

BREED PROFILE : THOROUGHBRED HORSE



The fastest of all horses, Thoroughbreds are known as the royalty of horse racing. In fact, these strong, graceful bundles of energy have fascinated horse enthusiasts since their racing debut centuries ago.

The breed is best known for its use in horseracing. These horses are unrivalled for their speed and stamina over distances from 800m to 6000m.

Thoroughbreds are expected to carry weights in the range of 50 – 60 kgs in races. They have a strong natural inclination to compete against other horses, a trait which has been developed since the breed was founded in England during the 17th century.

Modern Thoroughbreds trace their roots to three foundation stallions in 17th Century Britain. These three stallions – the Darley Arabian, Godolphin Arabian, and Byerly Turk, each named for their owners – were imported into England to breed with select, native racing stock. The result was a strong fast horse that could work extended distances. This powerful, yet graceful, breed quickly became the favoured race horse in England, America and, eventually, around the world.

Average height is approximately 163cm (16hh). By far the majority of these horses are bay, brown, chestnut, black or roan in colour, with about 5% turning out grey.

Thoroughbreds may be marked with stars, blazes, stockings, or socks, however, white markings generally do not appear on the horse's body.

Bred for stamina, athleticism and speed, Thoroughbreds are the embodiment of physical strength. They have well chiselled heads with widely spaced, and intelligent eyes. Their necks are long, withers high, and chests deep. Their well defined stature continues through an evenly curved back, lean, muscular body, and clean, long legs. During their racing career (generally 2 to 8 years of age), different individuals weigh between 475 – 540 kg.



Thoroughbreds are hot-blooded racehorses bred to be spirited and bold. The strong physique of Thoroughbreds allows them to reach speeds up to 64 kilometres per hour. This elegant breed also exhibits a profound amount of grace and courage under saddle. They are suited for a variety of disciplines beyond the racetrack, including eventing, show jumping, dressage, and polo.

Pedigree recording has been carefully maintained for around 250 years – no other creature has been so carefully documented and strictly controlled. About 120 000 foals are registered worldwide per annum. All Thoroughbreds in the Southern Hemisphere officially become a year older on the 1st August in order to standardise racing for each generation.

Problems which commonly affect racehorses are epistaxis (bleeding from the lungs during races), bone chips (front knees), sprained tendons and colic. Low fertility affects production on the stud farms.

Elevation (1968)

