

# THE COLONIAL SPANISH HORSE IN THE USA: HISTORY AND CURRENT STATUS

## CABALLOS CRIOLLOS EN LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS: HISTORIA Y SITUACION ACTUAL

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### Palabras clave adicionales

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### SUMMARY

Colonial spanish horses in the USA descend from horses introduced from Spain during the conquest of the New World. They are a direct remnant of the iberian horses of the 1500s, and conserve this type of horse in present populations. The colonial spanish horses brought to the present United States of America all came from the region of present day Mexico, and these in turn descend from the original spanish imports to the Antilles. Other south american and caribbean horse populations had later, direct, input from horses directly from Spain. Their less select origin makes the north american horses interesting historically as well as biologically, since they are closer in type to those horses originally introduced into the New World than are other present types and breeds.

The colonial spanish horses in the USA are generally small and compactly made, with convex to subconvex facial profiles. Muscling tends to be long and tapering, and the croups slope distinctively with low set tails. The horses are used for a wide variety of uses, although endurance and pleasure riding are the most common tasks.

Colors vary widely, and indeed include variants not common in other populations descending from spanish horses. The colors include black, bay, chestnut, sorrel, grullo, dun, red dun, buckskin, palomino, cream, and an unusual chocolate brown based series of colors. Patterns of white include grey, roan, ticked, frosted roan, as well as tobiano, frame overo, sabino overo, and the leopard complex of colors.

The colonial spanish horse type is registered in different registries: Spanish Mustang Registry, Spanish Barb Breeders Association, Southwest Spanish Mustang Association, Florida Cracker Horse Association, and American Indian Horse Registry. These registries all register a similar type of horse, but all have slightly different emphasis or exclude certain different subpopulations from registration. The registries are open, but only horses of colonial spanish type that have accurate histories and phenotypes can be entered into the herdbooks. Therefore, in spite of the open herdbooks, these registries are all involved in true purebreed conservation of the colonial spanish horses.

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## RESUMEN

Los caballos criollos españoles en USA, descienden de los llevados desde España durante la conquista del Nuevo Mundo. Son un remanente directo de los caballos españoles del descubrimiento y conservan este tipo de caballo en las poblaciones actuales. Los caballos criollos de origen español en USA proceden de los del actual México y estos, a la vez, de las importaciones originales españolas a las Antillas. Otras poblaciones de caballos caribeños o sudamericanos tuvieron, posteriormente, impacto de caballos traídos directamente desde España. Su origen menos selecto hace a los caballos norteamericanos interesantes desde puntos de vista históricos y biológicos, pues son más parecidos a los caballos originalmente introducidos en el Nuevo Mundo que otros tipos o razas.

Los caballos criollos españoles en USA, son generalmente pequeños y compactos con perfiles convexos o subconvexos. La musculatura tiende a ser alargada y delgada y la grupa cae marcadamente con inserción baja de la cola. Los caballos son empleados para una amplia variedad de usos aunque la resistencia y paseo son las tareas más frecuentes. Los colores varían ampliamente y, por cierto, incluyen variantes que no son comunes en otras poblaciones que descienden de los caballos españoles. Los colores incluyen negro, bayo, castaño, alazán, ceniciento, pardo, pardo rojo, palomino, crema y una infrecuente serie de colores basados en el pardo chocolate. Las formas de blanco incluyen gris, ruanos, overos y el complejo de colores leopardo.

El tipo de caballo criollo está registrado en varias registros Spanish Mustang Registry, Spanish Barb Breeders Association, Southwest Spanish Mustang Association, Florida Cracker Horse Association y American Indian Horse Registry. Todos ellos incluyen un tipo similar de caballo, pero cada uno de ellos hace énfasis sobre ligeras peculiaridades o excluye ciertas subpoblaciones del registro. Los registros están abiertos, pero

sólo pueden incluirse en los herdbooks caballos de tipo criollo con historias y genotipos muy precisos. Por eso, a pesar de permanecer abiertos los registros están todos implicados en la conservación de la pureza de los caballos criollos.

