
The North American Curly Horse is an unusual and versatile breed with a mysterious past. No one knows where they originated, but they have been known to exist in the western United States for over 200 years, and they have been bred and used as ranch horses for at least 60 years. There are over 2,500 horses registered in two Curly Horse registries in the United States.

Although they are often called “Bashkir Curly” horses, they are not descended from or related to the Russian Bashkir, a predominantly straight-haired pony breed.

Although modern Curlies have been extensively cross-bred and come in every size and color, they retain a unique common trait: a curly winter coat that resembles a poodle's. They also have curly mane and tail hair that looks "permed," and curly eyelashes and "ear fuzz" year-round.

The saddle-horse type averages about 14.2 to 15 hands high and about 1,000 pounds, and has heavier-than-average bone. Curlies tend to be easy keepers and there are no known hereditary health problems in the breed (such as CID or HYPP). Their grooming and health care needs are similar to other horses'.



The curly coat does not have any special requirements or problems and in fact has several advantages. Because it is so dense, Curlies are well suited to cold weather. There are two unique additional benefits to owning a Curly.

First, their hair can be used as "fiber" when it sheds out in the spring. A study at Texas A&M showed that Curly Horse hair is hollow and felted (feathered) like a sheep's, providing excellent insulation. Several Curly owners use their Curly hair in weaving and knitting projects

Second, many people allergic to horses have found that they have little or no reaction to Curlies. Many allergic horse-lovers have bought Curlies for their whole family to enjoy. The pony size Curlies are ideal for small children.

Curlies are noted for their intelligence and calm, friendly dispositions; they are rarely spooky and often mischievous. They are also gentle, good-natured, and easy to train. They make excellent family horses because of this kind, unflappable nature. Some Curlies are also gaited, making a smooth riding horse.

Curlies are used for every kind of equine recreational pursuit as well as ranch work. Because they come in many sizes and types, there is a suitable Curly for every purpose. Curlies are currently used as trail horses, carriage horses, dressage horses, and handicapped rider program horses, among others. There are breeders in almost every state, Canada, and several other countries.



For more information, contact:

International Curly Horse Organization,
HC 31 Box 102A Williamsburg, NM 87942
Email: office@curlyhorses.org
Web site: www.CurlyHorses.org

Photo Credits

Page 1 © Sorrel
Page 2 © Betsy Lirakis
Page 3 © Sandra Hendrickson
Page 4 © Ellen Bancroft

The North American Curly Horse

