

razil, one of the world's largest countries, with centuries of close political and cultural ties to Portugal and the Iberian peninsula, today boasts the largest population of horses descending directly from

Iberian stock. More than 50% of all registered horses in this part of South America still reflect the influence and characteristics of the famous horses of the Conquistadors, the Jennet. Here, the Mangalarga, Crioulo and Campolina breeds account for 350,000 horses, twice as many as Quarter Horses. The most popular of them is the Mangalarga Marchador, the National Horse of Brasil.



9 year old Mangalarga
Marchador gelding



MARGALARGA MARCHADORES

A Horse Without Frontiers

• Christiana Guerra

Origins

Not unlike the horses of Andalucia or the coastal plains of Peru, the Margalarga is the product of a rich agricultural area and its haciendas. There the farmers and ranchers have always valued an enduring horse with a smooth and comfortable ride and superb temperament. After all, they spent a large part of their work day on horseback.

In 1807, when the armies of Napoleon threatened Portugal, the royal family withdrew to Brazil. They remained past the French occupation and, in 1815, made Brazil a separate kingdom. D. João VI succeeded to both thrones, ruling the home country of Portugal through a council of regency. When D. João left Portugal, he brought with him some of the finest horses of the breeding farm Coudelaria Altes do Chão. From these horses descended the stallion Sublime. It is said that in 1812, Prince Pedro I, who later was named Emperor of Brazil, presented Sublime as a gift to his friend Gabriel Francisco Junqueira, Baron of Alderán and the owner of the established breeding farm Hacienda Campo Alegre.

Gabriel's father had established Campo Alegre and horse breeding seventy years earlier in the state of Minas Gerais. With its capital city of Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais was one of Brazil's richest areas, famous for iron, gold and diamond mining, cattle ranching and extensive agricultural production. With the arrival of the stallion

was established in Belo Horizonte in 1949 with the major goals to set breed standards and to promote and distinguish the Mangalarga Marchador as a unique breed, principally with regard to its gait. The group is now called the Associação Brasileira dos Criadores do Cavalo Mangalarga Marchador (ABC-CMM) and boasts 7,000 members and close to 190,000 registered horses.

When introduced to the neighboring state of São Paulo, some blood of Arabian, Thoroughbred and American Saddlebred origin found its way into the breeding programs, leading to a separate registry of Mangalarga Paulista horses in 1934. The traditional breeding of Mangalarga Marchador horses though, has concentrated on the original pure foundation lines from Hacienda Campo Alegre. Genetic studies of these lines show many species with very little or no outside influences. These lines proved to produce horses that were sure footed, graceful, comfortable and of excellent temperament.

Breed Characteristics

The Mangalarga Marchador is of good size with an average height of over 15 hands and weighing 900 to 1100 pounds. Horses smaller than 14.2 hands are not being accepted for registration. Most colors are represented in the breed with grays, bays and chestnuts being the most popular. The horses are well known for their keen intelligence, docile nature, undying stamina and regal bearing, but most of all, for their incredibly smooth and fluid ride even at high speeds. The head is triangular in shape with a straight profile and rounded over the nose region, typical of the Barb horse. The coat is fine and silky and the mane and tail are full. The neck is of medium length, sufficient for the horse to be well balanced for riding and reining. It is well arched and muscular, inserted in the top third of the chest to allow for a proud, high carriage. The thorax is deep and allows for great lung capacity, one of the reasons for the legendary stamina of the breed. The back is of medium length with short and well muscled loins. The gaskin and forearm

tend to be long, well muscled and articulated and the cannons are short. The pasterns and hooves are at the slightly lower angle typical of Spanish horses. This allows him to overreach well and without excessive stress to his suspensories.

The Gaits

The Mangalarga Marchador has two special gaits or *marchas*, the *marcha picada* and the *marcha batida*. Which gait is superior is always subject to debate and it seems to boil down to the personal preference of the individual breeder.