## GENERAL HISTORY

The spanish colonial horse descends from the once vast population of spanish horses in the USA. The ancestors of these horses were brought to the New World by the spanish conquistadors and were instrumental in their ability to conquer the native civilizations (Cunningham-Graham, 1989; Denhardt, 1975 and Dobie, 1952). The source of the original horses was Spain, and this was at a time when the spanish horse was being widely used for improvement of horse breeding throughout Europe (Loch, 1986). The spanish horse of the time of the conquest had a major impact on most european light horse types (this was before breeds). The spanish horse itself then became rare, and was supplanted as the commonly used improver of indigenous types by the Thoroughbred and Arabian. These three (Spanish, Thoroughbred, and Arabian) are responsible for the general worldwide erosion of genetic variability in horse breeds. The Spanish type subsequently became rare and is now itself in need of conservation.

Following centuries of divergent selection the horse currently in Spain is distinct from the Colonial Spanish Horse (Cabrera, 1985 and Loch, 1986). The selection pressures and goals in North America, South America, and Spain all differed from one another.

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These differences in selection produced divergent horse breeds from a single original base. The result is that the current New World remnants are very important to horse conservation since they differ from Iberian horses. The north american remnants are especially interesting since they probably most closely represent the original, less selected, type of iberian horse brought to the New World.

The original horses from Spain came to the Caribbean Islands where populations were increased before export to the mainland (Cabrera, 1985). The horses coming to the Caribbean varied in quality and origin, but most were from southern regions in Spain. While the intent was to import horses of high quality this was sometimes frustrated by a tendency for the horseowning conquistadors to sell the high quality horses in Spain before departure, replacing them with lower quality animals, and pocketing the difference in price (Cunningham-Graham, 1989). Horse herds were increased on the Caribbean Islands and then were used to found mainland populations, first in Mexico and then elsewhere.

The conquest of the New World was not viewed as a wholly worthwhile endeavor in the early days of its beginning, so very little care was taken in the selection of the original animals sent to the West Indies (Cabrera, 1985). If anything, poorer quality animals were assured due to the shortness of supply of horses in Iberia at the time. Following the discovery of gold reserves and vast,

unexplored lands the conquest endeavor became more highly regarded and consequently more highly selected horses were added to the original imports.

In the case of North America the most common immediate source of colonial spanish horses was Mexico rather than the Caribbean. Even the eastern populations brought into Florida and the southeast were imported from Mexico and not from the closer Caribbean sources (Chard, 1980). The general pattern of the development of horse populations in what is now the United States involved single event, direct introduction, with subsequent diffusion of horses to from one area into neighboring areas. Once horses had been introduced into an area there was rarely if ever subsequent addition of horses directly from Spain into these local populations.

This history of relatively slow diffusion with little ongoing introduction is in contrast to the horse populations further south (Cabrera, 1985). Horse populations from most of the south american areas were started by initial introductions from the Antilles as well as large introductions of selected horses which came directly from Spain. South american horses also benefitted from repeated introductions of individual horses of excellent quality from both the Caribbean and also from Spain. These high quality horses were imported by wealthy landowners or powerful political figures. The result of the pattern of introduction is that the horses of Central and South America tend to be somewhat distinct

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from those in North America since the northern horses descend from horses initially less highly selected than those further south.

The distribution of colonial spanish horses in North America, at least initially, tended to follow the pattern of spanish settlement and influence. This involved the mission chains in California, as well as those in Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas (Denhardt, 1975). One frequently overlooked contribution is the important missionary influx into the southeast of the present United States. These missions were in northern Florida, and the southern portions of Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. From this influence the local native tribes developed their advanced plantation agricultural systems which involved the breeding of excellent spanish horses as well as other types of livestock.

Following the missionaries were the agriculturalists, and both of these groups increased the numbers of horses and their widespread use. Horses also were acquired by native tribes and quickly diffused throughout most of the western portions of the present United States. The horse allowed these tribes to become highly mobile warrior nomads, and this changed both the tribes and the distribution of the horses considerably. Added to these mission, rancher, and native tribal herds were vast feral herds of purely spanish horses which increased from lost and strayed animals (Dobie, 1952 and Ryden, 1970).

About 1700 the purely spanish horse occurred in an arc from the

Carolinas to Florida, west through Tennessee, and then throughout all of the western mountains and great plains (Dobie, 1952). In the northeast and central east the colonists were from northwest Europe, and in those areas northern european horses were more common than the colonial spanish type. However, even in these northern and eastern areas the colonial spanish horse was highly valued and contributed to the overall mix of american horses. Due to the wide geographic distribution of pure populations of colonial spanish horses, as well as their contribution to other crossbred types, the colonial spanish horses were the most common of all horses throughout North America at that time. They were widely used for riding as well as draft.

