

# COWBOYS - VAQUEROS

## Origins Of The first American Cowboys

### Chapter 5

By **Donald Chávez Y Gilbert**

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#### The First Horses, Sheep and Cattle

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In the interest of school children who may need a shorter compilation of the pre-Columbian history of Ranching, immediately below is an abbreviated version of the longer section which follows immediately thereafter.

### **PRE-COLUMBIAN HISTORY OF CATTLE RANCHING, DISPELLING THE MYTHS**

THE HISTORY OF **CATTLE RANCHING IN NEW MEXICO** STARTED THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO IN A FAR AWAY LAND ACROSS THE OCEAN CALLED IBERIA

- I.) **RANCHING, THE FIRST COWBOYS:** The history of cattle ranching is tied to the whole topic of livestock ranching or animal husbandry, inseparably and integrally connected to sheep ranching. The two areas have traded predominance back and forth over the eras of time. They evolved together.

**HISTORICAL REFERENCES:** SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT RESEARCH – COPYING INFORMATION FROM ONE PERSON IS CALLED PLAGIARISM; COYING INFORMATION FROM A GROUP OF PEOPLE IS CALLED RESEARCH.

- a. **HOW OLD?** Cattle ranching dates back to between 30 and 50,000 BC based on archeological evidence.



- b. **GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN?** This first archeological evidence is found in the **Iberian** Peninsula, in the caves of Cova Negra, southern Spain. According to **Richard E. Ahlborn**, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1980 in his book titled **Man Made Mobile, Early Saddles of Western North America**, “Archaeological evidence of the advent of riding in Spain occurs in rock art dating before 2000 B.C.

- i. **IBERIA?** The Iberian Peninsula, AKA the Hispanic Peninsula  
The “Hispanic peninsula lies at the extreme southwestern tip of Europe, in the direction of Africa and the outer Atlantic. SEE MAP
- ii. It is second only to Switzerland as the highest area in Western Europe, land like the original Kingdom of New Mexico which included most of the American Southwest, rising rapidly from the lowlands to high desert hill country.
- iii. Except for the green belt referred to by Charles J. Bishko as the Humid Crescent that comprise the northern and northwestern fringes, it is a predominantly dry area.
- iv. **THE PEOPLE OF THE IBERIAN PENINSULA**  
The Romans gave the name “Hispania” to Spain. “The Romans described members of most of the Hispanic tribes as rather short, dark-haired, white-skinned, and physically agile, if not particularly muscular characteristics which would seem to describe modern as well as ancient inhabitants of the peninsula.”
- v. **Cowboy mettle: *The makings of the cowboy persona***  
The largest ethnic group in the peninsula, the Iberians, were **strongly tribal and warlike, qualities characteristic** of the population of ancient Hispania as a whole.

#### Historical timeline of ----- LIVESTOCK

- II.) **HORSES:** Man first saw horses as part of his wide variety of al la carte menu. **Between twelve and ten thousand BC**, the two North American subspecies of horses became extinct, shortly after humans arrived in the Western Hemisphere.
  - a. Meanwhile in the Iberian Peninsula around this same time cave paintings depict horses and the invention of the rope.
  - b. It is estimated that mankind evolved his relationship from hunting horses to domesticating them between **four thousand and three thousand BC, the same time as the invention of the wheel.**
  - c. Ancient mariners brought horses of Afro-Turkic origin to new places they had never traveled during the natural course of nature.



- d. Men were already selectively breeding Afro-Turkic horses for intelligence, endurance, and hardiness and reducing their methods to writing for use in chariot battles between **1600 and 1800BC**. Around **1000BC** North African mariners brought Afro-Turkic horses to the Iberian coast where they had their stallions cover mares of the larger Draft subspecies. The results were amazing! They got colorful offspring larger and harder than their sires. This was the worlds first “*out crossed*” breed of horse. This was the beginning of a foundation herd for all modern Iberian breeds, Breton, Welsh, Hobby, Cornish, Galwey, Asturian, Galician, and Iberian, to name a few.

III.) **CATTLE, SHEEP, and GOATS:** Between **six and ten thousand years BC** sheep, goats, and cattle were being domesticated.

IV.) **SUBSEQUENT COWBOYS AND THE MELTING POT**

**Who Were The First Cowboys?** Controversy on line: Internet Blogs; Wikipedia Encyclopedia

- a. The early Hispanics were followed by the first clearly definable group of immigrants, a sizable wave of **Celtic migrants** around **1200-1300 BC** from central or northern Europe. The early name of Spain, “Iberia”, is Celtic and is derived from their word “aber”, or “open” as it translates in Spanish, meaning “harbor” or “opening.”
- b. Archeological fragments of **Celtic weapons, horseshoes, bridle bits, and prick spurs show up around 500 B.C.** About that same time, more evidence of bent-knee riders in saddles of concave silhouette appear in Iberian stone carvings, bronze castings, and vase paintings.

**Other historical ethnic contributors:**

- 1.) By 1100 B.C. **Phoenicians** arrived to the peninsula and founded colonies, the most important of which was *Gadir* (today's Cadiz, Andalucia).
- 2.) Also **Greeks** founded colonies in southern Spain and along the Mediterranean coast. During the *Punic Wars (200BC)* between Rome and Carthago, Carthaginians invaded Spain and conquered large parts of it.
- 3.) The eastern Iberians were considerably influenced by Greek and Phoenician merchants and immigrant colonies, who contributed much to their culture and political organization.



**Basques:** The most distinctive ethnic community among them was that of the Basques of the western Pyrenees and adjacent foothills. The origin of the Basques is shrouded in mystery. Probably the most famous American of Basque origin was Don Juan de Oñate

4.) After **Rome** defeated Carthago, Romans invaded the colonies in Spain, eventually conquering the entire peninsula. According to Stanley “the complete lack of political or cultural unity among the disparate societies of the peninsula impeded rather than facilitated their conquest by Rome. The incorporation of Hispania into the empire was a long, slow process, lasting from 218 B.C. to 19 B.C.

