

Carousel Farm

By: James F. McGowen and Holly Grubb

I started Carousel Farm in Jefferson County, West Virginia in 1986 with my wife and two children. We moved from our farm in Central West Virginia (Calhoun County) along with eight or nine Percheron horses, two milk cows

with calves, three English shepherds and a litter of puppies. We had known about crossing Thoroughbreds with drafts to make American sport horses. Our new farm was in an area where sporting horses are very popular, that

first spring we bred an outside TB mare to our stallion, R.H.B EMBLEM, and the colt went on to show in the sporting horse foal class the next year at Dover, PA . The foal did quite well in a field of registered foals.

Holly Grubb and quarter Percheron, Carousel's Special Agent Potchi competing in the Event For the Cure.



Our farm is located about three miles from Charles Town, WV, the home of Charles Town Races. There are a lot of TB stallions around so we started breeding our young fillies to local studs for their first foals. This made for easier foaling and offspring that were worth more at sale time in our area. When looking for a Thoroughbred stallion to breed to we look for much of the same qualities desired in a Percheron, good disposition, a good brain to deal with uncertainties, athletic ability and refinement of confirmation. We're not looking for size, we know we will get that from the Percheron.

Percheron horses are the breed that caught my eye at horse sales. They seemed to carry themselves with a little more style and grace and the JUSTAMERE SHOWTIME line of horses just kicked it up a notch. Our first registered Percheron mares were MI DID'S DOLL (DID'S DOLL) and her daughter MI SHOWTIME ABIGAIL, purchased from Bob and Mary Mischka in Whitewater, Wisconsin. All of our current Percheron horses trace back to them. It was their first filly foals that raised our first TB crosses.

We start our horses in the round pen. We teach them voice commands of walk, trot and canter, both directions! Once they are solid in voice



Morgan Borchert competing Beginner Novice aboard, half Percheron mare, Carousel's Carry Me Home.

commands we put a surcingle on them and a bridle using driving lines and voice commands. This will help teach steering, halt, and foot placements.

When they are close to three years old we head down to the main riding ring. We drive them in the ring to continue teaching them to steer, halt, stand quietly, walk and trot as if they are driving. They are driven over ground lines to teach foot placement, balance, and stepping under themselves into their bridles. Once they have mastered this, we are ready to start them under saddle for riding. They are about three years of age when we first mount them.

To mount a three-year-old, we ask them to stand quietly at a mounting block. They are asked to move forward through their learned voice commands. They learn to balance with the rider with a low headset, to build their top lines and bascules asking them again to step from hind to front into their bridles. We work on shoulders staying open, bending corners, diagonal to diagonal at both the walk and trot gaits to a halt. This keeps them forward, rib cages soft. They are walked and trotted through ground lines to pick their feet up and to help establish flexion with knee action. We can then teach length-

ening and shortening of strides. This also helps with straightness to avoid drifting. At this point our horses are ready to canter. We sit up and back, ask with leg first to inside rein. When they are willing and balanced, they will quickly learn to pick up the correct lead.

They are sent forward out of a circle, or bend and slow them down in the bend on the other side of the ring for continued balance.

Once Carousel's athletes have mastered the flat, at roughly four years old, it's time to see the free jump of the stars. We start in the round pen

with a single jump and put up a little vertical. This is exciting for one reason, and one reason only: The horses learn how to bring their knees up to their chin. Through this that you get to see their natural jumping form. This is a favorite part of ours. By watching this process, a rider will learn what to expect when they proceed with their first jump under the saddle.

The horses head back to the main ring with jumps already set on lines, and bends. They warm up with flat work training, lengthening strides and straightness. Here's why: to avoid our horses getting behind a rider's legs and the horse stop in front of the jump. Sending horses forward allows a nice smooth jump and the horse to safely clear the jump.

Percherons and Percheron Thoroughbred crosses are smooth to ride and very willing to please. The horses will do great things and try harder, if you show them praise. Once we know they truly understand, we continue taking them around the courses we set up. The courses are set to match anything they would see in a show jump ring.



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The jumps are a small, 2'3" height. , once the horses learn to round over the jumps we add difficult courses with tight turns and roll backs.

Cross country is probably our favorite part of a horse trial, getting out to the wide open. We walk over logs, ditches, through puddles, and of course, hand gallop through the countryside. We teach the open gallop in a half seat. When we want the horse to slow down we sit back and up, giving a half halt, in teaching this, it's very easy to slow the horse to step down a bank, up a staircase, tables, and a combination of three jumps at one fence. We have a

few cross country schooling farms in our area, so field trips to gallop and jump new objects is a plus.

As an employee of Carousel Farm, I take great joy in training these amazing Percherons and Percheron Thoroughbred crosses. There is nothing better than hand galloping these intelligent, majestic, big hearted, eager-to-please athletes. They can do any job at hand, and never give up trying. They are a pleasure to ride at a full gallop to my next numbered cross country job as spectators, judges, riders, and trainers look on. The ground shakes, hooves hit the turf like thunder, and everyone is

wondering, What's this? We approach, each stride louder, my huge horse clearing a jump by two feet, landing and galloping off, hoof beats fading in the distance. Never, not once, have we not made our times in Stadium or Cross Country, and we've always danced a lovely Dressage test.

The majestic stance, the eyes that seem to peer into their own heart and soul, the love of any task assigned. These horses are level headed and willing, gentle athletic giants performing at their best, regardless of weather. They are incredible animals that truly can show in any ring. 



CAROUSEL'S HUMMER sired by #291184 Sonador Farm's Excalibur out of #285178 Carousel's Harmony competing USDF first level test two at the Evergreen Dressage Show series with Holly Grubb riding.

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#303095 CAROUSEL'S CHELSEA sired by #291184 Sonador Farm's Excalibur out of #285178 Carousel's Rachael competing USDF first level test two at the Evergreen Dressage Show series with Holly Grubb riding.

Blue winning performances

CAROUSEL FARM
 Jim McGowen
 1640 Darke Lane
 Kearneysville, WV 25430
 304-725-3909
carouselfarm@frontiernet.net