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Gypsy MVP at Magnolia Ranch Belleville and Katy, Texas

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photo: Gerald Wheeler Gypsy MVP and Magnolia Ranch offer top-quality Gypsy Vanners for sale and breeding.

If you pick up your phone and call a concierge, you are usually trying to find out how to get tickets to the best show in town or advice on where to dine. When you call the concierge at Magnolia Ranch, you will get information and advice, alright, but not about tickets or food. This concierge focuses on the care and feeding of Gypsy Vanner horses.

"We are there all the time for support - answering the phone seven days a week to help our customers," says Doug Kneis, co-owner of Magnolia Ranch and Gypsy MVP, which offer Gypsy VIP Concierge Service to customers who buy their Gypsy Vanners. "We have always been a turn-key service and I say service because that is number one."

A lot of Kneis' buyers are first time horse owners, so he takes service well beyond answering the phone. "My barn manager flies all around the United States, goes to our customers' homes to teach them things about the breed, how to care for the horse, how to feed it. We help them pick out tack, set up their barns, even teach people how to ride."

Buy a Gypsy Vanner from Kneis and, as part of his Gypsy VIP Concierge Service, he will also help you start your own breeding business, if that's what you want. "We will sell them mares in foal. And we will give them free breeding for next year or the year after to help them get something started," explains Kneis. "We also help them sell their horses if they have offspring and they have done business with us. This is part of the concierge service. I don't know anyone else out there who does that."

Kneis is totally committed to his customers, whether they buy or breed. His commitment seems like a tall order until you understand where it comes from.

"The breed was very young when I bought my first Gypsy Vanner. There were people selling this breed, and others similar, on the Internet but they were lumping all the horses together - good ones with really awful ones - coarse heads, bad necks, poor conformation, no feather," says Kneis. Then he pauses. "They were calling them Gypsy Vanners. Here was a brand new breed of horse already devaluing. I didn't like that."

Kneis decided to fix it. Magnolia Ranch and Gypsy MVP were the result. Starting these enterprises was a big gamble; Kneis understood the ups and downs of the horse business. He always had horses but never this many and never just one breed. His love affair with Gypsy Vanners all began with a close encounter with a box of horse treats.

"I had an Arab horse here at the ranch and a couple of Friesians and an Andalusian horse and I was at the feed store looking for horse treats and found this box on one of the counters. It had a caricature of a black and white horse on it with a long thick mane down to its shoulders and tons of feathers - prettiest horse I had ever seen in my life."

photo: Gerald Wheeler Doug Kneis' businesses began as a dream with a few horses and have expanded to include over 50 horses.

was a guy in Florida that had a few of these horses. I contacted him and that started the whole adventure. I got my first one and I was hooked ... that was it."

That was 2001. Like most horse lovers, Kneis' operation started with a dream and just a few horses. Today, he owns 80 acres and 50 horses and two operations in the United States, Magnolia Ranch in Katy, Texas, and Gypsy MVP in Belleville, Texas, where he breeds and sells Gypsy Vanners. Kneis also imports Gypsy Vanners from Europe and the United Kingdom.

Breeding, selling and importing these horses do not make his operation unique. There are other people importing Gypsy Vanners into the United States and breeding them. But Kneis has a unique way to ensure that the horses he brings into this country are among the best in the world. He has two barns overseas, one in England and one in Germany, and two women who help him find and import only the finest Gypsy Vanners.

Sabine Lappe-Theis buys from top breeders in Europe. Anne Bevan provides the same service in England. Bevan grew up with the Gypsies. There are no cultural barriers, which means she gets an opportunity to buy only the best horses the Gypsies have.

"I have the best job in the world but the hardest. Thousands are bred but only a few will be accepted," Bevan has been working with Gypsy Vanners for 40 years. "Out of fields full of dear souls, I hand pick only a very few to come to me." Bevan never ships horses directly to Kneis. "These horses will stay with our family for months until we know them fully. This is important to place the right horse in the right home."

Bevan finds the best Gypsy Vanners; Kneis finds the best vendors who help ship his horses to the United States without a hitch. "We trust the people who help us transport the horses and our vets in Europe. If they tell us something we can believe it," Kneis adds that his vendors provide the same level of service he does. "We know that we can call all along the way."

Even in quarantine, Kneis and his network of vendors are focused on the horse. "When the horses arrive stateside, we call on the phone and ask how they are doing. Our customers call and talk to the people about their horse when it is in quarantine. We even get pictures of the horses."

For Kneis, this is all part of his commitment to the breed and his concierge service. "That is the kind of service we give people. You won't find anybody else out there, selling these horses that cares that much about the horse," he says.

Stateside, Kneis has a full-time staff of seven to help him with the day-to-day business of running his ranches. Key to his success is Erica Barton, president, ranch manager, trainer and concierge. "I work with the horses daily, spend a lot of one on one time with them," she says. "I spend a lot of time with each horse, make sure they are handled every day, and get to know their personalities, likes, dislikes."

Barton is passionate about the horses she manages and about the breed. So is her boss. "We're not in this for the sale. We are in it for the horse. We are trying to find the best possible match for a horse and the best home," he states.

For these top-of-the-line Gypsy Vanners, you would expect nothing less.

To get more information and to see just a few of the fabulous Gypsy Vanners Kneis owns, visit his website at www.gypsymvp.com or give Gypsy VIP Concierge a call at 281-389-3356!

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