

BUYING ~ BREEDING ~ GENETICS

The future of the Missouri Fox Trotting horse rests solely in our hands today. What breeders produce and sell today are the international ambassadors of the breed forever..

The basics of buying and/or breeding is to look first at the horse in front of you, or in the case of long distance buying/breeding – a good video and conformation photos. Decide if you are buying/breeding the show horse type with extended reach and animation, or the older original type of Foxtrotter. (My breeding practice addresses the latter only). If breeding is a consideration, then look at the pedigree and confirm it will blend well with your mare or stallion.

CONFORMATION



Analyze the horse's conformation from the side, the front and the back carefully. While few horses are perfect, be honest in your evaluation. My preference is for a well balanced horse, strong driving rear end, deep heart girth with good chest and leg muscle, straight front legs, medium length pasterns and feet large enough to support the horse's mature size (if looking at young stock). Additionally I look for well placed neck, a large soft eye well placed, width of muzzle and small ears. Look to see if the horse moves forward freely from the shoulder with minimal knee action. It has been my experience the conformation of the front 1/3rd of the horse will determine reach and left; the driving rear 1/3rd of the horse will determine range of motion and the ability of the horse to round its back. If buying or breeding for color, make sure you have the best of all the basics first, add color last.

Most sellers and/or breeders have developed marketing strategies to attract visitors (buyers/breeders) to their farms and ranches. Some specialize in particular colors, size, curls, ponies or emphasize lengthy pedigrees. I have found no correlation in looking/researching pedigrees 5 and 10 generation back to ascertain the original breed make-up of the horse in front of me. The fact of buying or breeding still remains the same – look at the horse in front of you. Does it foxtrot, pace or hard trot?

The Missouri Fox Trotter horse evolved from several different breeds in the 1930/1940's; Morgans, Tennessee Walkers and Saddle Horses to name a few. When mares, stallions and geldings were first registered in the new Missouri Fox Trotter Horse Breed Association, they were registered because they were required to demonstrate a solid foxtrot under saddle prior to registration. There is no scientific data to support any

particular breed of horse registered, regardless of their breed or unknown status, demonstrated any gait other than a foxtrot.

Some of the old time bloodlines I especially like are Toddy's Perfection, Danney Joe W., Hawkeye's Black Sambo, Missouri Traveler E., Golden Governor, Zane Grey and Pooles's Blue Boy. In my opinion, they offered the conformation, disposition and above all – the Foxtrotting gait I want in my breeding program.

GENETICS



Equine gene mapping commenced in 1998 to investigate the complex hereditary basis of equine performance, behavior, disease and color. To date, scientists have not located a gait gene; but it is hoped that in the near future, this important aspect of genetics will become available and perfected to the same degree as current equine dna parentage verification and dna color testing.

In the meantime, I cannot stress strongly enough to look at the horse in front of you – does it fox trot, hard trot or pace?

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