

Crossbreeding the Andalusian Horse

by Sarah Gately-Wilson



The classic Spanish Andalusian.

The Andalusian horse is growing in popularity and its future is full of endless possibilities. The purebred Andalusian is highly versatile and capable of being successful in any discipline; however, with less than 5000 registered purebreds in the U.S. these horses are still very rare and not easy to acquire. To fill the growing demand for the qualities the Andalusians possess many breeders are turning to crossbreeding. Some of the crosses have been bred long enough to establish breeds in their own right and some are just getting started. A few acknowledged crosses include the Iberian Warmblood, the Azteca, the Spanish-Norman, the Warlander (Andalusian x Friesian), and the Hispano-Arabe.

Most modern purebred breeds started as part of crossbreeding programs. They were then further developed and refined into the horses we see today. The Andalusian, still very rare and highly desirable, can be crossed with nearly any other breed of horse to produce offspring that can be sold for a profit; however, anyone interested in breeding should give careful consideration to the characteristics of the foundation breeds being used. It is important that the horse being created is desirable enough to ensure a positive future in the equestrian world.

When looking for an Andalusian to breed, whether to another Andalusian or to an outside breed, you should look for one with a good-looking head set on an arching neck, a broad forehead, well-placed ears, and almond shaped eyes that are alive and kind. The Andalusian should have an abundant tail, set low and hung tightly against the body; the mane as well should be thick. It should have well-defined withers preceding a short back and broad strong hindquarters. In judging the movement of the horse, look for a free flowing trot with good knee and hock action that does not impede the length of the stride. The horse should travel wide and straight. One of the most important things to consider is the horse's disposition. An Andalusian's disposition should be bright and responsive, sensitive to its handler and alert to its surroundings, but never spooky or prone to over excitement.

When Spain claimed the New World, the Spanish horse was there to help. On his second voyage in 1493, Christopher Columbus brought the Andalusian horse to the Americas. Every subsequent expedition also contained Andalusians in its Cargo. Breeding farms were established in the Caribbean to provide mounts for the Conquistadors as they explored and settled the New

World. These original Spanish Andalusians became the foundation stock for all American breeds of horse to follow. The Mustangs, Pasos, and Criollos still strongly resemble their ancestors, but few realize that the Morgan, American Saddlebred, and the American Quarter Horse, to name a few, are also descendants of the Andalusian horse. The Andalusian had a strong influence on European breeds as well.

The Iberian Warmblood "The Ultimate Dressage Horse"

It is well known that the Byerly's Turk, Darley's Arabian, and Godolphin Barb were crossed with the King's English mares to produce the modern Thoroughbred. What few realize is that at the time the King's English mares were mostly of Spanish descent: Andalusians. Similarly, Warmbloods started out as draft horses, which were put to Iberian blood to refine them into more elegant coach horses. Since, they have been further refined by additions of Arabian and Thoroughbred blood. Isn't it something that today's dressage competitors were pulling heavy wagons, coaches, and the army's artillery while the Andalusian was the High School Dressage Horse bar none!



King Oberon OSF, 5 yr. old Iberian Warmblood competing successfully in eventing.

The Andalusian is often criticized for having too much animation and not being able to lengthen its strides. While this may be the case in some bloodlines, it hardly represents the breed as a whole. In Europe and the United States breeders are careful to promote the strong conformation and versatility of the Andalusian horse, producing a mount that is capable to compete against the best Warmbloods in the world. In the 2004 Summer Olympics held in Athens, Greece, Spain's dressage team consisting of one Warmblood and three purebred Andalusians won the Silver in the team dressage.

Today breeders are infusing more Iberian blood back into the Thoroughbreds and Warmbloods to create a lighter, more sensitive, more rideable dressage mount. Warmbloods are often difficult to ride, especially for the aging rider. Today's Warmbloods have big gaits and often need to be lunged before their owners are comfortable to get on and ride. By adding the kind temperament, sensitivity and tremendous rideability of the Andalusian to the Warmblood you create the perfect partner: the Iberian Warmblood. The Iberian Warmblood is fluid and forward to ride with uphill movement and good bones. They are sensitive to the rider's aids and submissive to the rider's requests.

