



PHOTO: DAVID CARRANO

IRRESISTIBLE Iberian Horse

ABOVE: Lusitanos have agile, elevated movements said to be very comfortable to ride. Stallion Bizet Interagro displays the flashy movement and strong elegant conformation that makes Lusitanos a pleasure to watch and ride.

By Melanie Huggett

The Iberian Peninsula of southwest Europe contains the countries of Spain, Portugal, Andorra, and Gibraltar, as well as a very small portion of France. The land's mountainous slopes, arid plateaus, deep river valleys, and expansive coastline have been home to horses for many millennia. Today, there are 17 breeds native to the peninsula, which are thusly named Iberian horses.

However, two of these 17 breeds truly stand out: The Pura Raza Espanola (PRE) of Spain, more commonly known as the Andalusian, and Puro Sanguie Lusitano (PSL), or simply

Lusitano, of Portugal are well known for their beauty, athleticism, and ability to inspire passion.

The history of the PRE and PSL is closely related and dates back to 30,000 BC. Archeological evidence suggests that their ancestor is the Sorraia, a small, dun coloured wild horse native to southern Iberia. Cave paintings dating back as far as 20,000 BC look remarkably like the modern Andalusian and Lusitano.

Since being mounted and ridden by man for the first time around 4000 BC, the Iberian horse's primary use has been as a

The ANDALUSIAN and LUSITANO

war horse. Archeological findings show that cavalry battles with halberds, a weapon used to dismount the enemy, occurred during the Bronze Age on the southern peninsula.

Later on, both the Greeks and Romans used Iberian horses for their cavalry. The famous Greek cavalry officer, Xenophon, praised the “gifted Iberian horses,” which helped the Spartans defeat the Athenians during the Peloponnesian Wars in 400 BC.

Much later, Iberian Horses were used during the Crusades of the Middle Ages. Considered noble horses, they were ridden by many famous individuals, including the great warrior King Richard I of England, also known as Richard the Lion Heart.

At this time, bulls began to be used in both Spain and Portugal to keep horses and warriors fit for war. A series of exercises and tricks were used to fight the aggressive bull.

During the Renaissance, Iberians became prized for their ability to perform high school dressage, becoming common at royal courts and classical riding academies across Europe. Again, due to his noble appearance, the Iberian became the principle mount of royalty and nobility in many countries.

Iberian horses also began to make their way to North and South America aboard Spanish, Portuguese, and French ships between the 15th and 17th centuries. All the horse breeds developed on the American continents are either directly or indirectly descended from Iberian horses. These breeds include the Quarter Horse,

The PRE horse should be well balanced, with a well set neck, medium length head with straight or subconvex profile, and strong back and hindquarters. This stallion is owned by Carlos Lara of the Cuatro L Andalusian Breeding Centre in Wainwright, Alberta.

Mustang, Appaloosa, Canadian Horse, Mangalarga Marchador, Paso Fino, Peruvian Paso, and many others. In Europe around the same time, the Iberian became the foundation of the Lippizan, Kladruber, and, later, many European Warmbloods.

Until 300 years ago, the Iberian ancestor of PRE and PSL horses was the same. The separation between the Lusitano and Andalusian began primarily in the 18th century, when bullfighting in Spain ceased to be performed on horseback; a man on foot, or matador, became the primary bullfighter in Spain at that time. In Portugal, however, bullfighting on horseback remained, and is still practiced to this day, though the bull is not killed in the ring like in Spain.

Arsenio Raposo Cordeiro explains in his book *Cavalo Lusitano* (Lusitano Horse): “The end of the bullfight on horseback in Spain forced the introduction of a new selection process in horse breeding... which became focused on the selection of a sporting horse with elevated and exuberant movements. In Portugal however, where bullfighting on horseback continued to be the only accepted form, a more cautious selection was practiced to produce a specialized fighting horse.”

Pura Raza Espanola

The PRE or Pure Spanish Horse is often called the “Horse of Kings” for his noble looks, fine temperament, and history as a mount for nobility.

In North America, Andalusians can be registered with the International Andalusian and Lusitano Horse Association (IALHA), however, the main studbook for the PRE is in Spain,

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and is managed by the National Association of Purebred Spanish Horse Breeders (ANCCE). To be registered, a foal must have both parents verified in the PRE studbook.

