

## **Breeds of Horses at Michigan Race Tracks**

There are several breeds of race horses in Michigan. Standardbreds run at the harness tracks (Jackson Raceway, Sports Creek Raceway, Northville Downs and Hazel Park Raceway), thoroughbreds run at thoroughbred tracks as well as the mixed breed track (Mount Pleasant Meadows) and Arabians, Quarter horses and American Paints race at the mixed breed track (Mount Pleasant Meadows).

### **THE STANDARDBRED HORSE**

The Standardbred horse is a strong breed that comes in a variety of colors with bay, brown and black being predominant. They are a docile animal by nature. Standardbreds are trained to gait in either a trotting or pacing style. Trotters move with a diagonal gait with the left front and right rear legs moving in unison, as do the right front and left rear. Pacers move the legs on one side of their body in tandem. That is, left front and rear, and right front and rear. Pacers are nicknamed, "side-wheelers" because of this action.

Trotters race against trotters and pacers run against pacers. Pacers have the faster gait and most of the horses run this style. Pacers wear hobbles (plastic loops) on their legs to help them move in synchronization.

Most Standardbreds start racing as 2- or 3-year-olds. Nearly every harness race is a mile long. All Standardbreds wear the basic equipment of a harness and a bridle, along with a Buxton martingale, which keeps the harness from slipping. Standardbreds race in sulkies, also known as racebikes. These are light-weight, two-wheeled carts that are attached on either side of the harness, and the driver sits close behind the horse.

### **THE THOROUGHBRED HORSE**

The Thoroughbred horse is known as the, "King of Horses" and rightfully so. This horse is a tall, elegant, sleek and slender breed. The main colors of Thoroughbreds are bay, chestnut, black, brown and gray. Thoroughbreds run with a jockey sitting in a saddle on the back of the horse at a gallop.

In the Northern Hemisphere, all thoroughbreds share the same birthday of January 1 while in the Southern Hemisphere, the common birthday is August 1. These artificial dates help to set standardization for the horses in certain age group. Thoroughbreds typically begin to race at 2 years old.

The Jockey Club oversees the naming of all Thoroughbred horses in the United States. Owners submit proposed names to The Jockey Club for approval. A number of restrictions govern the naming process. For instance, names may not be longer than 18 characters, including punctuation and spaces; and the names of certain famous horses, such as Secretariat, cannot be used again.

### **THE QUARTER HORSE**

The American Quarter Horse is the most popular breed in the United States today. It has a stocky build with heavy muscling and a compact appearance. Quarter horses are quick and balanced, surefooted and steady. Quarter Horse race horses are bred to sprint short distances ranging from 220 to 870 yards.

Quarter horses race primarily against other Quarter horses, and their sprinting ability has earned them the nickname, "the world's fastest athlete."

### **THE ARABIAN HORSE**

Arabians are among the oldest breeds of horses and just about every modern breed can trace their heritage back to them. The Arabian horse is a strong, tough breed but with an elegance that is unmatched. The horse is bred to run endurance traveling long distances. This type of horse is intelligent, gentle and loyal to its rider. Arabians come in gray, black, bay, and chestnut.

All thoroughbreds in the world trace their ancestry in the direct male line to three imported sires to England about 375 years ago. All three sires were Arabians - The Byerley Turk (about 1648-90); The Darley Arabian (1700); The Godolphin Arabian (1730).

### **THE AMERICAN PAINT HORSE**

American Paint Horses have strict bloodline requirements and a distinctive stock-horse body type. A Paint's sire and dam must be registered with the American Paint Horse Association, the American Quarter Horse Association, or the Jockey Club (Thoroughbreds) and at least one parent must be a registered American Paint Horse. To be eligible for the Regular Registry, the horse must also exhibit a minimum amount of white hair over un-pigmented (pink) skin.

Each Paint Horse has a particular combination of white and any color of the equine spectrum: black, bay, brown, chestnut, dun, grullo, sorrel, palomino, buckskin, gray or roan. Markings can be any shape or size, and located virtually anywhere on the Paint's body.