### **SPANISH RESISTANCE TO FOREIGN DOMINANCE**

This was a much longer time than was required to subjugate other major portions of the Mediterranean littoral.” – **More evidence of the tenacity of the Iberian Hispanics. This extended period of isolation sustained and contributed to their ability to perfect and consistently maintain a predominance of animal farming and to develop salient methods and higher more specialized ranching technology.** “The fact also that it was highlighted by celebrated examples of diehard resistance the most famous of which was the struggle to the death of the town of Numantia in 133 B.C. has led some Spanish historians to view the ancient Hispanic tribes as already “**Spanish**” in their cultural characteristics, particularly in their xenophobia and obstinate resistance to foreign domination.”

within the culture of ranching Rodero (author of El Ganado Primitivo Andaluz y Sus Implicaciones en el Descubrimiento de America, E. Rodero, A. Rodero & J.V. Delgado) agrees, “**the arrival of the Romans did not suppose any substantial change in the existing animals, but they brought important changes in the methods of breeding and production**

### **Back to horses**

By the fall of the Roman Empire in the **fifth century AD**, Visigoths and Vikings sweeping southward through Iberia built boats, loaded stolen Iberian horses and took them to North Africa and created the “**back cross**” of the Iberian horse upon the shores of North Africa, resulting in the origin of the **Barb Horse** of North Africa.

The **name Barb** having been borrowed from the **Berber** peoples. -----  
**Cross the Iberian Spanish horse with the North African Berber horse and the new Spanish “Barb” is born.**



Fast forward generations and the continuous crossbreeding of these two prototypes produces Iberian horses of the Jennet type, e.g., Cartujeno, Grenadine, Galiceño, and Estremadureño. From these Jennet type Iberian horses Columbus shipped varying combinations of horses to which occasioned Baguales, and American Mustangs.

In the 7<sup>th</sup> century Mohammed united his people and converted almost the whole of the Near East to Islam. Islam brought horses from North African coast in 711 into Jerez de la Frontera and overran the Iberian Peninsula. Thus began nearly eight centuries of Islamic rule, pedigrees, and the Iberian Jennet or *Spanish Barb*.

In 1492 when the Spanish drove the Moors out of Spain the Spanish began disseminating their Spanish Barb “Cowponies” throughout the world to which their explorations and conquests can attest. The culture of Spanish ranching and cowboying started a new and significant chapter as the ever evolving Caballero and vaquero headed for the Americas and arrived in the “West.” Enter a man from Catalan, Spain whom for political reasons misinformed King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella that he was from Italy, Cristobal Colon, better known in English speaking parts as Christopher Columbus.

#### V.) The First Cowboy Ranches:

##### The *FINE ART OF ADAPTATION*

- a. A. Rodero, E. Rodero, and J.V. Delgado in their paper The Primitive Andalusian Livestock and Their Implications In The Discovery Of America, observe that **“from the data collected in the literature we deduce that in old Spain existed a predominance of animal farming over agriculture** at least in certain regions such as the Betica (Guadalquivir River Valley in Andalucia.)
  - b. Estrabon, talking about Turdantania(which corresponds presently to West of Anadalusia), notes...{”**even though this region exports wheat, many wines, oil, wax, honey, pitch, cochineal and minium, the abundance of farm animals belonging to all species is enormous.”**
  - c. **The predominance of animal farming over agriculture, was favored by the fact that most of the Iberic Peninsula was sparsely inhabited.**
  - d. **The farm animals were one of the principal sources of wealth in old Hispania, and the food base for almost all the Spanish human populations.”**
- 5.) **Why Iberia?** As mentioned before the **Iberians were visited and invaded by wave after wave of new tribes.** Moving conditions



required that they place value of wealth in their animals more than their real-estate.

- a. In other parts of Europe and the world, while these other parts of the globe also suffered their share of hostilities, history tells us there were sufficient numbers of “keepers of livestock” with continuity of peace and consistency that the people were able to maintain their status quo. That is, **they could keep their “hand full” of cows, oxen, sheep, goats, etc. in relative comfort without the constant pressure to adapt and improve their game, absent the need to move the whole operation swiftly and at a moments notice.** Those people and animals which would have fallen behind or not withstood the stresses imposed by frequent upheaval, war, starvation and the rigors of living on the move survived to perpetuate their genes and characteristics, whereas, **the Iberians more often had to leave their weaker animals and relatives behind, thus leaving the stronger Iberian, people and animals to pass on their strengths to future generations.** Iberians lived in harsh rugged climate and terrain which forced survivors to develop and evolve a strength and endurance equal to the challenges of the land. That is why they and their livestock thrived as transplants to the similarly situated Kingdom of New Mexico.

- b. Iberians were isolated on vast tracks of land with little or no contact with other people or other livestock with which to hybridize their stock.

### Summary of contributing factors: to The *FINE ART OF ADAPTATION*

- I The vast expanses of the Iberian Peninsula was sparsely inhabited preventing the hybridizing of animal and sharing of cowboy technology over long periods of time.
- II. The harsh climate and geography of the mostly dry high desert assured only the **hardiest** DNA was passed on to subsequent generations.
- III. Constant hostilities by invading immigrants caused:
  - a. farm animals to be valued more than land.
  - b. Farm animals had to have the **endurance** to move vast distances at a moments notice.
  - c. Farm animals being raised under these trying conditions over many generations in close contact with their intrepid cowboy keepers favored



the survival of **more intelligent** horses, cattle, and sheep than their counterparts in more commodious parts of Europe and the world.

IV. Selective breeding by design:

- a. All the same conditions which forced the Iberian livestock to improve its attributes of endurance, hardiness, and intelligence also contributed to these same attributes in the people of the Iberian Peninsula. These people were hardy, intrepid, stubborn, proud, and intelligent. The phenomenon of survival of the fittest did not escape them. Consequently, they intentionally and methodically bred their animals for hardiness, intelligence, and endurance.

V. Human hybridizing:

The one significant factor different in the evolution of the technology of cowboys which was absent in the evolution of their livestock was that these cowboys benefited by the interbreeding with all the invading tribes each contributing their special strengths to the ever evolving cowboy.