The vast majority of Andalusians are grey. In the past, grey, bay, and black were the only allowable colours, but today other colours and dilutions are permitted.

Standing 15.2 to 16.2 hands high on average, they should be as long as they are tall. Andalusians are a baroque type horse, with high set, arched necks and well developed, strong bodies. The head should be of medium length, the profile straight or subconvex, and the eyes oblique rather than round. The back should be short to medium length and flat, with a wide chest, deep girth, and strong loins. The legs are sturdy but fine, with upright hooves. The tail is low set, and the mane and tail long and ample. A stallion's hair is never cut, though traditionally mares are roached for practical reasons.

Mares and stallions tend to have distinctively "feminine" and "masculine" characteristics. Mares are delicate, less muscular, and shorter. Conversely, stallions tend to be very muscular and typically more beautiful. "The emblematic Spanish Horse is a male horse," said Carlos Lara, President of the Canadian Association of the PRE Horse (CAPREH).

"Their (the PRE horse's) biggest physical trait is their ability to collect and to bring themselves (under) and transfer their centre of gravity to their hind end," said Lara, who breeds PRE horses at

ABOVE, LEFT: Lusitanos such as this stallion, Blackstone Interagro, are powerful and athletic, possessing stamina and speed.

ABOVE, RIGHT: Iberians are admirable jumpers, as demonstrated by this PRE mare.

Cuatro L Andalusian Breeding Centre in Wainwright, Alberta. This ability to shift their weight back makes PRE excel at the collected movements in dressage and *Alta Escuela* (high school dressage), especially the airs above the ground.

"The terrain in Spain is very rocky, so through evolution, in order to get away from predators, they had to step high over rocks and sandy soil. They developed the ability to have very expressive front end movement," continued Lara. Due to their wonderful high knee action and uphill balance, Spanish horses do not naturally extend like Warmbloods or Thoroughbreds. It can certainly be taught to them with training, but is not as natural as collection.

Besides dressage, PRE can be used for a number of different disciplines, both English and Western. "They can be used for any discipline because these horses tend to be so brave," said Lara. "They do a decent job at most everything."

"The Andalusian is built with natural balance, collection, impulsion, and agility — an all around athlete," said Bette-Lyn Eger of the Pacific Association of the Andalusian and Lusitano Horse (PAALH). "They excel in upper level dressage. Andalusians also participate in driving, jumping, eventing, reining, performance, and exhibitions."

Often referred to as "the original cow horse," Andalusians are also great for working cows either competitively or on the farm. Spanish vaqueros have used Andalusians since the Middle Ages for cattle ranching. Their technique of training horses to work with cattle, called *Doma Vaquera*, has now been turned into a competitive sport and art form.

Besides their bravery, there are many other qualities that make the PRE a wonderful partner for almost any equestrian. "Andalusians are people orientated, possessing a proud but kind temperament," said Eger. "They are sensitive, and particularly intelligent, responsive and cooperative, learning quickly and easily when treated with respect. It is said with the ideal Andalusian temperament, the horse will carry itself with presence and pride in the show ring, as well as be able to follow quietly behind a child."

Getting the best out of an Andalusian requires patient training. "They often try to please and can be pushed too quickly. If so, they may internalize and nervous signs of stress will appear," said Eger.

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Iberians have often been the mounts of nobility due to their elegant looks and regal presence.



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LEFT, TOP: While developed for centuries to be the ultimate bullfighting horse, the Lusitano's agility, athleticism, and willing temperament make him an excellent mount for a number of different disciplines, including dressage.

ABOVE: Stallion Alvahiro Interagro has a convex profile typical of Lusitanos.

LEFT, BOTTOM: PRE horses make wonderful dressage mounts. Not only do they have good movement, but their temperament and intelligence makes them easy to train given patience and respect.



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"Take your time with them, building a trusting foundation. This breed will give you their heart if treated with firm understanding, respect, and patience."

While relatively rare in Canada, there are approximately 175,000 PRE worldwide. Andalusian crosses are also quite popular in North America, with many even given their own names, such as Azteca (Andalusian-Quarter Horse), Spanish Norman (Andalusian-Percheron), Iberian Warmblood (Andalusian-Thoroughbred), and Hispano-Arab (Andalusian-Arab).