In Portuguese, *picada* stands for a light touch and of the two *marchas*, the *marcha picada* is a bit smoother. It is a broken pace and therefore creates little vertical movement. This gait is characterized by the movement of the animal's legs in a lateral sequence, with periods of triple hooves support. The principal advantage of this lateral four beat gait is its greater smoothness resulting from the periods of triple hooves support and from the overreach. The gait can be sustained for long periods of time, allowing the rider hours of enjoyable riding with little discomfort. The timing of foot falls is similar to the *passo llano* of the Peruvian horse.

Batida means to hit and describes the gait considered to be a broken trot. It is characterized by the movements of the legs in a diagonal pattern, also with

moments of triple support and a four beat sequence. This gait, unlike a trot, shows very little suspension (all the legs in the air) as the horses are always in contact with the ground. This creates stability and smoothness. The longer and more frequent the moments of triple hooves support are, the more comfortable the gait will be. On flat ground, performing the *batida* at a normal speed, the hind foot overreaches the track of the forefoot on the same side, adding to the smoothness of the ride. In this gait the timing of the footfalls is similar to the *tracha* gait seen in Colombian horses.



Young Mangalarga Marchador mare.

THE *Royal Horse* OF EUROPE

The Story of the
Austrian and
Lusitano
by Sylvia Loch

This extraordinary book tells the story of the great war-horse of Spain and Portugal. The author's original research covers the development of horse and horsemanship in the Iberian Peninsula from pre-Roman times to the present day.

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MANCLARCA MARCHADORES

Performance and Versatility

Not unlike the Swiss army knife, the Mangalarga Marchador is very versatile and can fulfill many functions and perform a variety of tasks. They include the management of large agricultural farms and cattle ranches and a number of non-specialized sports, such as cutting, endurance riding, trail and pleasure riding, jumping and polo.

In 1994, two 60-year-old Brazilian men completed a 8,694 miles trail ride to prove the stamina of the Mangalarga Marchador. For one and a half years they rode all day and rested at night, all with the same horses. This was a defiance for the breed and the feat was recorded in *The Guinness Book of World Records*.

In its effort to preserve and perfect the essential characteristics of the breed, the ABCCMM holds annual tests and competitions where conformation and type, gait and functional performance are being judged. The national points ranking system highlights the winning horses and breeders and many competitions attract exhibitors with cash prizes. Gait classes are rigorous and normally last about an hour, during which the horse is judged for executing its gait with carriage, bias and elegance with consistent timing over a wide range of speed. Functional performance testing includes reining competitions, cross country events and endurance tests over distances from 32 to 62 miles. Top honors for breeding animals are awarded to horses with the high point score from a combination of all the above tests. Shows and competitions for Mangalarga horses are very popular all across Brazil. In 1995, the city of Belo Horizonte alone saw 27 shows and competitions with over 1500 exhibitors and close to 4400 horses.

The tack used for the Mangalarga is simple. The saddle commonly used is similar to an Australian stock saddle. The headstall is clean cut and a snaffle bit is usually employed. The attire used in showing the Mangalarga in Brazil varies from region to region but it is always colorful and unique.

Expanding the Frontier

Outside Brazil, the Mangalarga Marchador has been received enthusiastically by Spanish horse aficionados and admirers of smooth four beat gaited horses alike. With its gentle temperament, stamina, comfortable ride, versatility and willingness to perform, this breed adds yet another color to the incredible mosaic of horses with Spanish ancestry around the world.

Germany was the first foreign country to be conquered by the Mangalarga Marchador breed by the end of the 1980's. Today, there is already a well established German Mangalarga Marchador breeders association and the horses compete in many shows around the country. The breed can now be found in Portugal, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Holland and many South American countries.

Mangalargas finally arrived in the United States in 1991. The Brazilians, Gabriel Andrade and Lucas Guerra have pioneered the introduction of the Mangalarga Marchador to the United States and brought some horses to Miami, Florida. With its legendary stamina, excellent cow sense, great versatility and supported by the growing popularity of smooth riding gaited breeds, the Mangalarga Marchador is sure to be a great success here as well. As the Brazilian breeders association's motto says, it is truly a "breed without frontiers."

*Journal of International Equine
the Mangalarga Marchador*

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