



THE PASO FINO

“THE HORSE WITH THE FINE STEP”

By *Trudy Weichers, Sundancer Paso Finos*

Dennis and I were first introduced to the Paso Fino breed of horses while in California visiting our son. Growing up in Quarter Horse-dominated Iowa, we were not familiar with the breed.

At a later date, we traveled to Illinois to visit a farm where they raised Paso Finos, and we were able to try them out under saddle. One ride was all it took for me! I was hooked on Pasos!

A Brief History of the Paso Fino

The Paso Fino is a mixture of three European breeds, the Andalusian, the Barb and the now extinct Spanish Jennet. They were used as foundation stock for remount stations of the Conquistadors and were able to carry their riders for days over any kind of terrain. These horses came to be known as *Los Caballos de Paso Fino*, or “the horse with the fine step”.

In the early 1900's, there was a large international meat packing company that would send their cowboys between Florida and Cuba to work cattle. These cowboys would ride the native Paso horses and became so used to the smooth ride and “cow sense”, that some were brought back to stateside Cattle Ranches and descendants (most of these unregistered) can still be found in Florida.

The Paso Fino became more well-known, however, when during the second World War American servicemen were stationed in Puerto Rico and rode and fell in love with the Paso and started bringing them home to the United States.

The third importation of the Paso Fino was in the 1960's when Americans began looking in Columbia and started bringing

Paso Finos back from this country. As these bloodlines crossed, they became known as the American Paso Fino.

What Makes the Breed Stand Out?

The Paso Fino is often called the “Rolls Royce” of riding horses, as the rider never has to “post” but just sits flat in the saddle and glides along.

The Paso Fino is known for its loyalty, athleticism, spirit, graceful carriage and exceptional smooth ride. They are also called the horse with “soul”.

The Paso Fino can walk, trot, canter, and gallop like any other breed but they prefer their own natural four-beat gait. The footfall of the Paso is the same sequence as an equine walk and if executed perfectly, the four hoof beats are even in both cadence and impact. Propulsion is primarily from the hind legs and the horses' motion is absorbed in its back and loins so the rider doesn't experience the jarring impact

compared to the trot and jog in other breeds. The gait is natural from birth and is not achieved through soring, weighted shoes or any other means used by some of the other breeds.

Whether riding in Western or English tack, the Paso Fino will demonstrate their remarkable versatility in the show ring, competitive trail and endurance riding, team penning, roping or back at the ranch working cattle.

They show their Spanish heritage through their proud carriage, elegance and natural gait. They are a “people” horse and ideal for anyone who wants a willing and responsive disposition for the pleasure of riding.

At Sundancer Paso Finos, Dennis and I started out with two Paso Finos but eventually had to move to a larger farm as we decided to breed and raise these wonderful horses. We are starting to meet people through the Iowa Horse Fair that will come up to us and tell us they have a Paso Fino. I know of a couple others that may also be breeding them but not sure what their numbers are. As of now, I believe we are the largest breeder in Iowa of the Paso Fino.

As a breeder of Paso Finos, I say they not only have “soul” but are good for the “soul”. I can't imagine having anything but a Paso Fino.

We would like to extend an invitation to anyone who would be interested in finding out more information on the Paso Fino to come to Cedar Falls and visit our farm.

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The Paso Fino Horse Association is located in Plant City, Florida.

