

THE COB: AN HONEST PERSPECTIVE

The Traditional Gypsy Cob is a breed of horse, the studbook is held in Great Britain and it is recognised as a UK native breed throughout the world.

Originally bred to do a job for a gypsy family, whether that was ridden or to pull a bow top waggon they are an amazingly flexible breed with a range of talents that make them a fabulous hack but they also have success in dressage, driving and showing while competing against other breeds of competition horse. The gentle temperament and weight bearing abilities of the breed are well known amongst the converted and that is the point, more and more people are being converted to the joys of the traditional gypsy cob. Their gentle nature and their patience are without doubt and these attributes are included within the breed standard, it also ensures that they are a super horse to own and are often suitable for even the more novice rider, but can up their game when ridden by someone with more experience.

Temperament and correct conformation has been bred into the breed from generations of knowledgeable horse owners, the gypsies themselves. These were breeding all-round family horses, but they would have to stand up to hard work, stay sound and not cost a lot to keep.

In recent times the beauty and versatility of this breed has been recognised worldwide and many of these horses have become extremely valuable, but while the elite animals travel the world as living breathing examples of how exceptional the gypsy cob can be, the rest cannot be overlooked. They are popular with knowledgeable caring horse owners who want an all-rounder with which to have fun.

Over the last few years the traditional gypsy cob has not just been bred for the use of the gypsy family but for sale and export, so what happens to all the cobs that don't meet the stringent criteria required to be an exemplar for best of breed? Many are cherished by horse owners and riders who are not from gypsy stock, they are used for RDA, are competition animals but sadly some are left languishing in fields. This is the issue that needs addressing and Cob Care is adamant that the campaign to 'Give a Cob a Job' will provide a bright future for the breed and many lucky horse owners.

So many general horse owners have discovered the delights and versatility of the traditional gypsy cob but more need to overlook any prejudice they may have around the connotations of the word gypsy. In fact, most true gypsies are hugely knowledgeable horse owners and breeders, many leisure horse owners can benefit from their experience plus the versatility and gentle nature of this wonderful breed. You have the choice, either stand back and dwell on all the inflammatory publicity around a few less scrupulous individuals or benefit from generations of horse knowledge and breeding that will ensure you have a horse that is 'as described' and will fulfil a number of roles.

If you are looking for a horse to compete at the Olympics this is probably not the breed for you, but if you want a wonderful all-rounder that will take you to camp, compete in dressage to a fairly high standard and excel at riding club activities while keeping a smile on your face, the traditional gypsy cob could be the horse for you. Why not give them a try? There are many already assessed gypsy cobs at rescue centres throughout the UK to choose from, or you could even contact one of the many private breeders within the UK who are part of the TGCA Assured breeder's scheme. Whatever you want to do, just go along and try one, we promise you will be hooked!