*\* This is the end of the abridged version of Pre-Columbian ranching history.*

## HORSES

About twelve thousand BC wild horses were hunted by man wherever they were found. Shortly after humans arrived in the Western Hemisphere, about ten thousand BC (and eight thousand BC when dogs were first being domesticated), the two North American subspecies of horses became extinct. According to Dr. Debora Bennett the horse was domesticated independently several times wherever it appeared in its' range. Prior to domestication, horses had evolved seven separate subspecies found in both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres. Interestingly, recognized authority on prehistoric horses Dr. Debora Bennett attributes the origins of horses to seven original types of wild horse, 1.) *Equus caballus mosbachensis* [Central European subspecies], 2.) *Equus caballus caballus* [Iberian Draft subspecies], 3.) *Equus caballus pumpelli* [Afro-Turkic Horse], 4.) *Equus caballus ferus* [Tarpan], 5.) *Equus caballus przewalski* [Przewalski Horse], 6.) *Equus caballus alaskee* [Beringian Horse], and 7.) *Equus caballus mexicanus*, [American periglacial Horse], none of which include the *Equus stenonius* cited by the Spanish Barb Breeders Association in Anthony, Florida as the precursor of the Barb/Iberian horse from one of the six original types of wild horses known to man; a riddle which will no doubt be solved by the genomics of DNA analysis.

The consensus is however, that horse domestication seems to have originated in Eastern Europe or the Crimea, (Tarpan subspecies [*Equus caballus ferus*] now extinct); the southwest Russian steppe; in North Western Europe; **in Iberia, (Draft**



subspecies [**Equus caballus caballus**]), Central European subspecies **Equus caballus mosbachensis**, and **North African subspecies (Afro-Turkic – Equus caballus pumpelli)**. The early domesticators of horses discovered that horses were not as tractable as other livestock.

Around this same time cave paintings in the Iberian Peninsula depict horses and the invention of the rope.

Between six and ten thousand years BC sheep, goats, and cattle were being domesticated. It is estimated that mankind evolved his relationship from hunting horses to domesticating them between four thousand and three thousand BC, the same time as the invention of the wheel. Ancient mariners brought horses of Afro-Turkic origin to new places they had never traveled during the natural course of nature.

**From war horses to cowponies:** It bears pointing out as a historical note that horse domestication marked the beginning of modern warfare. The mounted warrior became the conqueror who could attack his unmounted neighbor with impunity. Even when opposing sets of warriors were mounted on horseback technologically practical designs like the jineta (jennet) style saddle cinched to the smaller, more maneuverable Afro-Turkic Barb resulted in the Moors decisive conquest over the Spanish mounted military wearing heavy armor, riding large Iberian Draft horses with cumbersome Estradiota Spanish war saddles. The smaller size was an advantage allowing the Moors/Berbers to close in with the enemy and strike with more lethal and debilitating results. This is precisely why Turks' - Arabs' fighting blades, scimitars, were forged with curved angles. They could slash at their opponent with minimized chances of wounding their own horses.

Men were already selectively breeding Afro-Turkic horses for intelligence, endurance, and hardiness and reducing their methods to writing for use in chariot battles between 1600 and 1800BC. Around 1000BC North African mariners brought Afro-Turkic horses to the Iberian coast where they had their stallions cover mares of the larger Draft subspecies. The results were amazing! They got colorful offspring larger and harder than their sires. This was the world's first **“out crossed”** breed of horse. This was the beginning of a foundation herd for all modern Iberian breeds, Breton, Welsh, Hobby, Cornish, Galway, Asturian, Galician, and Iberian, to name a few.

Centuries past and by the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century AD, Visigoths and Vikings sweeping southward through Iberia built boats, loaded stolen Iberian horses and took them to North Africa and created the **“back cross”** of the Iberian horse upon the shores of North Africa, resulting in the origin of the Barb Horse of North Africa. The name Barb having been borrowed from the **Berber** peoples. Cross the Iberian Spanish horse with the north African Berber horse and the new Spanish “Barb” is born. Fast forward two thousand years and the continuous crossbreeding of



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According to authorities on the Berbers, this an ethnic group indigenous to Northwest Africa, of the Afroasiatic family principally concentrated in Morocco and Algeria but with smaller communities as far east as Egypt and as far south as Burkina Faso. There is no complete agreement about the origin of the Berbers, however the consensus is that most northwest Africans (whether they consider themselves Berber or Arab) are predominantly of Berber origin, and that populations ancestral to the Berbers have been in the area since the Upper Paleolithic era where they would have long had the opportunities and history connected with North African horse subspecies (Afro-Turkic – *Equus caballus pumpelli*). The predominant ancestors of the Berbers appear to have come from East Africa, the Middle East, or both.

### **Arabian horses visa-vis Barbs**

More than 1600 years later with the Islamic conquest of Arabia, Persia, Egypt, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Baluchistan, the Afro-Turkic horses (those not having been crossed with Iberian horses), began to be selectively bred for beauty, spelling the beginning of the Arabian horse. From this beginning spun off Akhal-Teke, Bashkir, Darabair, Lokai, Turkoman, Marwari and other breeds. While the Barb was bred for usefulness, its Arabian cousin was bred for refined features such as the high “flagging tail,” dainty more rounded forehead, and dished profile. The Barb has a thicker head and heavier bones. More important, the Barbs’ low tail set, rounded haunches, and sloping croup provide for greater ability to negotiate uneven terrain, spring, and wheel in unpredictable circumstances compared to the Arabian’s design to run over horizontal ground. Again, the Barb had an early start at preparing for rounding up livestock or cavalry maneuvers.

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On Spain's second voyage to the Americas in 1493 Columbus brought 24 stallions, 10 mares, eight pigs, and an unspecified number of cattle, sheep, goats, and chickens to the Antilles – the island of Hispaniola. In 1511 a colony was established in Cuba, followed by Mexico, (New Spain - inclusive of modern day New Mexico), Puerto Rico, and Jamaica. Livestock was introduced in each of these American settlements. Hernan Cortez invaded Mexico in 1519. The first herd of cattle on the North American mainland was introduced by Gregorio Villalobos in 1520 through the port of the Paunco River near present day Tampico, Mexico.

