



# TODAY'S *Magazine* HORSE

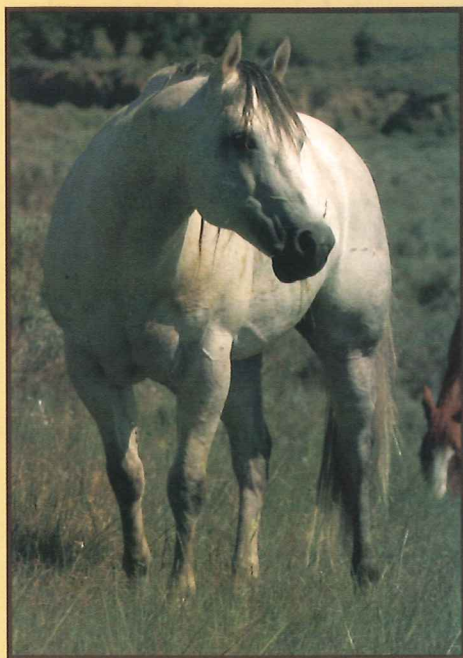
2009 BREEDER'S EDITION

Today's Horse Magazine  
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**The Premier  
Stallion  
Publication**

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By Dawn Faught

Scattered amidst the gnarled sagebrush and prickly pear cactus, Goldsberry Ranch Quarter Horse mares graze upon the hard grass of the badlands. Colts scamper over high buttes and down sharp inclines, relishing the sometimes harsh life of the badlands.

## Gestation Length ... pg. 72

By Heather Smith Thomas

Gestation in mares is usually estimated at about 340 days. This figure is just a guideline, since many mares foal as much as 3 weeks earlier or later, and some carry their foals for more than 12 months. Mares are notoriously unpredictable.

## Equine Insurance ... pg. 75

By Heather Smith Thomas

Most people who own valuable horses insure their animals, to cover the economic loss if the animal dies. There are also major medical policies that help cover expenses if the horse becomes sick or injured and requires surgery or extensive treatment.

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By Jesse Chase as told to Cathy Herbert

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Today's Horse Magazine



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By Cindy Card Buchholz

At one time or another, every horse will be afflicted with some degree of lameness. Having a basic understanding of lameness is the starting point to proper care of our horse.

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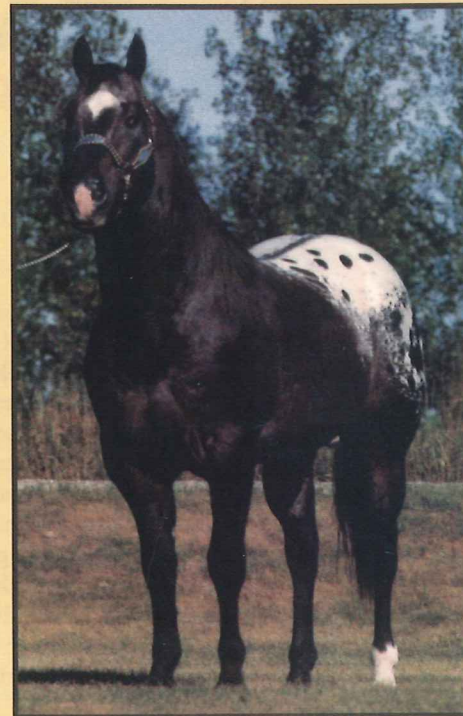
Most barns are a three-alarm fire looking for an opportunity to happen.



## The Gypsy Horse ... pg. 86

By Nastel Dean

The Gypsy Horse is still a fairly new breed to North America, but is becoming more popular due to its versatility and docile temperament. Now, these beautiful horses can also be found at the West River Gypsy Horse Farm near Custer, S.D.

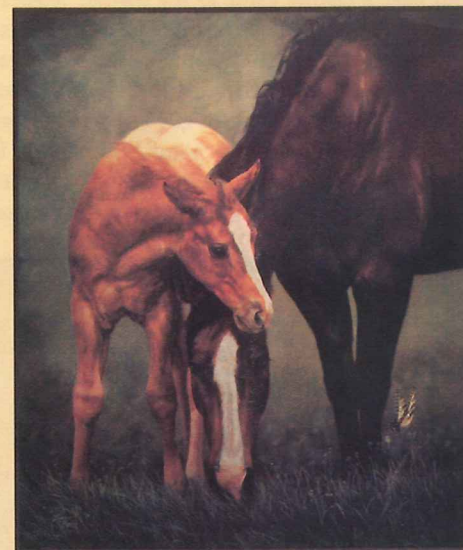


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By Dawn Faught

The royal bloodlines of champions including Mighty Bright, Bright Eyes Brother, Prince Plaudit and Skipper W runs in the veins of all of the horses at the Sheldak Ranch.