The colonial spanish horse became to be generally considered as too small for cavalry use by the europeans, and was slowly supplanted by taller and heavier types from the northeast as an integral part of northern european expansion in North America (Ryden, 1970). In the final stages the replacement of the spanish horses by non spanish types was fairly rapid, and was made even more so by the extermination of the horse herds of the native americans during the final stages of their subjection in the late 1800's. The close association of the spanish horse with both native american and mexican cultures and peoples also caused these horses to diminish in contrast to the more highly favored larger horses of the dominant anglo derived culture, whose horses tended to have breeding

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predominantly of northern european types. The decline of the colonial spanish horse resulted in only a handful of animals left of the once vast herds. This handful has founded the present breed, and so these are the horses of interest when considering the history of the current breed.

### CONFORMATION, TYPE, AND COLORS

The colonial spanish horse is generally a small horse, although size is increasing with improved nutrition and some selection among breeders, (Spanish Mustang Registry, 1975). The height is around 180 cm, usually varying from 130 to 185 cm, but up to 150 cm in some exceptional horses. Weight varies with height, but most are around 350 to 800 kg. Distinctive conformational features include heads which generally have straight to concave (more rarely slightly convex) foreheads and a nose which is convex. This is a fairly typical subconvex spanish type head, in contrast to the straighter nasal profile of most other breed types available in North America. The heads vary somewhat between long, finely made heads to shorter, deeper heads. Both are typical of spanish colonial horses. Spanish colonial horses typically have narrow but deep chests, with the front legs leaving the body fairly close together. It is difficult to describe this aspect of conformation without making it sound defective, when in actuality it is a strong, serviceable conformation. The chest is usually vee shaped rather than

straight across as in most other modern breeds. The chest is deep from the side view, and usually accounts for about half of the height of the horse from the ground to the withers. The croup is generally sloped, and the tail is set low on the body. The rear quarters vary from fairly massive and heavily muscled to a more slenderly built and less excessively muscled conformation. From the side there is usually a break in the curve of the hind quarter somewhere in the area of the base of the tail, rather than the full even curve of the most breeds with northern european breeding.

The muscling is characteristically long and tapering, even in the heavily muscled individuals. Leg conformation is generally sound, with ample angles in the joints and strong, harmonious relationships between the lengths of the varying parts of the limbs. Hooves are small, and chestnuts and ergots are small or missing altogether. Shoulders are long and well angulated, and withers usually sharp.

One myth frequently told is that these horses have only five lumbar vertebrae. They are more likely to have five than are most other breeds, but many pure colonial spanish horses also have six lumbar vertebrae, as has been demonstrated by work done in Argentina on Criollos, Thoroughbreds, Barbs and Arabians (Cabrera, 1905). The colonial spanish horses do usually have short, strong backs regardless of the number of vertebrae.

Colors of the colonial spanish horse vary widely, and it is through the spanish influence that many other north american horse breeds gain

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some of their distinctive colors. Colonial spanish horses come in a full range of solid colors including black, bay, brown, chestnut, sorrel, grullo, zebra and red dun, buckskin, palomino, and cream. Other solid colors such as the lighter chocolate brown based colors, and even silver dapple, occur rarely as well. In many horses these base colors are combined with white hairs or patches to result in grey, roan, paint (tobiano, frame overo, and sabino overo types) and the leopard complex of blankets, roans, and dark spots usually associated with the Appaloosa breed. Different breeders select for various of these colors and patterns, but all can be shown from artwork to be present in the spanish horses at the time of the conquest. Many of these colors and patterns, especially the spotting patterns, are now rare or extinct in some of the present iberian breeds derived from the same genetic base as the spanish colonial horses. At least one of these patterns, the frame overo, seems to have been limited to the spanish colonial horse, although from that limited occurrence it has now spread to a few other breeds. Another pattern, the tobiano spotting pattern, is somewhat controversial as being present in the original spanish colonial horses, but is certainly present in north american strains known to have descended from it.

