

## Prized horses bring prestige and business to Treasure Coast

By Jennifer Schroeder

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PALM CITY — Eighteen Interagro Lusitano stallions recently ended a seven-day journey from Brazil and will call the Martin Downs Equestrian Center home for the next month.

The Lusitano collection are highly sought after horses and will stable at the facility through Feb. 24, then travel to the Jim Brandon Equestrian Center in West Palm Beach for auction.

Until then, dressage riders, show jumpers and carriage drivers from around the world will make their way to the Palm City center to preview these internationally renowned horses.

At auction, they are expected to go for between \$50,000 and \$160,000.

"We are expecting over 100 groups to travel here for previews," said George Cosman, who along with wife, Sandi, has owned the Martin Downs Equestrian Center since 2007. "The groups will come and go through March before the auction, and those who buy at the auction will then return here to pick up their horses."

Last year, potential buyers previewed the horses during a four-day event at the West Palm Beach auction site.

Martina Brandes, who came with the horses from Brazil, is in charge of their overall care along with Heather Bender.

Brandes said last year's whirl-wind schedule benefited neither the horses nor the buyers.

"It was too rushed last year," Brandes explained. "Buyers may have had only 10 minutes with a particular horse. The horses were tired and stressed.

"This year, buyers will come here for two to three days, allowing them to see these animals at their best."

Cosman said having the month-long preview in Palm City is good news for the Treasure Coast.

He indicated area hotels, restaurants and other entertainment outlets, which have suffered through the slow economy, will benefit from their presence.



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