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American Maid

By artist Luann Houser

Ablestock.com photos on pages 12, 44, 72, 82, 86



# Raising the Versatile

# APPALOOSA

By Dawn Faught

*“For the past 40 years we have stayed with breeding the same type of horse, an athletic halter horse. In other words, we breed a horse that can be a halter champion and then go out to do anything in the field of real work or the show ring.”*

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**S**cattered amidst pastures near Sheldon, N.D., colorful Appaloosa mares and colts with exquisite conformation graze; horses so stunning that you brake as you drive past just for a better look. The royal bloodlines of champions including Mighty Bright, Bright Eyes Brother, Prince Plaudit and Skipper W runs in the veins of all of the horses at the Sheldak Ranch. Their versatility as proven performers in a variety of disciplines and dispositions are unbeatable in the equine world.

Sheldak Ranch colts have been sold to places far and wide including Alaska, Mexico, Panama, Hawaii, Australia and Chile; and adult horses to Belgium, Sweden, Germany and Venezuela. Even solid colored Sheldak Appaloosas have found their niche as hard working dependable mounts upon the ranches of the midwest. These royal Appaloosas are the lifetime accumulation of Dave and Kim Utke's breeding program, proven producers of some of the greatest champions within the Appaloosa breed – a truly versatile athletic halter horse.



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## Humble Beginnings

During her youth Kim owned a "backyard horse" in Detroit Lakes, Minn. Dave was raised on a farm near Fargo, N.D., with horses and cattle. The couple met while showing horses at the fair in Fargo and married in 1963, with their mutual love for horses, embarked on a life-time career. Kim admits, "I had made my mind up when I was in high school that I wanted to raise horses for a living. And when everyone told me how ridiculous it was, I got more stubborn and wanted to do it even worse. Then when you get into your 60s you realize just how right they may have been! But it has been very rewarding."


The Utke's were introduced to the Appaloosa breed in 1968 when Laura Boggio, an Appaloosa breeder stopped overnight and boarded a leopard Appaloosa, Rebel Red Hawk, on her way to an Appaloosa show in Crookston, Minn. "We fell in love with him. His disposition was out of this world. A year later we ended up buying him and from then on it was history." They purchased the ranch in 1968 and then spent many years cleaning the neglected farmstead, pulling out trees and rebuilding fence, moving in barns and building a house. "We had no time to show except for a leopard colt and filly out of the first crop of colts. They both won their classes. As our daughter Lori was growing up, she showed some of our foals to many championships."

## Mighty Bloodlines

Mighty Tim (Mighty Bright x Cherry Cordial) helped put the Sheldak Ranch on the Appaloosa map in 1973. "Mighty Tim was one of the top show horses in the nation at the time. We were looking for a new stallion so I contacted about 4 or 5 different judges to ask them what they considered to be the one of the top future sires of the breed and all of them mentioned Mighty Tim."

Intrigued, the Utke's contacted the owners of Mighty Tim to no avail. "A couple months later I was in the dark room developing pictures and Mighty Tim's owner called and said they were in the middle of a divorce, neither one would give in and let Mighty Tim go to the other." The stallion was now for sale, Kim relates, "I just about lost a whole roll of film right then and there! I was so excited. We went to the banker who couldn't believe how much this horse was

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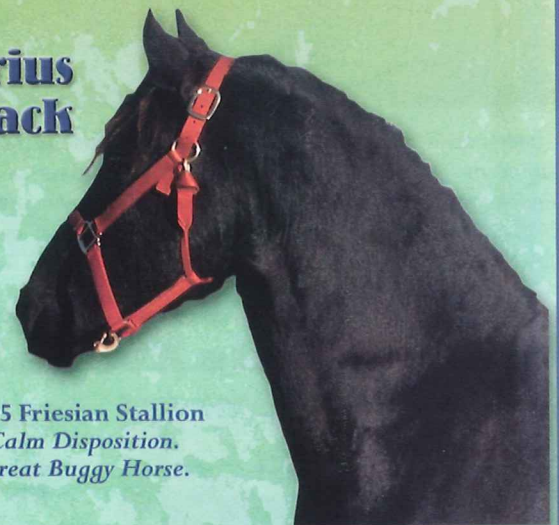
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going to cost. But he went along with us and if it wasn't for Charles Feeney with the Citizens State Bank at Enderlin [N.D], we never would have gotten to where we are today. That was fate. There aren't too many bankers like him."

