

HISTORY OF THE SWEDISH WARBLOOD HORSE

The History of the Swedish Warmblood Breed

The Swedish Warmblood is one of the oldest warmblood breeds in the world. The history of the Swedish horse closely follows that of humans in Scandinavia. Archaeological evidence has been found showing the existence of horses in what is now Sweden dating to 4000 BC. The original Scandinavian horse was small (12 to 14 hands), high spirited and hardy.

In the sixteenth century, a program was begun to improve the quality of the native horses. Friesians were imported from the Netherlands to increase the size of the native stock. The major centers of Swedish Warmblood breeding were at the national stud farms of Kungsör, Strömsholm, and Flyinge. Following the peace treaty with the Danes at Roskilde, Sweden, in 1658, the Swedish King, Carl X Gustaf, ordered a royal stud to be established at Flyinge, Sweden. The horses from Flyinge and the national stud farms were often used in the royal stables.

For centuries, the breed has been specifically developed for riding, while most other warmblood breeds at that time were bred to be draft horses for farm work. The Swedish military chose stallions that would produce comfortable and rideable horses for the army, carefully selecting thoroughbred and other warmblood horses for fresh blood. Farmers owned the mares and the army bought offspring suitable for its activities. The larger draft breeds were excluded. Due to increasing difficulties between the two largest users of horses in Sweden—the army and the farmers—the Swedish breeding program was divided.

The military began importing Thoroughbred, Anglo-Norman, Hanoverian, and Trakehner stallions to improve the breed. In order to direct the breeding efforts and to consolidate the different breeds, the Swedish government began an examination system in 1874. This new improvement resulted in several excellent saddle breeds, including the Swedish Warmblood.

Avelsföreningen för Svenska Varmblodiga Hästen (The Swedish Warmblood Association—ASVH) was formed in 1928 by breeders, with encouragement from the army, to promote the development of uniform mares of high

standard. In the period between the World Wars, ASVH's breeding program focused on the production of excellent riding horses at a time when other warmbloods were bred primarily as agricultural draft horses. The army stopped using horses in the 1970s. Since then, the breeding program in Sweden has been fully in the hands of ASVH.

The History of SWANA

In the late 1970s, Anne Gribbons became the first representative for ASVH in North America, later working with Jan Philipsson to promote Swedish Warmbloods in North America. The first ASVH inspection of Swedish Warmblood mares and stallions in North America took place in 1981.



Kristina Paulsen replaced Gribbons as North American representative for ASVH in 1984, and as the breed grew in popularity, it became evident that additional spokespeople would be needed. Anita Edstrand and Bo Crabo accepted those new positions. Biannual inspection tours with qualified Swedish inspectors ensured that the breed in North America would still be held to Swedish standards.

Bo Crabo petitioned ASVH to allow the North Americans involved with the breed to establish their own self-supportive, non-profit organization. In 1994, the Swedish Warmblood Association of North America (SWANA) was formed and became a dues-paying sub-organization under the direction of ASVH in Sweden. SWANA

continues the traditions of ASVH, employing the ASVH breeding committee for inspections to maintain consistency of the breed. Yearly inspections by ASVH representatives are now held in several locations in North America.

The Future

The future of the Swedish Warmblood horse in North America looks bright. In numbers, this is a small breed compared to other European breeds, yet Swedish Warmbloods are competing well in the world. Mainly recognized as world-class dressage horses, more and more Swedish Warmblood competitive jumpers are taking the stage. It is exciting to see the large number of Swedish Warmblood horses reaching the FEI levels in competition every year, a direct result of centuries of skillful management.