Caspian Horses
A Lecture Created by Tracey Adams
Louise Firouz  
(nee Laylin)

- Graduate of Cornell University
- Married Iranian, Narcy Firouz in 1957
- Moved to Iran and had three children
- Established Nourozabad Equestrian Centre near Teheran, Iran
- Discovered Caspian horses in 1965
History

King Darius the Great of Persia - 500 BCE

Caspian type horses depicted on his royal seal

Entertaining recreation of the lion hunt
Ancient writings and artifacts and skeletal remains from 3,000 BCE

Caspians appear to be mostly unchanged over 5,000 years

Highly prized by ancient royalty

Three breeds in ancient Persia
South of the Caspian Sea, North of the Alborz Mountains of northern Iran

Very isolated wilderness, farms and a few small villages

Foundation stallion Zeeland*
Prehistoric Horse

- Modern Horse, Equus Caballus, has 64 chromosomes
- Equus Ferus Przewalskii has 66 chromosomes
- Hybrid crosses have 65 chromosomes, and are fertile
- About 1/3 of all Caspians have 65 chromosomes
- It is probable that Caspians are an evolutionary hybrid
- This is likely what makes Caspians different from all other breeds
- Other theories include chromosomal fusion and fission

Registered Caspian Mare
Equus Ferus Przewalskii
Prehistoric “Curly” and colour genetics
Horse Types

All modern horse breeds evolved from these four ancient types

Pony Type 1
Resembled Exmoor Pony

Pony Type 2
Resembled Highland Pony

Horse Type 3
Resembled Akhal Teke

Horse Type 4
Caspian
Evolution

It is proposed that the Caspian is the ancestor to the modern Oriental breeds:

- Turkoman
- Yabou
- Akhal-Teke
  - Fars
- Arabian
- Shagya Arabian
  - Kurd
  - Barb
- Bedouin
Dr. Gus Cothran - Equine Geneticist  
University of Kentucky  
Caspian DNA evaluator

Elwyn Hartley Edwards  
Renowned equine author and editor

Dr. Shahram Dordari  
Equine Researcher  
Ministry of Ag. - Iran  
Caspian herd vet and Iranian registrar
Foundation Horses

- Ostad* (1965 - 1974: 27)
- Palang*
- Ostad* & Aseman*
- Amu Daria*
- Daria Nour*
- Ruba*

(1986 - 2008: 30)
Exports

To USA
1966: 1 stallion
1974: 1 stallion

To Bermuda
1970: 1 stallion and 2 mares
   These horses and 4 offspring then went to Great Britain.

To Great Britain
1971: 1 mare and 1 stallion
   given to HRH Prince Philip
1974: 3 stallions and 5 mares
1975: 4 stallions and 3 mares
1976: 1 stallion and 6 mares

1977-86: Iranian revolution and Iran/Iraq war

To Australia
1975: 1 stallion and 3 mares

To Great Britain
1993: 4 stallions and 3 mares exported to Great Britain

To Germany
2008: 20 horses (pending reg.)

Total exported from Iran
40 plus 20 pending

All Caspians exported from Iran
Physical Characteristics

- Appearance of a well-bred, elegant horse, with no pony features
- 10 - 13 hands
- Prominent forehead, tiny muzzle, and deep, wide cheek bones
- Large prominent eyes and tiny ears
- Supple neck with refined throatlatch
- Refined, slim, close-coupled body
- Long, sloping hindquarters
- Long shoulders and forearms
- Strong, oval hooves
- Flat, silky coat, in all solid colours
Comparison

These have not been PhotoShopped!
Temperament

- Extremely intelligent
- Willing to please
- Easy to train
- Spirited
- Very brave
- Adaptable
- “Primitive”
Differences

- Unique parietal crest creates a domed forehead
- The first six vertabrae are longer
- Many Caspians have a molar instead of a wolf tooth
- Specific markers in their DNA
- Often a metallic sheen to the summer coat
- Elongated scapula
- Canon bones are longer
Usage

- Jumping ability
- Driving sensibility
- Great with children
- Speed
- Endurance
- Agility
Part-Bred

Half Miniature Horse

Half Hackney

Half Welsh Pony

Half Quarterhorse

Half Arabian

Half Arabian
Caspian Horse is listed as Critical: Less than 300 active breeding mares world-wide

There are about 1400 registered Caspian horses; 450 of them are in USA 35 are in Canada

* Still a few Caspians at large in Iran
Stewardship

- New owners and breeders quickly fall in love with Caspians

- Breeders often end up making drastic personal sacrifices to preserve, promote and propagate the breed

- Cooperative efforts among breeders worldwide, to share and distribute bloodlines

- Never had to introduce other breeds for genetic variation
Caspians in Canada

- 1981: 1 Caspian mare imported to Toronto, from UK
- 2005: 1 Caspian yearling gelding imported to Vancouver Island
- 2006: Tracey Adams imported the first breeding herd; 1 stallion and 3 mares to Eastern Ontario in June
- 2007: Brent Seufert imported 21 Caspians to Calgary
- 2007: Donna O’Neill imported 1 stallion and 2 mares to Edmonton

Brent and Kristull Best Yet  Donna’s Kristull Talib  Tracey and Stella
Conclusion

What luck, for one person to have stumbled upon such a perfectly preserved specimen of the equine species. After 1,000 years of obscurity, the Caspian horse has walked out of our imaginations and into our hearts.

Words and pictures are insufficient to truly portray their exquisite beauty and unusual personalities. When you finally meet a Caspian, if you open your mind, you will feel the same wonder you might, if you were to touch a unicorn.