## **AN OVERVIEW OF THE COLONIAL SPANISH HORSE HISTORY BY DONALD CHÁVEZ Y GILBERT.**

### **Spanish Mustangs, Living History Making A Comeback**

For many generations the name “Spanish Mustang” or “Spanish Cowpony” generally referred to a category of horse, which was brought to America by the Spanish Conquistadors and Spanish Colonists and used by cowboys, Indians, and ranchers. For over four hundred years in America the name has primarily carried the connotation of wild or feral horse. However, as the need has evolved to subdivide types of horses, specify lines of breeding, and establish registries, this is no longer the chief definition. The Spanish Mustang now has a proud following that recognizes these tough little animals as descendants of the first horses brought to North America by the Spanish. Other common references to this horse are Spanish Barb and Spanish Colonial Horse.

The word “Mustang”- or Mesteño, its original form, comes from the language of the Spanish Vaqueros in the fifteenth century and earlier. As is the case with most cowboy lingo, when English-speaking cowboys arrived in the west they adopted Spanish cowboy terms and corrupted them into what eventually became an Anglicized equivalent. Such is the case with Mestesño- the original Vaquero term for a feral or stray horse- becoming Mustang.

When Columbus, back from his first voyage, reported that there were no horses in the new world, the Spanish Government immediately made arrangements to export their horses to North and South America. On his second voyage Columbus on



September 25, 1493 departed from Cadiz, Spain, and upon arriving on the Island of Hispanola introduced twenty-four stallions and ten mares, eight pigs, along with the introduction of cattle, sheep, and goats into the Caribbean Islands, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Jamaica in the early 1500's. From there livestock along with Spanish Mustangs then arrived on the North American continent with each of the early explorer expeditions including Juan Ponce de Leon, 1513 in Florida, Hernando de Soto, 1514 in Louisiana, Alonzo Alvar de Pineda, 1519 in Texas, Hernan Cortez 1519 in Mexico, and Pizarro, 1544 in Peru. Gregorio Villalobos, however, introduced the first substantial continental infusions of livestock for breeding purposes in Mexico in 1520, and in 1598 Don Juan de Onate brought several thousand horses, cattle, and sheep to New Mexico in a four-mile long procession including over eighty wagons and oxcarts. At the same time in Spain, when all available Spanish Barbs were being shipped to the Americas, greater quantities of non-Spanish horses were being imported to replace the shortage of the smaller hardy Barbs. This process continued to the point that eventually the Spanish Colonial cowpony virtually disappeared in Spain.

These Spanish Mustangs are among the strongest, most intelligent, and hardiest horses in the world as a result of several factors. Like their Hispanic breeders they are focused, proud, passionate, and confident. First, the Spanish, who had been improving their foundation stock for hundreds of years, brought with them some of their finest horses such as Andalusians, Ginetes, Sorrias and Garrano mixes selected for breeding by Spanish Hacendados and vaqueros in rugged Iberian Spain. Next, horses brought to the Americas were given an extra edge when on Columbus' second voyage- as he complained in a letter to King Ferdinand - in his absence from the shipping docks, peasant horses had been loaded onto his ships rather than the more expensive stock he had paid for. In his letter to the monarchs he stated “...you will tell their Highnesses that as the keepers of horses came from Granada in the show made in Sevilla they rode good horses, and after shipping I could not see them because I was a little ill and they gave us such animals that the best of them did not seem to cost more than 2000 Maravedies; they sold the good ones and brought these...”

As it turned out, this smaller, hardier, peasant stock had a higher survival rate during the voyages to the Americas than the larger breeds. Finally, of those horses that did escape into the American wilderness and became feral, particularly in the arid southwest, ‘survival of the fittest’ breeding forced by harsh climates, scarce food, and predation by animal and human predators alike ensured that only the toughest horses would survive and procreate.



If you are wondering what became of the larger, “finer,” more expensive horses the horse brokers used to bait and switch Christopher Columbus, it is a safe bet that although all these Iberian horses, (Spanish Barbs) were all from the relatively same foundation stock; these so called better horses were already on their way toward being selectively bred into what is in modern times Spain called the Andalusian horse. Its counterpart (with its own salient breed specifications) in Portugal is known as the Lusitano. Combined they are sometimes referred to as “The Iberian Horse.” This is an egocentric label as our American Mustangs are all descendants of the first Spanish Barbs; so our American mustangs are also Iberian horses. Predictably these related horses claim many of the same bragging rights, e.g., low maintenance, high intelligence, hardy, disease resistant, and have been used to develop other special equine lines such as the South American Paso Fino, Peruvian Paso, Marchador, Mangalarga, and North American Quarter Horse.

When American-Anglo aliens poured into the Texas, Mexico area to learn ranching they found that their larger English Thoroughbred horses had neither the endurance nor intelligence to make good cattle-working horses. They soon learned it was best to replace their mounts with the hardier, hard-working Spanish Barbs. The first British breeds of cattle were introduced into Jamestown in 1607. Not being of hardy genetic criollo Iberian Corriente origin they did not survive. In 1611 cattle were reintroduced and guarded carefully until they began to adapt and reproduce. Virginia governor Thomas Dale issued a proclamation to protect them, stating “*no man shall dare kill a bull, cow, calf...whether his own or appertaining to another man.*”

As valuable as foundation stock had to be in those times, it is estimated that over the years of importing livestock from Spain and Portugal to the Americas that many animals perished en route or escaped. Rodero states that “*...dead animals must have been many because of the long trip (around two months). Finally, at times the expeditioners had to use these animals as food because of the problems of the trip. Cunningham (1946) says: “...at calm times (no wind in the sails) when the boat would stay for months near the Ecuador and the water became limited, and they had to throw the animals to the sea because they could not continue giving water to the horses.”* In this way Chincoteague horses were either thrown overboard or Spanish galleons crashed off the shore of Assateague, and the horses that were part of the cargo swam ashore and came to live on the Assateague and Chincoteague islands. Vaqueros are perhaps best known for sheep and cattle ranching, but these were not their only areas of endeavor. While there were still vast open range herds of wild mustangs there existed an area of ranching called “mustanging.” Mesteneros, or mustangers, were the first cowboys to make a living by catching and raising wild horses. These men and their families were self-sufficient, making their own lariats of rawhide, and girths, bridle reins and hackamores from horses’ tail and mane hair.



