



February 12, 2017

Re: Amicus brief in support of an investigation of the Fort Polk horses

To Whom It May Concern,

I write this letter in support of beginning an investigation into the genetic documentation of the feral horses found on the Fort Polk property in Louisiana. Initial visual assessments point to the possibility of the horses being a remnant population of a Colonial Spanish strain of horses known as the Choctaw horse. If this is the case it would mean that the horses could be of genetic, cultural, and historical importance to the region.

With this letter I have included a document created by Dr. Phil Sponenberg who is considered the leading authority on Colonial Spanish horses in America. It explains in detail the importance of Colonial Spanish horses and why we believe the Fort Polk horses may be considered one of them upon further field investigation.

The Livestock Conservancy has a long history of nearly forty years of collaboration with the U.S. government and wildlife conservation agencies to assess feral populations on public land. We have assisted with creating management strategies which on occasion has included removal and placement with new breed stewards. Our mission is the conservation of unique livestock and poultry breeds and as such we seek only to secure them so that their legacy as a living piece of history along with the genetic resource they represent is not lost.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter, and do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Jeannette Beranger
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The Livestock Conservancy

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Conserving Heritage Breeds Since 1977



The Livestock Conservancy™

Colonial Spanish



Breed Facts

Status:
Threatened

Use:
Endurance,
Riding, Hunting,
Driving

Adult Weight:
700 - 900 lbs

Temperament:
Even, Gentle
Disposition

**Experience
Level:**
Novice

Notes:
Some are gaited,
have long stride

The Colonial Spanish horse is a group of closely related breeds that descend from horses brought by Spanish explorers and colonists to the Americas beginning in the 1500s. Horses were an integral part of Spanish success in the New World, and both domestic and free range stocks spread far and wide. For centuries, Spanish horses were the most common type of horse throughout the Southeast and all of the regions west of the Mississippi. Beginning in the mid- to late 1800s, however, almost all Spanish stocks were crossbred with or replaced by horses of larger size, including Thoroughbreds, other riding horse breeds, and draft horses. Ubiquitous between 1750 and 1850, the pure Spanish horse in North America was almost extinct by 1950.



By the 1950s, only a few herds of pure Spanish horses remained in the Southeast and the Southwest, owned by traditional ranchers or Native American tribes, or found in isolated free-ranging herds. From these remnants, conservation programs began. Several groups of dedicated breeders have been involved. First among these was the Spanish Mustang Registry, founded in 1957, followed by the American Indian Horse Registry, the Spanish Barb Breeders Association, and the Southwest Spanish Mustang Association.

The North American Spanish horse population includes many distinct strains, and these could be considered either parts of a larger, single breed, or several smaller, closely related breeds. Given the overall consistency of this population and the fact that many individual horses are registered in more than one of the registries, The Livestock Conservancy has chosen to consider them as one breed, while recognizing the importance of the unique regional adaptations of individual strains.

The Colonial Spanish horse goes by a number of names including Spanish Mustang, Spanish Barb, or their strain name. Regardless of the name, they share conformational features that distinguish them from other riding breeds. They are small, standing 13.2 to 15 hands (54-60") at the withers and weighing 700-900 pounds. The horses are generally short coupled and deep bodied, but narrow from the front so that the front legs join the chest in the shape of an "A" rather than the shape of a "U" that is seen in the stock horse breeds. The croup is sloping and the tail is set low. The horses have broad foreheads and narrow faces, and the profiles may be either straight or convex. Spanish horses are athletic and useful for a variety of riding disciplines, among them ranch work, endurance competitions, and pleasure riding. They have an unusually long stride, and many of them are gaited. They are renowned for their even temperament and gentle dispositions.

Nearly all colors of horses occur in this breed. Solid colors include black, grullo, bay, dun, buckskin, chestnut, red dun, palomino, and cream. Gray and roan are common, as are every sort of paint (frame, sabino, and tobiano) and the leopard complex of colors commonly associated with the Appaloosa breed (including blankets, leopards, and varnish roans). Indeed, Spanish genetics are the source of the color in the Paint, Pinto, Appaloosa, Pony of the Americas, Palomino, and other breeds. The Spanish horse has also made substantial contributions to the American gaited breeds and to the American Quarter Horse and other stock horse breeds.



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