### **FOUNDATION STRAINS OF THE PRESENT BREED**

**FERAL STRAINS.** Some of the purely spanish horses remained in isolated

feral herds. Such pure horses became rare fairly early in this century due to the practice of shooting the spanish stallions and replacing them with draft or Thoroughbred type stallions in an attempt to *improve* the feral herds as sources of draft or remount stock. Isolated pockets of uncontaminated horses remained in various areas of the western United States. These were assembled by early conservers of the spanish colonial horses in a successful effort to conserve the spanish type. Especially important in the conservation of this type was the Brislawn family. Many Brislawn horses came from herds in Utah, especially from the Bookcliffs regions. Other feral horses of pure spanish type were included, but these were fewer in number and only incompletely sampled the genetic material in herds that were themselves few in number and widely dispersed. As a result many of the foundation feral horses contributed to the overall mix of breeding, but did not found distinct strains of breeding representing any of the isolated pockets of pure spanish feral horses. Only a very few feral strains persist as distinct strains within the overall colonial spanish horse.

Feral horses of the Cerbat Mountains in Arizona have remained as a distinct strain. The Cerbat herds have a known history of purity on their present range since 1862. The Cerbat horses from the original capture in the 1960s have recently been supplemented by more recent Bureau of Land Management captures from the same ranges. The newer horses are identical in type to the older ones,

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giving added credence to the history. The strain is used by several breeders of colonial spanish horses. The horses come from a very restricted range, and are very uniformly conformed. They also have some unique bloodtypes (bc combination in the system), which is another indication of their value for conservation. The feral Cerbat herds are still pure, and are being managed by the Bureau of Land Management to remain pure within themselves. These feral herds will hopefully continue to be a source of this unique genetic type along with animals of the same strain being raised domestically.

Another feral group is the Riger mustangs from Oregon. These are feral horses of spanish type that are selected to be dun, grullo, or red dun. This narrow range of colors is inappropriately considered by some to be overwhelmingly connected to pure spanish ancestry. Riger horses are managed both in the feral herds and in herds of private breeders. The excess horses from the range herds are periodically rounded up and sold to interested buyers. The Riger herds currently vary somewhat, and reflect a phenomenon common in the feral herds of the western United States. Some of the Riger horses are still of spanish type, but others show incursions of outside influence, probably Quarter Horse. These crossbred horses are larger than the original type, and are also excellent general purpose saddle horses. Such desirable crossbreds are the reason for the original rarity of the spanish colonial horses since the crossbreds

had higher immediate value than the purebreds. To the extent that the incursion of outside breeding is allowed to continue or to increase the Riger will be lost as a source of spanish colonial breeding, which is a fate typical of most of the feral herds of spanish type.

Most feral herds remaining today are crossbred with non-spanish horses. Recent success, especially with the Cerbat horses, has stimulated some investigation into the feral herds that are controlled by the Bureau of Land Management for other herds of spanish type. If other herds of the correct type are found then the history of the feral horses in the area will be considered, along with bloodtyping information, in order to determine if any of these herds should be added to the list of spanish type herds. The Pryor Mountain herds are currently the subject of such investigations. Any pure herds can be managed to guard against incursion of non-spanish horses. A conservation program that helps the purely spanish horses has several advantages. It keeps the feral colonial spanish horse in the original environment so that selection pressures keep working to produce environmentally resistant horses. If any such spanish herds remain they are probably very, very few in number, but are interesting and essential for conservation due to their rarity.

**NATIVE AMERICAN STRAINS.** Feral horses were not the only group to contribute to the colonial spanish horse of today. Many foundation

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horses came from the horse herds of native americans. The native herds were especially important early in this century. Most of these tribal horses have only influenced the present breed through individual horses and not through groups of horses that continue to be bred pure within the strain. Tribes contributing foundation horses to the present breed include Cheyenne, Lakota, Paiute, Navajo, and a few others. The search is always on for breeders or families that have kept the original type pure, but these become rarer and rarer as the years go by.

A few tribal types have continued to be bred as distinct strains. The Choctaw and Cherokee horses are among these. Both of these tribes, in addition to the Chickasaw and Creek, were avid horse breeders in their original homes in the southeast, having obtained their original stock from the spanish missions and settlements before control of the area shifted to the British. The quality of the native tribal horses is specifically mentioned as being excellent in various travel journals. Following removal of these tribes to what is now Oklahoma they continued to breed horses. The basis for these Oklahoma herds was horses brought from the southeast on the Trail of Tears, but no doubt some western horses were added as well. The original horses were spanish, obtained at first from the chain of missions across the deep South in early spanish colonial days. The additions were surely spanish as well and some have unique bloodtypes as evidence of the accuracy of the oral

history of isolation surrounding these herds. These tribes became important as mediators between several of the more western tribes and the US government, and it is likely that exchange of horses between tribes occurred during the many meetings that were held.