According to Ruben Salas, *The West – A Hispanic Creation*, the most famous mesteneros were the Celedon brothers and Pedro Trujillo from New Mexico.

Having lived on early Spanish Encomiendas (grants of land issued by the King of Spain which usually included a village of Indian inhabitants or a mission,) and worked for Spanish Hacendados and vaqueros, Indians learned the use of horses. The Indian Pueblo Revolt of 1680 in the Santa Fe, New Mexico region marked the first significant release and capture of these horses by native Indians. The Pueblo Indians, being primarily an agrarian culture, traded these horses to the Apaches, Navajo, and Comanches who in turn traded them to many other tribes. Ironically, the mobility that the Spanish Mustangs allowed them later enabled these warring tribes to relentlessly raid the Pueblos almost to extinction- and they may have, had it not been for the intervention of Don Juan Bautista de Anza, the founder of San Francisco, California, and Governor of New Mexico in 1778. Some tribes were superior breeders of Spanish Mustangs. When Lewis and Clark crossed the Rocky Mountains, the Clark expedition traded for Spanish horses with the Snake Indians. The Chickasaw Horse strain derived from Spanish Colonial stock. Indian agent Edmund Atkins noted in his 1755 report on the Appalachian Indian frontier that the Chickasaw had the finest breed of horses in North America. In 1717 the East Texas tribe Caddo was driving horses to the Illinois Indians to trade.

**COLONEL RICHARD I. DODGE RECORDED IN HIS MEMOIRS, *OUR WILD INDIANS: THIRTY THREE YEARS PERSONAL EXPERIENCE AMONG THE RED MEN OF THE GREAT WEST*, PRINTED IN 1886, A RACE BETWEEN THREE THOROUGHbred RACE HORSES AND A COMANCHE HORSE THAT TOOK PLACE BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR. OFFICERS AT FORD CHADBOURN, NORTH OF SAN ANGELO, TEXAS, OWNED THE RACEHORSES. IT WAS THE PRACTICE OF THE OFFICERS TO RACE THE LEAST FAST OF THEIR HORSES FIRST; THE NEXT FASTEST SECOND AND THEIR BEST RACEHORSE LAST WHEN THE BETS WERE HIGHEST. MU-LA-QUE-TOP AND HIS BAND OF COMANCHES WERE CAMPED NEARBY AND WERE CHALLENGED TO RACE. TO THE SURPRISE OF THE SOLDIERS, THE COMANCHE HORSE, A MISERABLE SHEEP OF A PONY, WON. THE BETS WERE DOUBLED AND IN LESS THAN AN HOUR THE SAME COMANCHE HORSE FACED THE SECOND FASTEST OF THE RACEHORSES AND WAS AGAIN VICTORIOUS. DETERMINED TO RECOUP THEIR DOLLARS, THE OFFICERS BROUGHT FORTH THEIR CHAMPION, A MARE OF FAMED LEXINGTON BREEDING THAT REGULARLY BEAT THE OTHER TWO BY AT LEAST FORTY FEET IN A FOURTEEN HUNDRED YARD DASH. WHEN THE FINAL RACE BEGAN, THE COMANCHE RIDER GAVE A WHOOP AND THREW AWAY THE WHIP HE HAD USED TO ENCOURAGE HIS MOUNT IN THE PREVIOUS RACES AND EASILY TOOK THE LEAD. FIFTY YARDS FROM THE FINISH LINE, THE COMANCHE SWUNG HIS LEG AROUND AND RODE BACKWARD, MAKING FACES AT THE RIDER OF THE THOROUGHbred OVER HIS GALLOPING HORSE'S TAIL AS HIS SPANISH MUSTANG FLASHED OVER THE LINE.**



With the rounding up of the American Indians by the US government, which disposed of most of the Indian's mustangs, and the infusion of larger European breeds of horses brought by Eastern Anglos, Spanish mustangs almost completely disappeared. Thousands of Mustangs were rounded up for the sole purpose of purging the countryside of these animals to make room for grazing sheep and cattle. The captured horses were then sold to slaughterhouses to be made into dog and cat food. Even the US cavalry eventually rejected the Spanish Mustang as too small and either eliminated them or bred them up in size with draft horses. What was left of the original Spanish-type horses was virtually lost when larger stallions were released with them to interbreed. By the end of the nineteenth century there remained only small pockets of mustangs in remote open areas, in Indian country, and on rural ranches passed down by Hispanic families over fifteen generations. The bloodlines of these Spanish Colonial Mustangs were preserved by the remoteness of herds scattered primarily throughout the Southwest, West and Northwest, specifically in places like El Rito, New Mexico, Mount Taylor, New Mexico, the Sulphur herd, in southwest Utah, the Cerbat Mountains, Arizona, Kiger, Oregon, and the Pryor Mountains in Wyoming and Montana.

Several Indian tribes as well as Anglo and Hispanic conservators started to salvage the remnants of America's first True Horse just as the wild ones were beginning to be killed off or crossbred to other imported breeds. By the turn of the twentieth century a small fraction of wild horses of true Spanish type remained. The Great Depression and the advent of the automobile, the pickup truck and farm machinery nearly spelled the end of those few that were left on public lands. Fortunately, a handful of very isolated ranges protected the Spanish character of some of the feral horses, and a small number of far-sighted groups and individuals saw to it that real Spanish horses would be preserved. The best known of the conservators was Robert F. Brislawn, who worked for the Topographical Branch of the U.S. Geological Survey starting about 1911. "The Wyoming Kid", as Old Bob loved to call himself, had quickly found that only the sure-footed horses that they called Barbs could handle the rigors of terrain and climate that he had to deal with in the mountainous country where his work carried him. As colorful as the horses he fought to save, Bob Brislawn collected horses from the Crow Reservation, the Book Cliffs of Utah and from New Mexico and Oklahoma and took them to his Cayuse Ranch in Oshoto. His brother Ferdinand also preserved the Spanish horses, especially the uniquely colored Medicine Hats. Other important conservators include Buena Suerte Farms of Tome, NM, in conjunction with Terra Patre Farm in Belen, New Mexico, the Weldon McKinley family of Los Lunas, New Mexico; Ilo Belsky,



an Eli, Nebraska cattleman who loved the Spanish cowponies and bred them at his Phantom Valley Ranch, and Gilbert H. Jones of Finely, Oklahoma.