So far the Iberian Warmblood is becoming more and more successful in competition. Tierra's Luna, an Andalusian x Thoroughbred cross, competed as an Olympic hopeful and in July of 2002 was awarded the USDF Gold Medal (Gold Medals are awarded to riders with consistently high scores in the Intermediate I and II and Grand Prix levels). In 2004, one of the high-end eventing horses in the country was an Iberian Warmblood ridden by a junior rider.

The Azteca “The Horse of Versatility”

The American Quarter Horse has long been used as the “cow horse” famous for chasing down strays and driving herds on long treks. The Andalusian is used to herd the cows in Spain as well as face the fierce Iberian bulls. It seems like a natural combination. This cross has been bred for a long time in Mexico, and so loved by the charros that they have made the Azteca their national horse.

The Azteca is a natural at ranch work and built to be an athlete with heart and style. To meet the demands of high performance riding the Azteca must have strong forward and lateral movement with the ability for acceleration and a quick response time. Courage, agility, presence, and an intelligent, stable mind are essential. The Azteca is a beautiful creature with character, confidence and a curiosity that adds a playful, friendly demeanor.



The Azteca is one of the most popular Andalusian crosses.

Today one of the most sought after horses is the perfect trail companion. It is hard to imagine one better than the Azteca. Combining the toughness, and capability for hard work of the Quarter Horse with the smooth uphill gait and sure-footed confidence of the Andalusian creates an animal that can comfortably travel all day over rough terrain. Whether you are looking for bursts of speed, the natural ability to jump obstacles or maneuver quickly, or just a pleasure horse and partner, look no further. It is hard to imagine improving on this already exceptional breed.

The Spanish-Norman “The Fairy Tale mount of the Medieval Knights”

Have you been to the Renaissance Fair or to Medieval Nights to see the games, the jousting, and the beautiful horses? Many of the horses that carry the knights into the games are Spanish-Normans, Andalusians x Percherons. During Medieval times the now extinct Norman

horses of France were influenced by Iberian blood to create the agile yet sturdy mounts that carried knights to victory after victory. The Spanish-Norman combines the beauty and boldness of the Andalusian with the size and strength of the Percheron to reflect the power and presence of its ancestor, the Norman.

The Spanish-Norman stands between 15.3 and 17 hands and is predominantly grey with the occasional black or bay. They are a strong, sturdy horse with short backs, sloping shoulders, broad heart-girths and strong, powerful hindquarters. They have the thick, luxurious mane and tail of the Andalusian, as well as its fluid movement, cadence and elevation.

The Spanish-Normans are bred to be very versatile sporthorses with the potential for jumping and dressage, driving, and western events. Linda and Allan Hamid of Hamid Hill farm, Ltd., Woodbury, Connecticut established the Spanish-Norman Horse Registry, Inc. in 1991. Their Spanish-Norman stallion Romantico H.H.F. is competing in reining and in June 2000 won 6th place in the Invitational Freestyle Reining at the United States Equestrian Team Festival of Champions.

The Andalusian is also being crossed with the Friesian to produce the **Warlander**, a magnificent horse, usually black, with long flowing manes and tails and tremendous action. The Friesian lends more bone density and greater substance to the cross while the Andalusian lends its agility, intelligence, and presence. Another popular cross is with the Arab. Breeders are combining two of the most ancient breeds to produce a spirited, athletic horse, the **Hispano-Arabe**. Arabs often intimidate the more passive rider with their high spirit, however, when they are crossed with the Andalusian the result is a flashy mount of a more docile nature. In the end, any cross with an Andalusian has the potential to produce a great horse. Isn't it time for you to design the horse of your dreams? All horses with at least one parent registered as a purebred with the International Andalusian and Lusitano Horse Association (IALHA, 101 Carnoustie North, Box 200, Birmingham, AL 35242 or www.ialha.org. The author can be contacted at www.oldstonehousefarm.com.