons were one of the original agricultural 'work horses' in America. Today, Percherons are a source of enjoyment as a breeding horse, in agriculture, pulling and logging activities, as a competitive driving horse, as a pleasure driving or carriage horse, as a riding horse, and as therapeutic and rehabilitation companion.



### ***When can I start training my Percheron?***

As a general rule of thumb, Percheron foals can be safely weaned off of their mothers at four months of age. Learning to wear a halter and being tied, however, can be practiced before weaning. Between the ages of six months and two years, your Percheron will greatly benefit from learning additional ground manners. When almost three years old, your Percheron is ready to learn how to drive or be ridden.



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## *Breeding Percheron Horses*



***How long does a Percheron pregnancy last?*** The gestation period for draft horses is approximately 340 days. Some mares can be earlier; some later. It is not uncommon for a draft mare to carry her baby for a full year.

***How old does my mare have to be, before I can have her bred?*** In general, it is best to wait until a mare is three years old before exposing her to a stallion for breeding.

***To what age can I expect my mare to produce a foal?*** After reaching physical maturity, most mares are fertile for 10 or more years.

***Tell me about the Percheron estrus cycle:*** Normal Percheron mares' estrus cycle is 21 days, including a 5 to 6 day 'heat' and ovulation period.

***Do I have to own a stallion to have my mare bred?*** Not necessarily! You can have your mare bred naturally, however, many stallion owners will also ship chilled or frozen semen directly to you for artificial insemination. Embryo transfer activities are also a possibility. All breeding techniques should be carried out under the supervision of an experienced equine technician or veterinarian.



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***How much does a Percheron foal weigh when it is born?*** Generally, you can expect your Percheron foal to be about 10% of the mare's weight. For example, if your mare is 1500 lbs, you can expect the newborn foal to be about 150 lbs. On average, most foals range between 120 to 180 lbs.

***How tall is a newborn Percheron foal?*** Most normal newborn foals are around 36 to 40 inches at the shoulder.



# *The Colors of the Percheron Horse*

**Black:** Black is considered a “base” color and is known as Extension (E). Black horses are predominately black throughout their entire body, mane, tail, and points. Sometimes black horses will appear a brownish tone in their body, mane, and tail due to sun-bleaching or vitamin deficiencies. Black horses can be homozygous black, (EE), or they can be heterozygous black (Ee), meaning they carry a hidden red gene. Black is always dominant to red. White markings are suppressed more on black horses.

**Red/Chestnut/Sorrel:** All three descriptions represent the same gene, recessive extension (e). Red horses will be uniformly red all over the entire body but may be as dark as chocolate brown (liver). Some liver chestnut horses will have light straw to silver grey colored mane, tail, and legs but will never be black. Both flaxen and self-colored manes and tails occur within red horses. White markings express easiest on red horses. All red horses are (ee).

**Bay/Brown:** Known as Agouti (A) in genetics, bay and brown both involve black pigment being restricted to the mane, tail, ear edges, and legs. The body will range from bright red, to darkest brown. Some horses even appear black but usually have reddish hair around the muzzle and flank. Like black horses, bays can be either homozygous black (EE), or heterozygous black (Ee) and carry a hidden red gene. Agouti is responsible for the difference between a bay and a black horse. Bay is the rarest color of Percheron.

**Grey/Gray:** Grey is a dominant gene in that if a horse is grey, at least one parent must be grey. Grey is caused by depigmentation in the hair shaft. With age the horse will eventually appear “white”. Grey horses should always have black skin except where white markings are present. Grey horses can be born any of the other listed colors here. Foal base color is typically very dark compared to non-grey foals. White hairs will start to present in the face first around the eye, nose and ears. Some horses keep their base color longer than others. Both Dapple and Flea-bitten grey are present in the Percheron breed. Dapple is dying out. Grey horses typically express white markings easier.

**Roan:** Currently there are only Blue Roan (base Black), and one Red Roan (base Chestnut) horses within the breed. Roan is characterized as having a dark head, mane, tail, and legs while the body is covered in white hairs. Sometimes roaning will extend into the forehead, eyebrows, cheeks and edges of mane and tail head. Roan and Grey are not the same thing. Roan will never go completely white unless Grey is present. Roan is a dominant gene and one parent must be roan to produce roan. The body of roan horses will be dark in winter, and always lighten back “white” in spring through fall. Not desirable amongst most Percheron breeders.



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