Puro Sangue Lusitano

The Lusitano is named for Lusitania, the name the Romans gave the area of the Iberian Peninsula which corresponds to modern day Portugal. Its full Portuguese name, PSL, means "pure blooded Lusitano." The official studbook for the PSL is held by the Portuguese Puro Sangue Lusitano Breeders Association (APSL) in Portugal, which was established in 1967, though in North America they can also be registered with IALHA. Compared to the PRE, the Lusitano is a very rare breed, with fewer than 3000 productive mares worldwide, mostly in Portugal and Brazil. However, numbers are growing thanks to dedicated breeders and increasing popularity.

Like the PRE, the majority of Lusitanos are grey, although any colour is allowed. The body type is similar to the PRE horse as well, but with a shorter back and more powerful rear end. The head is usually more convex than a PRE horse and with a slightly sloping forehead, giving the head a curved outline. Due to being bred for bullfighting for centuries, "they tend to be very quick on their feet, with a slightly hotter temperament," said Eger. Lusitanos are able to go from excitable to calm, or peaceful to passionate quickly and easily, depending on the will of their handler.

There are three main bloodlines in the PSL breed today, each with its own brand:

The *Veiga* line produces the horses that look most typically Lusitano, with a convex profile known as the "Veiga head." Developed by Manuel Veiga, they are shorter than the other lines, quick and agile, courageous and obedient, and excel at bullfighting. Veiga described his horses as "nervous, full of gallantry, so obedient they seem to outguess the rider's intentions, high thin head, long free-flowing manes, elevated movements, and a striking agility challenging all threats and dangers with indomitable courage."

The *Andrade* line was developed by Ruy d'Andrade. They are tall, powerful saddle horses with a straighter profile than the Veiga line. With elegant gaits, they are excellent for bullfighting, dressage, and other work. D'Andrade described his bloodline as "strong horses, valiant with the bulls, changing from calm to ardent if spurred, and from ardent to obedient if left in peace; fast when running and rapid on turns, with good walk, sensible to the spurs, submissive with good mouth, endless strength in everything."

The final line is the *Coudelaria Nacional* (Portuguese State) and *Alter Real* line. Based on Spanish horses, they are taller, longer horses that are very good for dressage and driving.

Of course, these lines are often crossed. Crosses of Veiga and Andrade horses in particular have been extremely successful.

Working for centuries with the bulls using what the Lusitanians called *Gineta* tactics has made a horse that is bold but careful, intelligent and willing, and quick and agile. Lusitanos are extremely powerful and athletic, with an uphill balance and great stamina and speed. These qualities not only make them supreme mounts for bullfighting, but also make them fine sport horses for multiple disciplines.



Andalusians excel at high school dressage due to their natural ability to collect. This Andalusian from Cuatro L Andalusian Breeding Centre demonstrates a lavade.

One of the most famous Lusitanos is the grey stallion Novilheiro, who was ridden by Grand Prix show jumper John Whitaker of Britain during the 1980s. Novilheiro, out of a Veiga mare and by an Andrade stallion, was a top competitor during his day. Novilheiro has gone on to sire a great many exceptional sport horses. Not to be outdone, Novilheiro's full brother Opus II was one of the most famous bullfighting horses of his day, proving that the breed is truly versatile.

Lusitanos also make a fine light driving horse. At the 1996 World Driving Championships in Belgium, a team of Lusitanos won the four-in-hand class.

Of course, Lusitanos, like the PRE horse, still excel at dressage, especially collection and the high school manoeuvres. Many Lusitanos were present at the 2008 Olympics in Hong Kong in the dressage competitions:



Lusitanos make excellent driving horses for pleasure or competition. A grey Lusitano mare leads the four-in-hand team of Switzerland's Werner Ulrich at the 2009 FEI World Driving Cup in Budapest, Hungary.

the Portuguese and Brazilian teams were mounted entirely on Lusitanos, and Australia's Hayley Beresford rode the Lusitano Relampago Do Retiro.

More recently, Lusitanos have been used for Western events such as cutting and reining.

Dr. Paulo Gonzaga, founder of Brazil's Interagro Farms, the largest Lusitano breeding farm in the world, perhaps describes the Lusitano the best in his book *O Cavalo Lusitano*: "They are strong, vigorous horses, obedient, generous of character, agile, and articulate, elegant, distinct and arrogant, proud, lordly and noble of spirit; they are also docile, intelligent, and submissive, easy to teach for every horse activity. Such characteristics make the Lusitano the best saddle horse in the world."

