

Crossbreeding the Andalusian Horse

By Sarah Gately-Wilson

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 just over 10,000 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 (AQHA), the Spanish-Norman (Percheron), the Warlander (Friesian), and the Hispano-Arabe.



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.

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 English Thoroughbred as well as most of today's Warmbloods were bred from Iberian horses. When we look at the Hanoverian and Trakehner we see many Iberian traits still prominent in the breed. 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. 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.



King Oberon OSF 5 year old Iberian Warmblood competing in eventing.

The Azteca

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. Today one of the most sought after horses is the perfect trail companion. 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.



Left: Legada Destello, 4 year Azteca mare. Right: Yearling grulla Azteca colt.

The Andalusian is also being crossed with the Friesian to produce the Warlander. 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?