Many of today's horsemen, accustomed to modern standards of equine beauty (typified by such breeds as the Thoroughbred and Arab), speak in scorn of the Mustang. Isn't it just an undersized scrub horse, the 'Heinz 57' of the equine world? But this tough little remnant of Western History deserves more appreciation than that.

Although few of the feral horses left in America today are of true Spanish blood, there are some traits to look for when seeking horses of the original stock. Spanish Mustangs stand between 13 and 15 hands high, averaging around 14 hands. They tend to have a deep chest, a short, strong back, and low-set tail. The thick-walled hooves are tough and require less maintenance than many of our domestic breeds, and the chestnuts (especially on the rear legs) are often small or absent. The head may sport a Roman nose and straight profile, and medium length or short ears that may be curved inward at the tips (barbed). The upper lip is often longer than the lower (though the teeth have an even bite.) Although they come in many colors, these horses are predominately found in solid colors such as dun, grulla, black and bay.

Supporters of the Spanish Mustang say that these horses are loyal and capable of developing a deep bond for their human partners, yet able to think for themselves. They are incredibly tough, with great endurance, agility and speed. Their natural hardiness makes them easier and less expensive to care for than many modern breeds. Their intelligence and energetic brio make them a rewarding fun animal to own. All of these traits that once made the Spanish Mustang a sought-after mount are once again causing appreciative horsemen to choose them as their partners, as America's enduring and endearing first horse rides through the pages of history and into the present- making a comeback.

### **The Spanish Cowpony**

The Spanish Colonial Horse is by compass a small horse, although size is increasing with improved nutrition and out crossing to different strains. The Spanish Barb horse resembles the Iberian horse, but because the Barb has a higher quantum of the smaller Afro-Turkic blood; it is consequently a lighter-statured horse. The usual height is 14 hands, and some vary from 13.2 to 14.2. Some are now reaching 15 hands and taller. Weight varies with height, but most are 800-900 pounds.



**HEAD:** Spanish Horses generally have a straight to convex nose. The forehead is wide and tapers to a narrow, fine muzzle. The head is wide from the front, but the facial features are narrow. The nostrils are usually small and crescent-shaped.

**CHEST:** Spanish horses typically have narrow, but deep chests. The front legs leave the body fairly close together. This may sound defective - considering the standard Quarter Horse type conformation, but it is actually a very strong and sturdy conformation, allowing for more mobility and weight carrying ability.

When viewed from the front, the legs join up into the chest in a classic "A" shape appearance rather than an "H" shape seen in other modern breeds that have wider chests. The chest is deep from the side, with the shoulder long and angled sharply.

**WITHERS:** Are usually high set, and sharp looking instead of rounded and "meaty."

**CROUP:** Is sloped and the tail is characteristically low set. The hind quarters can vary from fairly massive to slender and less muscled. From the rear, they often exhibit a "rafter hip," meaning that there is no distinct crease where the leg muscles join the backbone. Instead, it tapers up to where the backbone is the highest point.

**BACK:** Typically short and strong, some strains show a long back, but it is usually proportionately shorter than most other breeds. This also contributes to a greater strength and agility.

**LEGS:** Conformation of the legs is almost always very sound. They have shorter canon bones, and the angles of the bones in the feet and legs allow for less work-related lameness and injury. Often the horse's chestnuts (especially on the hind legs) are very small or missing altogether.

**FEET:** Hooves are small and have more of an upright angle. Feet are almost very hard and resistant to injury.

**STRIDE/GAITS:** Spanish Horses usually have a very long stride, and many have gaits other than the usual trot of most breeds. These other gaits can include any number of the following; a walk, single foot, amble, pace, and the "paso" gaits (as seen in the Peruvian Paso, and Paso Fino).

**INTELLIGENCE:** Not a "push button" type horse. Like donkeys and mules, they are smarter than most horses and because commands need to make sense, they are sometimes perceived as stubborn or "difficult" to train. They do not tolerate bad treatment. Exceptionally intelligent, they learn quickly and once "bonded" to a human make very willing, loyal companions, and work horses.



Colors of the Spanish Horse vary widely. It is through the influence of this breed that many other North American horse breeds gain some of their distinct colors. Because they were bred as working horses, color was never a consideration to the early breeders. Today they carry all the original colors found in the early horses brought from Spain. Base colors include; black, brown, chestnut, sorrel, grullo, zebra barred, red dun, buckskin, palomino, and cream.

In many horses, these base colors are combined with white hairs or patches to make other colors; gray, roan, paint (tobiano, overo\*, and calico), pure white, and the leopard complex of blankets, roans and dark spots associated with the Appaloosa breed.

The Frame overo color is interesting as it is limited to the North American Spanish Horses, and their descendants. It may have spread to other breeds and other regions, but it traces directly to Spanish origins.

### **Frank Hopkins Spanish Mustang Quotes**

*You can't beat mustang intelligence in the entire equine race. These animals have had to fare for themselves for generations. They had to work out their own destiny or be destroyed. Those that survived were animals of superior intelligence. The mustang was grass-fed all his life. He picked his own food from the country, could live where even a cow would starve, and knew how to take such good care of himself that he was always ready to go.*

*I know what the mustang strain means; it means a horse that can keep going day in and day out, that doesn't need bandaging, fussing with, and that can win endurance rides whether the rules are made to order or not...*

*Caring for your mount is part of the day's pleasure. My mounts were fed on buffalo grass. They got the best care I could give them, although the best could not be much. There was one class of horse I liked best and would ride no other but this -- even though there were many fine mounts offered me - I refused all but the Indian pony, a hardy little animal, no trail too long or too rough, a horse that could get along without grain and go without water for two or three days at a time.*

*The horses I rode were level-headed. Some horsemen would call them lazy. But I needed a horse with that disposition; a horse that would be content to walk all day unless I called on him to shake it up.*

## **THE POST COLUMBIAN IBERIAN HORSE**

Spanish Andalusians & Portuguese Lusitanos



The pride of modern Iberia, these animals stand between 15.2 and 16.2 hands, with proud refined features. The convex head compliments shoulders which are high upright with a muscular medium length neck, and strong back supported by long flexible thick boned legs. Their mane and tail are extraordinarily full and striking.