"We started out with Mighty Bright and Bright Eyes Brother bloodlines. We still think they are the greatest bloodlines in the breed. Most of the World Champions trace back to Bright Eyes Brother." Two or three years ago, Kim did a pedigree search on every



Imagine a 1990 stallion bred by Bill Blackmon is the current senior sire at the Sheldak Ranch. His credits from colts raised at the Sheldak Ranch mares include National and World Champion Sire, Superior and National High Point Sire, International Grand Champion Sire, National and World Champion producing offspring.

Kim Utke photo

single winner down to third and fourth place at the World. "Every single halter and performance class except for just a few traced back to Bright Eyes Brother and that was our foundation bloodlines. All of our foundation Appaloosa bloodlines we started out with were of the bloodlines that founded the Quarter Horse breed."

Sheldak Ranch's main sire for years, purchased at Carl Miles' dispersal sale, was an own son of Prince Plaudit, Prince David who was out of a Skipper W mare on the bottom, Sheldak Ranch is currently producing foals out of the outstanding sires Imagine, Awestruck, and Master In Command.

"Imagine is a grandson of String of Stars, one of the greatest Appaloosas of his time and goes back to Skipper W. He is an absolutely gorgeous horse; we are really very sold on that bloodline and that is what we've been concentrating on now. We purchased Master Star, an own son of String of Stars, to raise some daughters from the cross on Imagine and vice versa." Imagine is the Leading Sire of Halter Horses with many of his get receiving Superior halter and ROMs at Halter along with numerous World Champions, National Grand Champions.


The homozygous stallion Awestruck (Awe Striker x Love to Connect) was foaled at the Meucci Ranch in 1996 and has 8.5 Halter Points, 6 Most Colorful Points, a ROM Halter, Pleasure, Longe Line Sire. His bloodlines trace back to The Old Blue Mare - the single most influential mare in history of the Appaloosa breed. Master in Command, a chestnut and white blanket stallion foaled on the Sheldak ranch in 2004, is an own son of Master Star, the greatest son of String Of Stars and a multiple World Champion sire.

A highlight of the Sheldak Ranch was when one of the first foals they raised, Prince Shannon, named after their son Shannon, was inducted into the Hall of Fame for being the Leading Appaloosa Sire in all categories. Imagine That Jack by Imagine earned 2006 World Champion Junior Judge Heading and 2006 World Champion Open Steer Daubing titles. Many other colts raised by the Sheldak ranch have gone on to become World Champions in a variety of classes, including halter and performance.

## A Typical Day

"It's a nice life if you are content with no vacations and not going any place." Utke declares. "Our daughter will come to do chores sometimes over Labor Day weekend so we can get away. Otherwise we are pretty well tied down. A typical day "depends on what time of the year it is! We get up in the morning before daylight and get all of the chores done around the buildings. In the first part of May, we start hauling the mares out to their pastures which are a few miles from town in three different directions from our ranch. The stallions are turned out with the mares in separate pastures around May 10th."

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The Utkes creep feed in the pastures with mares and babies, and checks the other pastures daily. Kim handles the marketing and web-site updates along with keeping records, photography and getting pictures to prospective buyers. Dave handles the endless work outside – chores, fencing, haying and all the related tasks that keep a ranch going.

“When a sale has materialized we bring a pair of colts home and they go into the barn for their halter lessons and learn how to be solid tied and get ready for the trailer to pick up.” The remaining colts are brought home in late October. The horse market according to Utke: “It’s tough today. The closing down of the slaughter plants has devastated the horse market. There are lots of horses out there starving to death or being dumped off on government land because their owners can’t afford to dispose of them.”

