

Notes on Rickman horses, February 15, 2008

D. P. Sponenberg, DVM, PhD

The herds of Bryant Rickman consist of Spanish horses that remain from the early colonial efforts of the Spaniards in North America. These horses are important as a genetic resource because they have become rare, and are one of the oldest strains of horses in North America. The Rickman horses have two main roots, both of which are important to conserve. These horses fit very well into the conservation of Colonial Spanish Horses throughout the Americas, and conservationists throughout the Americas agree with me that these horses are typical of the Colonial Spanish type. The conservation success of these horses varies across the Americas, with the North American ones being quite rare, while the South American branch (Criollo) is popular and held as an important national treasure.

One of these is the Choctaw native tribal line. These horses have been pivotal in the conservation and breeding of Colonial Spanish horses in North America, but have generally been outcrossed to other lines of these horses in North America to produce a useful composite of strains. Bryant and Darlene Rickman have the largest population of the original, uncrossed genetic resource which are important as a major component of this type of horse in North America.

The second important group came to the Rickmans as a result of the long horse breeding career of Gilbert Jones. Gilbert Jones bred and conserved Colonial Spanish Horses over a very long and active life. He is one of three main breeders that ensured the survival of this breed to the present. Jones did move throughout the Southwest, and the Jones horses have influences from the various places and stages of his life. His strain has proven excellent for type, and also excellent for endurance riding. It is a pivotally important strain, and is rare in North America outside of the herds of Bryant Rickman.

D. Phillip Sponenberg, DVM, PhD
Professor, Pathology and Genetics
Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, VA 24061
dpsponen@mail.vt.edu dpsponen@mail.vt.edu
phone: 1-540-231-4805
fax: 1-540-231-6033