Puro Sangre Lusitano is currently bred by the Portuguese royal stud farms for exhibiting classical show (grandeur and baroque esthetics), but was originally used for war, ranching, and working livestock. It is in keeping with the tradition of the mounted bullfight where intelligence, confidence, and focus are important in the bull ring. Colors include buckskin, brown, palomino, black, chestnut, and bay.

Puro Raza Espanola with similar original purposes found a niche as a fine carriage horse breeding a higher foreleg step than the Lusitano. Their colors are predominantly gray with occasional bays and blacks.

## **SHEEP HISTORY**

**By Donald Chávez Y Gilbert**

**Sheep first arrived (along with other livestock and the ranching industry) in the United States with the Spanish 1598 Oñate colony. Since the early 1800's the U.S. sheep population has come full circle from about seven million head, sheep numbers peaked at 56 million in 1945, then declined to less than seven million head on January 1, 2003. At the same time, industry emphasis has changed from wool to meat. Sheep numbers increased slightly in 2005 and 2006, the first time since 1990. With the replacement of wool and other natural fibers by synthetic fibers by the end of the century the total numbers of sheep dipped below nine million. Amos Dee Jones developed Debouillet Merino in New Mexico in the 1920s by crossing Delaine Merino sheep with Rambouillette. Rambouillette sheep are a French version of the Spanish Merino. French King Louis XVI imported over three hundred Spanish Merinos for his estate at Rambouillette, France in 1786 crossing them with his native French sheep.**

According to the USDA New Mexico Agricultural Extension Service report census numbers for cattle at 1.5 million beef and 200,000 dairy cows and 300,000 sheep for the year 1996. The Spanish Merino was a foundation breed for many of the one thousand breeds of sheep worldwide and the fifty odd breeds in the USA. New Mexico's first principal export was sheep. While "Texans and Californians favored beef cattle and horses, New Mexicans originally concentrated on sheep ever since Don Juan de Onate and the first Spanish colonizers brought 5,400 head of sheep and 1,200 head of cattle to New Mexico in 1598. For one thing, sheep were far better



suited than cattle to the mountainous terrain, and even though Indian raiders occasionally stole sheep - or slaughtered a flock to gall the Spaniards - the animals could not be stolen in large numbers because it was difficult to round them up and drive them away... The hardy Churro sheep fed, clothed, and supported the first settlers when there was nothing between them and starvation. Winifred Kupper, in his book, *The Golden Hoof*, writes that, "Sheep were the real conquerors of the Southwest." In good years as many as 500,000 of the animals were herded to market in Chihuahua, capital of the state of Coahuila."

There are a number of web sites, which detail varying versions on the origins of both Churro and Merino sheep as they were shipped from Spain to the Americas. There are many authoritative references in the literature as well as "on line" for woolie breeds per se. However, a considerable amount of uncertainty is still attached to the precise origin of Churro sheep. The best reference I find is the one where Rodero extrapolates from Old Spanish archives and explains that, "the Churro Breed, probably belongs to the Lebrijano Churro type, today near extinction. Boezio (1990) considered that the Criollo Sheep from Uruguay before 1794 descended from either the Churro Sheep or from the Pirenaica Breed, both belonging to the descendents of *Ovis Aries studery*, while the Merino was introduced soon after. It is possible that these two branches were introduced to America at the same time, but each of them occupied different ecosystems; the Merinos were located on table lands and valleys with long displacements, and the Churros occupied the mountains in wet and cold areas."

"...Churra is a milk production breed of great hardiness, well suited to the continental climate of Castile and León, with long, severe winters, very short springs, and hot dry summers. The original Spanish Churra was a tough sheep, adapting quickly to the harsh conditions of the American Southwest." Because this sheep maintains features of hair sheep, such as adaptability, hardiness, and growing both hair and wool, it could almost be considered an evolutionary link between those first wild hair sheep domesticated by ancient Iberians and the breed, which came to be known as the Spanish Churra (o) sheep. This may help explain the etymology of the word "Chamorro" which according to the Velasquez Spanish-English Diccionario defines the word as meaning shorn, or bald. "Chamorra" refers to a woolen blanket and "chamorrar" is the infinitive form of the verb to shear or cut wool. In Rodero's discussion about the evolution of the first cattle and sheep-driving practices from isolated locations in the Iberian Peninsula to slaughterhouses and markets, he sites Chamorro sheep being valued for its meat as opposed to wool. This would make sense at a time thousands of years ago when hair sheep first domesticated would have been more of a meat and milk source, then later selectively bred to improve its' wool qualities. The word Chamorro may have originally referred to the precursors of more



modern churros whose natural condition was closer to that of its ancient hair sheep ancestors. Today, Chamorro in the sense of “bald or shorn” would be a contradiction to the obvious observation of a modern woolie churro, which is quite the opposite of bald. I refer here to a verbatim passage of Rodero’s, which makes the connection between the Chamorro and Churro. Again, so as not to influence the translation I have not edited grammar or syntax, so that his semantics are left entirely up to the reader; *“nevertheless, two facts changed the mentioned isolation. On one hand the apparition of the organized and institutionalized movements of animals (transhumancia), not only with respect to the Merino Sheep coming from the north (Castilla and León) of the provinces of Córdoba and Jaén, but also for livestock taken out for these shepherders, bought in Andalusia. The latter was called **chamorro** and they was famous for their meat but not their wool, very basting, they correspond to the Churro Sheep.”*

The traditional Churra Spanish sheep breed was the very first breed of sheep in the New World. Introduced to North America in the early 1500's by Spanish conquerors to serve as food and fiber (clothes, blankets, etc.) for the exploring soldiers, and in 1598, by the Spanish explorer Juan de Onate, into the American West through New Mexico. The word for Churro originated as Churra, Spanish for scrub sheep, eventually being corrupted in the American West into Churro. As Native Americans and settlers acquired sheep from the Spanish explorers, the breed's popularity as a food and fiber source grew and the sheep became a major economic asset. Also used as a meat source, the Navajo-Churro remains best known for its wool. The fleece is composed of an inner coat of fine wool fibers providing good insulation and a protective outer coat of long coarse hair, which sheds the snow and rain.