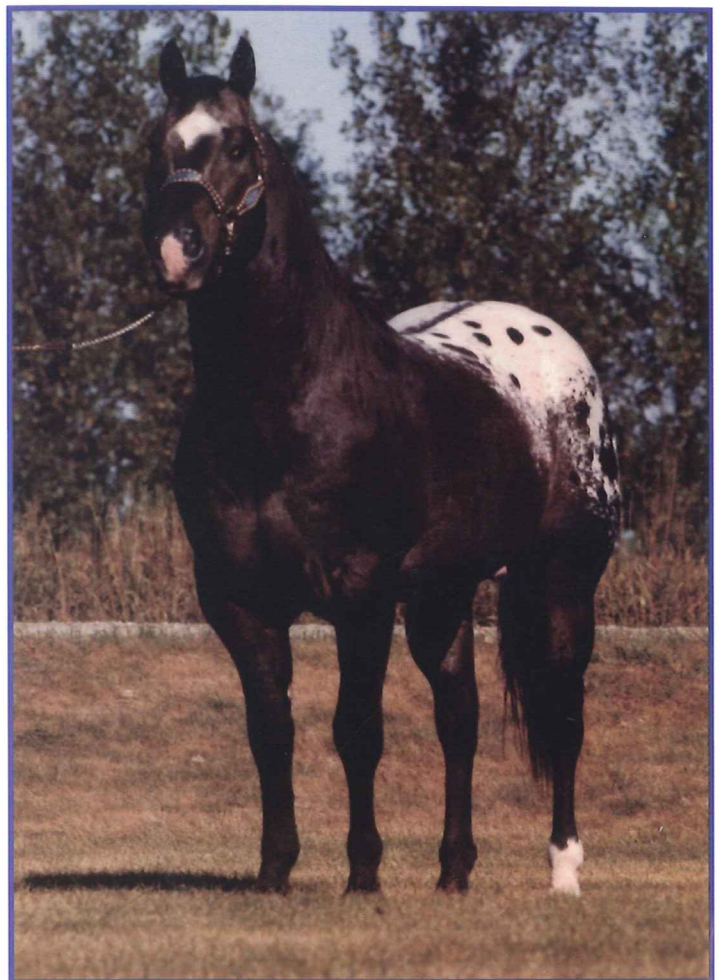
The price of fuel and shipping slowed sales: “Interest was good this year, but the great increase in shipping rates to some potential customers on the East and west Coasts, Canada, and Mexico hampered many of the sales.” Sheldak Ranch, at the time of writing this article had 9 foals out of 35 left; 4 are fillies they hope to keep and 5 colts to sell.

With both Utkes in their mid 60s and the hard work that comes along with caring for horses, mention of retirement is inevitable, “It’s going to be sad when we do have to quit, but I don’t know how long we can keep up this pace, especially at foaling time, and all of the things that can crop up and happen then. When it comes time to retire, we are going to have to sell out - except for maybe a few mares and maybe just have a young stud.”

### An Athletic Halter Horse

Many Sheldak colts go to Mexico, “Our bloodlines are popular there because they are exceptionally athletic and their dispositions are super. They can be calm and quiet and yet burst into instant blinding speed or agility or whatever is asked of them and then will drop back down and be quiet. They are very responsive horses and sensitive to cues. It makes it a real joy to work with these horses because they don’t forget anything and have such a willingness to do anything you ask.”

Springtime is Kim and Dave’s favorite time, “We love checking the pasture first thing in the morning and finding the new babies that foaled during the night and what colors popped out ... it’s exciting, disappointing at times, but you take what you get. We have never



The Sheldak Ranch was proud to be owners of Mighty Tim the 1967 stallion bred by Lane Hudson. Mighty Tim was All Time Leading Sire Halter and Performance Horses, Superior Halter; Superior Performance Sire, National and World Champion Sire, ApHC Champion, Gear Champion Sire, National High Point Halter and Performance Sire, Supreme High Point Halter and Performance Sire, World Champion High Point Western Horse Sire. All of these honors earned were on offspring from the Sheldak Ranch mares.  
Kim Utke photo

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Kim Utke photos

bred for color. We have always bred for the most superior conformation and champions in a bloodline that we can get and we have just prayed for color. But considering we are not breeding for color, it hasn't been too bad." Utke estimates 60-70% of the colts have color.

Far from a disappointment, the solid colored colts born at the Sheldak Ranch are highly sought after by ranchers in South Dakota,

Kansas and Nebraska, "Many of these colts we have sold through the past 40 years have gone to the real working cattle ranch. We've gotten amazing feedback from these people telling us what they can resell some of our horses for after they have been trained. There are horses in their 20's that are still doing a full day of ranch work. They claim they are some of the best ranch horses in the area."

