

July 8, 2009

NEWS RELEASE

Light Horse demonstrations provide educational fun



Stampede visitors get up close and personal with a spotted mule during the Light Horse Demonstrations and Displays event at the Northern Lights Arena, beside Horse Haven Stables in the Agriculture Barns. The Light Horse demos and displays run daily through 2009 Stampede, from July 3 to 12.
Photo credit: Calgary Stampede

Calgary — How much does Sheila McLellan love Welsh Ponies? Here's a hint: she travelled to Wales to bring one back for her breeding program.

"Back in the 1970s, some friends of ours gave our kids one of their Welsh Ponies, and we were hooked," says McLellan, of Priddis, formerly the owner of Kiltie Farm near Okotoks. "We bought a stallion at the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto, and started breeding Welsh Ponies, but we also went to Wales to buy a Welsh Cob and breed them too.

"I like the temperament of the Welsh, especially. They're extremely versatile. The Welsh Mountain Ponies are the babysitters, the ones kids start off riding with, but I always say that once the kids outgrow them, mom and dad can have fun,

because you can drive them. They're a good family animal."

Wander into Horse Haven Stables, at the north end of the Calgary Stampede's Agriculture Barns, and you'll hear all kinds of Light Horse enthusiasts waxing ecstatic about their equine companions.

The Light Horse Demonstrations and Displays event is open daily at the 2009 Stampede, in a Western fort setting, from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

"People are down here with horses to promote the breed that they love," says Donna Wyatt, the Stampede's Light Horse committee chair, who herself has been raising Appaloosas for more than 50 years west of High River. "And at the same time, we're promoting all the light horses."

This year, 16 breeds of Light Horses are on display — Quarter Horse, Appaloosa, Friesian, Tennessee Walker, Morgan, Paint, Welsh Pony, Mini, Norwegian Fjord, Thoroughbred, Standardbred, Peruvian Paso, Pasofino, Curly, Foxtrotter and Canadian.

"We're showing people 16 different breeds of light horse," says Light Horse committee member Genevieve Dean of Bragg Creek.

"We like to fill people in on their origins — their disciplines, their history, their conformational colour, disciplines, gentleness and usability," adds Dean.

Notes Wyatt: "You have to love it. You have to love what you're doing, or you can't really get the message across to people. And everyone here has a big passion for their breeds — and Light Horses in general."



These Light Horse breeds can also be seen in action daily in demonstrations in the Big Top and Northern Lights Arena. Highlights include the Priefert Percheron Hitch, presenting an amazing demonstration of speed and agility, and the Arizona Mini Mystique, a 12-member miniature horse driving drill team performing to a lively musical score.

And if you're just itching to own a horse, then Horse Sense 101, presented daily, is just for you. This family-oriented program teaches people the basics about horses in an interactive, hands-on, educational setting. The University of Calgary's Veterinary School brings in vets who'll discuss important topics such as nutrition, breeds and anatomy.

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The Calgary Stampede is a volunteer-supported, not-for-profit community organization that preserves and promotes western heritage and values. The Stampede contributes to the quality of life in Calgary and southern Alberta through its world-renowned 10-day Stampede, year-round facilities, western events and several youth and agriculture programs. All revenue is reinvested into Calgary Stampede programs and facilities. For more about the Stampede, visit www.calgarystampede.com.