

# “America’s First Horse” Is One Tough Pony

If you want a tough horse that can also be a great family horse, you may want one registered in the Horse of the Americas breeding registry. Known as America’s First Horse, the registry includes various localized groupings of what’s called the Colonial Spanish horse. These are near-pure descendents of horses first introduced by the Spanish in the early 1500’s.

“We include 17 different strains identified and approved by the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy,” says Vickie Ives, a founding member of Horse of the Americas and a leading breeder. “All of them were preserved by small groups of breeders or survived in isolation in the wild.”

The different strains are native to locales from Florida and the Carolinas to Montana and Wyoming and the American Southwest. All share basic physical similarities, stand 13.2 to 15 hands (54 to 60 in.) at the withers and weigh 700 to 900 lbs. Short coupled, deep bodied and narrow from the front, the horses have broad foreheads and narrow faces. They have an unusually long stride, and many are gaited.

“They are especially intelligent about verbal commands and learning tricks or new behaviors,” says Ives. “They don’t do well with constant repetition, as they are so intelligent that they get bored. They can’t provide the fast starts needed for barrel racing or cutting contests, but on pasture, they’ll work a quarter horse to death.”

Three distinct types have developed over

time, explains Ives. “The Northern Rancher was challenged by difficult winters, stores fat and tends to be broad and smaller than the other types,” she says. “The Southwest type tends to be leaner, does not store fat as well, has less body mass, and is narrow and longer so as to radiate heat. The median type is the Barb. It has retained more traits from the old Spanish Andalusian horses first introduced to the New World.”

Most strains are rare. Some, such as the Corolla, are found on a single island. There are only 130 head, and they have never been polluted by cross breeding. Others are well-known locally, such as the Florida Cracker, used by cowboys in that state. Two western wild horse herds could be registered, as well as some herds on the islands off the Carolinas.

Ives says the breed is long lived. She has a breeding stallion that is 25 years old. One of her horses is 33 years old and still used under saddle. She maintains that even the smaller-sized animals can carry full-size adults, recalling a 6 ft., 2 in. visitor who teased her about her small Corollas.

“I saddled a 13.2 hand for him and went for a ride,” she says. “The horse came in at a trot even though he was big enough to nearly touch the ground if he leaned to one side.”

She describes the breed as great cattle horses, really good for light harness, long distance and endurance riding. “They rarely need shoes as they have a thicker hoof wall than modern horses,” says Ives. They also have one less lumbar vertebra and often one



Photo courtesy Optical Harmonics

The Colonial Spanish Horse is a near-pure descendant of horses first introduced by the Spanish in the early 1500’s.

less set of ribs.”

Ives specializes in Spanish Mustangs at her ranch, Karma Farms. She also has some of the few Corollas ever removed from their island. (Once removed, they are not allowed back.) She says individual horses are priced according to age, training, color and bloodlines. However, the recent drought and the recession have affected prices.

“Normally they are fairly pricey, but right now it’s a buyer’s market,” says Ives. “Across the registry, foals start at \$500 to

\$1,200, green-broke start at \$750 to \$1,500 and finished horses are almost impossible to price as they rarely sell.”

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Karma Farms, 7925 U.S. Hwy. 59 N., Marshall, Texas 75670 (ph 903 935-9980; karmafarms@yahoo.com; www.karmafarms.com). Other breeders and information can be found at Horse of the Americas Registry, 2295 E. 1230 N., Attica, Ind. 47918 (www.horseoftheamericas.com).

## Zambian Farm For Orphans Continues To Grow

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

Carol McBrady’s farm for orphaned Zambian children has gotten a lot noisier since she was first featured in FARM SHOW in 2010 (Vol. 34, No. 4). There are 24 more children and much more livestock, as well as “parents” who live with the boys on Kulanaga Bana Farm, which means “Keeping Our Children”.

All the boys are orphans or abandoned children that the former Minnesota social worker rescued from the streets, with the help of her Minnesota-based nonprofit organization, Action For Children-Zambia.

The three 3-bedroom “townhomes” on the farm – built with donated cement blocks – each house eight children and a Zambian couple to care for them. It follows McBrady’s focus on keeping children in a family setting so they learn social and practical skills and become part of a community.

“The boys run the farm and even helped put up the housing,” McBrady says. “We had a local contractor teach them, and they did all the labor themselves under his direction. The same with the poultry. Four boys will go spend two weeks at a very large chicken farm for two weeks during school holiday where they’ll get training, experience and skills to put to use in our poultry operation.”

With a donated brick-making machine and molds, the boys are now making their own blocks to build more buildings including chicken coops to hold 250 hens each.

“Slowly, we are becoming more sustainable,” she says. “What we really need is an infusion of building funds and starter animals. It’s just very expensive to start such activities.”

She is astounded when she thinks about how many children have gone through her home and program since she moved to Lusaka in 2004. About 75 have been

educated and are now self-sustaining adults with jobs. About the same number are in her program now – in the city, on the farm or in homes of relatives.

With the growth of the farm, funds have been stretched thinner than ever, because there’s more children to feed, clothe and educate (an average of \$50/term). Working the 50-acre farm is hard manual labor. With only hand tools, the boys – with some help from local villagers – have managed to dig up about 25 acres to grow maize (a food staple at most meals) and vegetables.

A couple of the boys have received agriculture education and incorporated conservation and best management practices such as rotation and preserving water. There’s a well on the farm, but water must be hand-pumped to irrigate the crops. Later this month when planting season begins, the boys will plant soya beans for the first time along with the maize and vegetables. Soya doesn’t require as much fertilizer as maize.

“Right now, the costs of fertilizer are very prohibitive to what we can produce,” McBrady says. The manure from the chickens will help, and the addition of pigs would be another big boost.

“The farm gives us food, skills and profit that we can use to help sustain the organization so we are not donor dependent for life,” she emphasizes.

McBrady flew to Minnesota in October to visit family and attend fundraisers through the end of November. Besides money, she is open to ideas, advice, volunteers and donations of basic items to help the farm continue to grow.

“We could use solar lighting, a hammer mill for grinding our own maize, a pump, tank and irrigation system for the well,” she says. Plus, the used pickup they purchased a couple years ago needs a new engine.

“As any parent, I worry that there won’t be enough resources for the work to continue



AFCZ’s farm for orphaned Zambian children hopes to become self-sufficient but has many needs now if the children are to succeed. Donations are needed, says McBrady, who posed with some of “her” kids (top). The boys at the farm live in 3-bedroom “townhomes” they built themselves with donated cement blocks (above). They’ve learned to grow a variety of crops.



and the children to be taken care of. But I have to trust that we’ll continue to grow and get more support,” McBrady says, noting that she has survived by faith and help from supporters of her all-volunteer organization. The AFCZ website contains articles and

more information about her organization.

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