Some individual families were important in preserving the tribal horses. The Whitmire line, also including horses from the Cornthassle family, is a Cherokee line that can be traced back to the removal from Etowah, Georgia in 1835. It probably goes back even further as court records from 1775 indicate that these families had horses then. These horses were always kept within the line on the female side, although outside stallions were occasionally introduced. The stallions were of Mexican, Choctaw, or Comanche breeding, and were therefore also spanish. The outside stallions were carefully and specifically selected to be as similar to the Cherokee strain as could be had. This consistency of pure breeding is in stark contrast to the usual crossbreeding favored by european americans dealing with horses at this time. Many of the Cherokee horses that remain today are gaited, and many are unusual color patterns. At least some of the Mexican stallions used were of leopard type color patterns, while today many of the descendants are unusual paint patterns.

The major Choctaw families that preserved the horses until recently were the Brame, Crisp, Locke, Self, Thurman, and Carter families. Horses were run on the open range in areas



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where other types of horses were not kept. These families had hundreds of horses of consistent spanish type and widely varying colors including the spanish roan sabino type, leopard and blanketed, and others. Many have the unique frame overo paint pattern of spotting. The Choctaw horses are occasionally gaited.

From the hundreds of Choctaw and Cherokee horses that were available as recently as 1975 there are now very few. This is due to the dispersal of many large herds following the deaths of some of the elderly breeders. Probably only 50 pure Choctaw and Cherokee horses could be assembled in 1988, but some few breeders are trying to assure that this type continues to the future as a part of the overall breeding of spanish horses.

Other native tribal horses are rare and poorly documented. There is always hope that a few of the old strains are being quietly kept by some tribal breeders. This is especially likely in the fullblood communities which tend to be fairly isolated and treasure the old original cultures of the tribes. Work is currently underway to find and assess these strains before they are lost as elderly breeders can no longer maintain them. This is a high priority for the conservation of the spanish colonial horse, although only a very, very few of these strains are likely to persist.

**RANCHER STRAINS.** Another important subtype of colonial spanish horses is the rancher strains. Some of these, such as the Waggoner horses,

figure not only in the background of the colonial spanish horses but were also used in the American Quarter Horse. Most of the old ranch strains were spanish in the 1800's, with the later addition of horses from the northeast. These additions were probably Morgans, light draft horses, Thoroughbreds, and the old, eastern sort of Quarter Horse. The population of ranch horses was bred increasingly away from its spanish base. From this somewhat consistent spanish base were developed the more common breeds that are associated with the American West: American Quarter Horse, Paint, Appaloosa. These have been largely separated on the basis of color, but were originally part of a population that included all of these colors. As selection has proceeded in these breeds with continuous outcrossing to Thoroughbreds and Quarter Horse the original spanish influence has become minimal.

One rancher that kept the original spanish type was Ilo Belsky. He ranched in Nebraska and his herd began from horses that were accompanying cattle driven from Texas in the late 1800's. The best horses were kept, and then were selectively bred for most of Ilo's long life. Belsky horses are now very rare as an unique strain of spanish horses, but they do figure in the background of many spanish Mustangs and spanish Barbs. Belsky popularized these horses as ranch horses very early in the history of the conservation of this type of horse. His horses were commonly roan, grey, dun, or dark colors.

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Another important rancher strain is the Romero strain. These are from a ranch near Cebolla, New Mexico where spanish type horses were raised for generations. The Romero ranch passed to the McKinley family, but by now few if any horses of the original strain are still maintained on the original ranch. These horses figure heavily in some lines of spanish Barb horses.

Gilbert Jones, currently of Finley, Oklahoma, was also instrumental in maintaining spanish horses. Due to his moving from Texas to New Mexico and thence to Oklahoma his herd had influences from a wide variety of sources. Early horses he had included many Kiowa, Comanche, and Chickasaw horses as well as some from anglo ranchers such as Tom Waggoner. Some of the tribal horses were from strains of buffalo runners once frequently used on the Llano Estacado of Texas. These horses were all blended into a single strain. Later in the development of the strain were many Choctaw and Cherokee horses, and these represent a high proportion of the breeding of several Jones horses today. His herd is one of the few sources of Waggoner, Tom East, Kiowa and Comanche breeding left today.

