

A Rare Breed

As she lifted her coffee mug to her lips, Samantha Steele's hand unconsciously pushed back the long strand of blonde hair that fell from her knotted tie. She sipped the last of her second cup of coffee and placed the empty yellow mug on the kitchen counter. Once more she walked to the kitchen window to see if anything had changed since she last looked out just a few minutes ago. Her insides felt jittery and she wasn't sure if it was from the anticipation of the new arrival or from the caffeine. Either way she was almost giddy with anticipation. Today she was taking a big step in her Curly horse breeding program. A yearling Curly colt was on its way to her farm from Virginia and he would be the foundation stallion for her breeding program. Just thinking about it brought a smile to her lips.

Sam remembered the first time she read about the Curly horse breed. She had picked up a horse magazine that featured Curly horse photos along with an article on their history and breed characteristics. She was fascinated with their curly coats, soft eyes and strong bone conformation. At that time, she was the owner of an Appaloosa and Quarter Horse but for some reason she could not take her eyes off of the photos of the

gorgeous black Curly horse and her obsession with Curly horses began. Sam researched all the sites on the Web and learned everything she could about the breed.

She loved the history of the American Bashkir Curly, also known as the American Curly and was impressed with the amount of research conducted on their curly coats and DNA. Through her research she found that the North American Curly Horses were the favored horses of the Crow and Sioux Indians in the 1800s. In the 1930s they were found running with the wild herds in Eastern Nevada and were bred with other ranch horses because of their toughness, strength, strong bones and good hooves. A combination of calm temperament and easy trainability made them perfect for any equine discipline. Sam was awestruck by their curly coats and manes and their long curled eyelashes. Reading about these fascinating horses piqued Sam's interest but she discovered there were none to be found in her home state of Massachusetts. With her usual "barrel ahead attitude" she began her search to find a Curly mare and finally purchased one from a breeder in Pennsylvania. The purchase of the Curly mare that she named Sundancer began her five-year plan to bring the breed to her town and her state.

It was also when her friendship with Addie began. Addie lived in Vermont and owned a large herd of Curly horses. Sam bred Sundancer to Addie's stallion and Sundancer had produced a beautiful Chestnut Curly filly she named Morning Dancer. Her curly coat was a deep copper color and she had a loving, inquisitive

nature. Morning Dancer was sold to a woman in New Hampshire. The new owner, Lisa, was now showing her in local horse shows and she was earning high points in open show rings.

Sam and Addie's friendship had continued to grow and flourish. Since their first meeting, they found they had more in common than just their love of Curly horses and Sam considered Addie one of her best friends.

Sam blinked her eyes and yawned. She wondered if she should have another cup of coffee to shake the fog away that the lack of sleep had caused.

"No," she thought. "That's pushing it. I'm already jittery enough." She sighed deeply as her ears listened for the sound of a truck in her driveway. Sam leaned back in her chair and gazed across the porch. Her eyes settled on her old English Setter who was sleeping on the warm floor and she smiled as she watched his body twitch and his legs move as if running. The morning sun was hugging him and she guessed that he was dreaming of chasing squirrels while he lay covered with the pleasing warm blanket the sun provided. Sam could see he was deep in sleep and that he loved the feel of the sun on his old bones but she knew he would be wide awake as soon as he heard a vehicle come up the drive.

Sure enough, Ringo twitched his ears and lifted his head from its resting place and his body became alert to the sound of a truck coming up the drive before she did.

The loud noise from a diesel truck, slowly meandering its way up the drive, brought Sam out of her reverie. She quickly grabbed her sweatshirt and

while pulling it over her head ran to the porch door, swung it open and bounded down the steps onto the winding brick walkway.

The old blue pick-up truck was gasping and gulping as it struggled to pull the long horse trailer attached to its body and its brakes squealed as it turned and backed towards the barn. Sam hastily walked towards the trailer and stopped to watch as the truck came to a grinding halt.

On the hill above the barn the sound from running horses caused Sam to turn and look. The horses whinnied and called as if they instinctively knew a new pasture mate would soon join their herd.

The horse trailer began moving and rocking as the stud colt pawed and danced in place. He whinnied loudly to the other horses anxious to leave the confines of the stall he had stood in for many hours during his trip north.

The truck door opened and a short wiry man jumped down. His blue plaid shirt was tucked into well worn jeans and a large silver buckle dressed his brown belt.

A long gray braid dangled from beneath his crumpled black cowboy hat and his lips formed a huge smile on his lined tan face.

Sam walked over to him and put her hand out to shake his.

“Chet Granger,” he said heartily as he extended his hand.

“Samantha Steele,” she smiled, “But my friends call me Sam.”