

A REAL BLACK BEAUTY

Lake Metroparks Welcomes the Friesian

BY SUSAN TOWNSEND, EQUINE SPECIALIST

You may have noticed that almost invariably when a mythical maiden first meets Prince Charming he is aboard a breathtaking horse with magnificent presence, a long flowing mane and tail and a noble head. For the fair damsel, and for many of us modern day onlookers, it seems one glimpse of such a horse casts a spell. This spell has worked on many including those in the film industry that have recognized how such a beautiful horse can enhance their film. A large majority of these roles are played by the gallant Friesian. Producers of movies such as *Lady Hawk*, *The Mask of Zorro*, *Alexander*, *Eragon*, and most recently, *Prince Caspian* have noticed the alluring effect these beauties have on audiences.

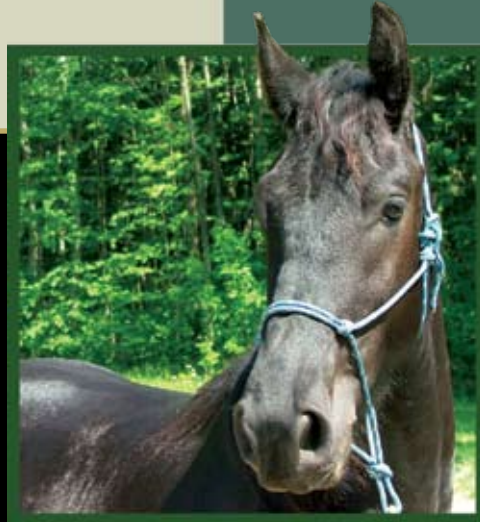
Indeed, the Friesian has star quality, a substantially structured black horse of height and bone typically standing 16-hands, with an upright neck crested with a graceful arch, a natural high-stepping gait, full wavy mane and tail, feathering on the legs, and the most outstanding quality, its kind temperament and willingness to please.

Although the modern Friesian is considered a warmblood, it is descended from heavier stock and retains many heavy horse characteristics. Originating in the Dutch province of Friesland, they were bred for centuries by the Dutch, who are intensely protective of the remaining purebreds.

The Friesian has a long and interesting history. This gallant charger once carried armored knights into battle. From war horse, the Friesian changed vocation to become an indispensable partner in agriculture and then used as a carriage horse by the wealthy. In the early 1800s, the Friesian was bred to be lighter and faster in order to accommodate the popular trotting races in Europe. Due to the mechanization of farming, as well as crossbreeding, the purebred Friesian nearly met with extinction by the end of World War I.

In 1879, a small group of concerned breeders founded the Friesch Paarden-Stamboek (FPS), the first Friesian studbook in the Netherlands. Today, the FPS has some of the tightest breeding regulations in the horse world. The Friesian, originally imported to North America during the 17th Century was lost due to crossbreeding. In 1974, the Friesian was reintroduced to North America and the Friesian Horse Association of North America (FANA) was formed, with intent to maintain the purity and standard of the breed.

Today the breed is thriving, proving to be a versatile and dependable performer in harness and under saddle. It has become popular and excels both in dressage as well as competitive driving.



FARMPARK'S FRIESIAN

Farmpark's Equine Center is now fortunate to have Thiadrik, a two-year-old Dutch Friesian gelding. Farmpark staff discovered Thiadrik while searching for an addition to the equine program. Light Horse Brigade members Larry and Joyce Wentz and Cynthia Campbell were so excited by the prospect of working with a Friesian that they pledged substantial donations towards the cost of Thiadrik's purchase (which was beyond Farmpark's budget.) These donations, made through the Lake Parks Foundation Farmpark Fund, inspired additional contributions from others including fellow Light Horse Brigade member Rick Prescott. The Lake Parks Foundation has pledged to help raise the additional funds necessary for Thiadrik's support.

So, the next time you visit Farmpark look for Thiadrik. He has a very friendly personality and is drawn to visitors when he is turned out. Presently, you may observe him being schooled on ground work in preparation for work in harness and under saddle once he reaches his third birthday.

For information about making a donation to the Lake Parks Foundation to support Thiadrik and other Farmpark programs or to become a Back-a-Breed sponsor, please call 440-256-3063.

Left: FaFnr, a 7-year-old mature Friesian with owner Vicki Peffers, during Farmpark's HorseFest 2008.



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