As is typical of landrace type populations, newly discovered herds of colonial spanish horses continue to come to the attention of breeders of this type of horse. A recently found herd of horses in Sasabe, Arizona fits into the rancher strain category, although it also is the last remnant (so far known) of spanish mission type

horses. These are the horses of the Wilbur-Cruce family. This strain was begun with 25 mares and a stallion that were bought in 1885 from a horse trader from northern Mexico. The horses originated in the region of Mexico that was the area of Father Kino's missions. This area had been a source of high quality horses since around 1700. The original horses were kept as a closed strain except for a single horse used for two years in the 1930's. This horse is described as having been a *paint Morgan* from Colorado. The description and location make it more likely that he was some sort of spanish horse. This stallion was traded for some of the Wilbur-Cruce strain and was turned out on the range. The ruggedness of the range combined with his being the newly introduced stallion in a range with older, local stallions, make it doubtful that he contributed much to the herd.

The Wilbur-Cruce herd was brought to the attention of breeders of colonial spanish horses in 1989, and illustrates an important point when dealing with landraces. It is critical to the conservation of the genetic resource of these populations for the organized studbooks to remain open and receptive to inclusion of new pure herds as they are recognized and documented. As time goes on such new herds will be recognized only rarely. They will always contain valuable genetic material for conservation and are always important new discoveries. The Wilbur-Cruce horses are more variable in type than the horses in the registries, even

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though they do have a spanish origin. This variability is interesting in that they are an example of a closed herd that includes some of the spanish types that differ from the usual spanish colonial type favored by the early conservers of these horses.

**MEXICAN STRAINS.** In addition to the feral, tribal, and rancher horses were some from Mexico. These Mexican horses usually were single horses and not distinct strains comprising an entire breeding population. One exception was a group assembled by Ira Yates, who also figures prominently in the history of the Texas Longhorn. These Yates horses are small and are dun or grullo. The horses were originally from 150 miles southwest of Mexico City. The original group, assembled in 1950, included two stallions and two mares. One stallion was infertile. The line still continues today, which is evidence that inbreeding need not always result in the decline of a line of animals. Other individual Mexican horses came into the Jones line, and were horses from the Huasteca tribe. These horses came from Southeast Mexico, and are responsible for many of the leopard type markings in some strains today. Other Mexican stallions were used in the Jewel Whitmire line of Cherokee horses, but the exact source of the stallions is unknown.

**SOUTHEAST STRAINS.** Most of the colonial spanish horses today can be traced to the above sources and came either as individual horses or as

contributions of distinct strains: feral, native tribal, rancher, and Mexican. Some other sources have contributed strains, such as strains from the Southeast United States. There is some discussion among colonial spanish horse breeders as to how pure these strains from Florida (Cracker horses) and the outer banks of the East Coast (Banker ponies) are.

One type of southeast horse is the Banker pony from the outer banks of Virginia and the Carolinas. These descend from spanish horses, but in some islands have been subject to the introductions of a variety of stallions of other breeds. A good example of this are the Chincoteague ponies. Recently mustang stallions from out west have been added to the herds, and before that there were introductions of other horses and Shetland ponies. The history for some of the other island populations is more vague (Shackelford and Ocracoke). Some few of these horses are included in the Spanish Mustang Registry. Some crossing of the Banker ponies with western horses is occurring, and to some extent this could blur the uniqueness of each population if they become totally blended.

In Florida there are still some remnants of the spanish rancher horses known as Cracker horses. These used to be the favored mount of the Florida cowboys (called crackers because of the whips they used). These horses were well adapted to the environment and were useful in working the local, spanish derived cracker cattle. In the rears of the dust

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bowl (1930s) cattle from the western drought stricken areas were moved in, and with them came the screwworm. This radically changed the sort of horse needed to work cattle since it was now necessary to rope and hold cattle for treatment out on the range. This required a larger horse than the original type spanish horse, and it lost favor to the Quarter Horse which had been bred to be bigger and heavier. The influx of these western cattle therefore caused the threat to both the cracker horse and the cracker cattle, although both persist to the present day as rare remnants of once numerous types.

