

Press Release

Fairy Tale Horses Making Inroads in America

Katy, Texas -- Two weeks ago, Texas oilman Doug Kneis imported his latest shipment of Gypsy Vanner horses, which have been selectively bred for over 100 years by the Romany Gypsies. These horses were born and bred in the English countryside but will now take up residence at Gypsy MVP, Kneis' operation in Katy, Texas (<http://www.gypsymvp.com>). The new horses will join Kneis' already well-developed herd of the unique and rare breed.

Gypsy Vanners are beautiful, showy small draft horses. Over the last decade, these horses have trickled into the United States in response to keen enthusiasm on the part of breeders and buyers. In 1999 there were few than 100 Vanners in America. Currently, there are approximately 1300. The Gypsy Vanner Horse Society was founded in 2004 to keep records of the breed and promote the horses.

The horses have the appearance of a fairy-tale animal, with their colorful coats often black and white or brown and white (called Piebald and Skewbald in English parlance). They have massive manes and tails and their lower legs are covered with long flowing hair or "feathers" typical of English draft horses.

The Vanner is distinctive not only because of its appearance, but because it is so gentle, says Kneis. "The English Gypsies bred these horses to pull their caravans, they raised their children around them." The horses had to be bombproof, unfazed by flapping cloth and loud noises that would send other breeds skittering. "When you've got everything you own hitched to a wagon behind a horse, you can't have that horse spooking," he points out.

Kneis became interested in the breed one day when he saw an image of one of the horses on a horse treats package. He didn't believe the picture could be of a real animal, and once he got involved with the breed, he couldn't slow down. He founded Gypsy MVP to manage the care, buying and selling of his animals and promote the breed. The company currently has approximately two dozen Gypsy Vanner horses for sale.

"These horses are like a drug." Kneis says. "There's just something about their sweet, almost human personality that gets to you. I've owned a lot of breeds, always loved horses, but the Gypsy Vanner horses are different."