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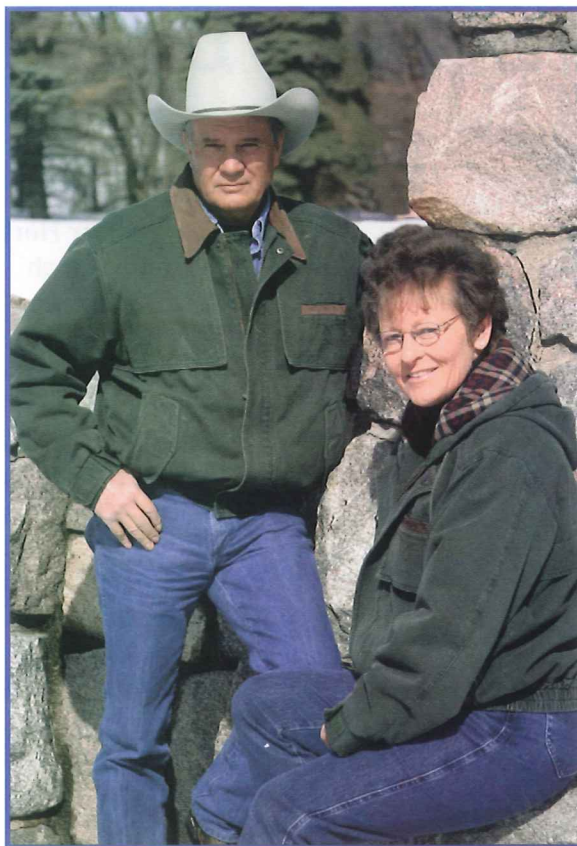
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"For the past 40 years we have stayed with breeding the same type of horse, an athletic halter horse. In other words, we breed a horse that can be a halter champion and then go out to do anything in the field of real work or the show ring - the versatile horse." The Sheldak Ranch continued breeding with this philosophy "right through the times it got to the point where you needed a different conformation horse for every different class. We look for a very athletic, exceptionally correct conformation, good hindquarter muscling, big eye, fine neck, a keen throatlatch, exceptional head, and small ears. Most of the things a person would want in a halter horse, but with an athletic touch to it. In order to be athletic - it has to have the best conformation."



Dave and Kim Utke, Owner of Sheldak Ranch have been breeding for the athletic halter Appaloosa since 1968.

Courtesy Photo

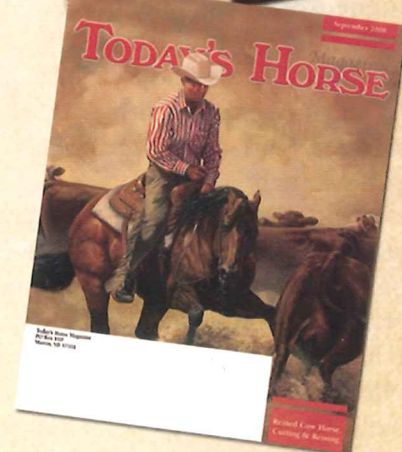
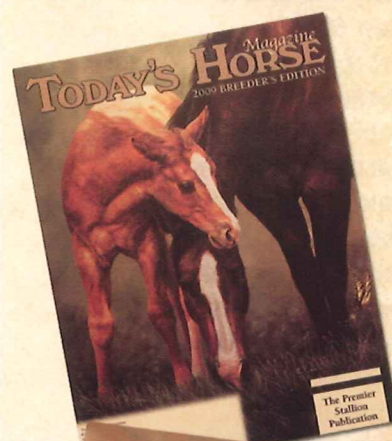
For more information on the Sheldak Ranch, visit their website at [www.sheldakranch.com](http://www.sheldakranch.com) or call Dave and Kim Utke at 701-882-3344.

## SEND US YOUR CALENDAR LISTING!

Send your upcoming horse sale or event to be listed in our calendar

Due the 5th of each month prior to publication.

Today's Horse Magazine needs the date, name of event, location, city, state, contact person with phone number, email and website address.



# 2009 Horse Sale Dates

## January 16

Victory Farms, Premier Mecca Barrel Horse Sale, Buckeye, AZ, 580-777-2877

## February 14

Victory Farms, LG Pro Classic Barrel Sale, Kinder, LA, 580-777-2877

## June 6

Perino Ranch 52nd Annual Performance & Production Sale, Fairgrounds, Newcastle, WY, 307-746-3555

## August TBA

Central South Dakota Ranchers & Breeders Quarter Horse Production Sale, Lauing Mill Iron L Ranch Arena, Blunt, SD, 605-962-6344

## August 1

Weller Ranch Invitational Gelding & Production Sale, Rodeo Grounds, Kadoka, SD, 605-837-2713

## August 22

Myers Training Stables Performance Horse Sale, Seven Down Arenas, Spearfish, SD, [www.frenchmansguy.com](http://www.frenchmansguy.com)

## August 29

Dakota Winds Quarter Horses, Seventh Annual Sale, Howard, SD, 605-772-5410

## August 30

Ranchers Quarter Horse Breeders Association Sale, Seven Down Arenas, Spearfish, SD, 605-985-5426

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