### **COLONIAL SPANISH HORSE REGISTRIES**

The descendants of the colonial Spanish horses are rarely referred to by this name, but rather are usually called Spanish Mustangs. The term Mustang generally carries with it the connotation of feral horse, and this is somewhat unfortunate since many of these colonial spanish horses have never had a feral background. These present day remnants are descendants of the horses that were brought to the New World by the conquistadors, and include some feral, some rancher, some mission, and some native american strains.

Various registries have had an important role in conserving the colonial spanish horses. They have also focused their breeding on a specific type of horses, which is the type described above as typical of

north american colonial spanish horses. This type varies somewhat from rangier, more lightly built individuals to others that are more compactly and more heavily made, but the range is fairly narrow between these two types. The original spanish type was probably even more variable, including some horses with higher set tails, broader chests, and rounder conformation generally.

The reasons for the registries not accepting some of what might in fact be spanish types are based in the history of the conservation of colonial spanish horses in North America. These horses were originally saved as a small minority of horses in the midst of a large population of horses based on spanish breeding but then deliberately crossed with draft, Thoroughbred, Morgan, and other types derived from northern european breeding, (Dobie, 1952 and Ryden, 1970). The range of spanish types that are likely to be refused registry cannot really be told externally from other types such as horses with Quarter Horse or Thoroughbred ancestry. Even though some such horses may be purely spanish they do pose a much greater risk of introducing outside genetic influence than do those horses of the more uniquely spanish types that are not confusable with these other breed influences. By concentrating on the most unique of the north american spanish types the registries have also assured that this rare genetic resource has been conserved with minimal contamination, and are to be commended on their foresight for doing so.

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Certainly there is some wisdom in the registries limiting the range of allowable types in order to produce consistent, predictable horses. It is equally important to recognize that some horses that are considered outside the type desired by the registries are still entirely of pure spanish breeding. It is worthwhile to recognize that horses of newly found purely bred spanish colonial horse herds may be more variable than the present horses in the registries. When such newly discovered herds are presented for registration, the registries usually accept only some and not all of the horses from these herds, although the horses are all indeed of purely spanish breeding.

The situation of the registries for the colonial spanish horse can be confusing. The Spanish Mustang Registry was founded by Bob Brislawn and others. It will accept only spanish horses, and the books are open to newly discovered horses that pass a visual inspection and consideration of the horse's origin and history. The SMR also includes the Banker ponies. The Southwest Spanish Mustang Association, begun by Gilbert Jones, is similar to the SMR and many horses are registered with both the SSMR and the SMR. The SSMA does not register Banker ponies. If there is a difference in the horses registered with the two registries it is subtle, but the SMR horses are largely of Brislawn origin (along with many others as well), while the SSMA horses tend to have more Choctaw, Cherokee, and Jones breeding in them. Both have the goal of conserving the purely spanish

colonial type, and both have defined this broadly to include both a rangier and a heavier type of horse.

The American Indian Horse Registry registers spanish type horses as O (original) animals, in addition to non-spanish types and crosses as R and RR. The AIHR diligently preserves the O types as a separate category. Many of the RIHR O animals are also registered with the SMR or SSMA. The Spanish Barb Breeders Association began with horses from the SMR and selected for a narrowly defined specific type. The result of this is that offspring of registered horses were not necessarily registerable. The SBBR periodically plans to put other spanish or north African Barb breeding into the horses, but this has not occurred yet and the horses are still of north american spanish colonial origin. The SBBR horses tend to concentrate the Romero and Belsky bloodlines, and are therefore important as these are rare in other registries. The type they prefer tends to be the cobbler of the types.

The Kiger mustang breeders have banded together to form an association, and register both the pure spanish as well as the crossbred type of the Kiger horses. An association for the Florida Cracker horse has recently been started, and the documentation and registration of foundation horses are underway. The Chickasaw Horse Association registers horses that resemble the type kept by the Chickasaw tribe. These were very popular horses in the 1800's. Most of the present horses in this association

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trace back to horses from the Blood Indian Reservation, and are therefore not lineal descendants of the Chickasaw horse. The Florida Cracker Horse

Association is conserving only the Florida Cracker type, and is still in its early days.

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