The Spanish vaquero introduced and taught the American Indians to shepherd sheep. The Navajo Indians not only quickly became proficient at sheep herding, moreover they became dependent on these sheep for their very livelihood. This influence helped transform the Navajo from a nomadic, warring culture to a ranching culture. Prior to the arrival of the Spanish, the Pueblo Indians complained that the Navajo would raid the farming cultures of the Pueblo Indians. The name Navaho originates from the Pueblo name, "Abache Nabahu." Abache or Apache meaning "enemy" and Nabahu or Havajo meaning "farm fields," or "the raider of the field," Alvin M. Joseph and William Brandon, *The American Heritage Book of Indians*, American Heritage Publishing Co, 1961.

Sheep and cattle together helped to shape and evolve the livestock ranching history, but not without their own battles for turf in the lands of cowboy ranches as well as between the pages of history. Both have dominated the ranching industry first in the Iberian Peninsula prior to Columbus’ arrival in America, taking turns having the upper hand, then again in the Americas, again taking turns dominating the grazing



ranges. New Mexico was first a sheep state rife with battles between cattlemen and sheep ranchers. My father told me a number of stories often about his sheep ranching antecedents in one case his great grandfather having been ambushed and shot to death while tending his sheep. In another instance, grandfather Juan Chavez y Trujillo, his maternal grandfather in Lemitar, New Mexico who had been a judge, being confronted in a bar by cattlemen still stewing over a former stiff sentence handed down to a cattleman. Following the unavoidable fight against overwhelming numbers, Juan Chavez y Trujillo grabbed my father, a young boy of ten years, threw him up onto the horse behind him and made a hasty escape among poorly placed bullets. My father's biggest complaint seemed to be that as the horse took one long stride after another, the saddle, behind which he was sitting, was pinching his inner thighs. No matter how loud he complained to Grandpa Juan Chavez y Trujillo his cries fell on deaf ears.

Sheep are still raised in many places in the original cradle of the west and have had a sub species named after the state where they were introduced into what is today's US of A. It is a hair (meat) sheep, Ovis Dalli Novo Mexicanis, or the **New Mexican Dall Sheep**, developed by descendents of the Belen Land Grant founders of 1742, (original founder Diego de Torres), at Terra Patre Farm, Belen, New Mexico, USA.

## HAIR SHEEP HISTORY

By Donald Chávez Y Gilbert

### THE FIRST DOMESTICATED HAIR SHEEP

While there is a lack of precise certitude in the case of Churro Sheep history, **where “hair” sheep are concerned** there appears to be utter confusion around the country. One hour on the internet reading assorted hair sheep web site' descriptions of the history of hair sheep and you will find almost as many arbitrary variations, descriptions, and histories as there are web sites. An effort to site proper authorities on hair sheep here should narrow down the parameters and lend some credence and consistency to the real history of hair sheep.

Between six and ten thousand years BC sheep, goats, and cattle were being domesticated. Domesticated woolen sheep, “woolies,” are so ubiquitous that it is probably safe to assume that most non-ranching folks are of the mindset that wool have always been “woolies.” As a matter of clarification, I should begin this section by stating that it is not natural for sheep to have a heavy fleece all year round.



The first sheep domesticated by our ancestors were wild **hair** sheep. Hair sheep to varying degrees, depending on climate naturally grow warm insulating wool as well as hair (like that of a goat) during the cold months of the year. As the weather warms, the wool fleece sheds leaving only the hair behind. This is a practical adaptation. Over the past eight thousand years, mankind has selectively bred sheep more for its' ability to produce wool and less for its hardiness. That is why the Churra sheep imported from the Iberian Peninsula which still carries some of these attributes of more primitive sheep like fecundity, hair plus wool, as well as hardiness were so successful over other strains of sheep and were a perfect strain to maintain by the first Hispanic ranchers living through many spells of hard times. The hardest people kept the hardest livestock.

There are many species of these wild sheep ranging in habitats in what is referred to as the Great Arc, (like the shape of ram horns), of the Wild Sheep, beginning with Mouflon sheep in western Europe across the Bering Straits to the American Bighorns in southwestern USA. James L. Clark has published a great book on these ancient wild sheep called The Great Arc of the Wild Sheep, University of Oklahoma press, 1994. The ancient sheep domesticated by man originated globally north of the equator and have been disseminated by nomadic people all over the world. One example mentioned above sites the French who borrowed sheep from Spain when French King Louis XVI imported over three hundred Spanish Merinos for his estate at Rambouillette, France in 1786 crossing them with his native French sheep and naming them after the French community "Rambouillette." And so went the practice of borrowing and renaming animals until there are far too many subspecies to mention.

Since the decline of the wool industry in the twentieth century, domesticated hair sheep, also referred to as meat sheep have become more popular for a number of reasons. They are great sheep for the beginner or hobbyist. As mentioned above, hair sheep are more resistant to disease, parasites, and climate changes. They are less expensive and easier to keep because they need no shearing, are hardy, prolific, and more forgiving than woolies. Finally, their meat lacks that mutton taste some people find distasteful.

The first reference to hair sheep appears in Spanish journals, references to their discoveries in the Canary Islands. The best reference to the origins of hair sheep comes from translated archives. This is a direct verbatim quote, (albeit a bit awkward), from Spanish to English by A. Rodero, J.V. Delgado and E. Rodero - El Ganado Andaluz Primitivo Y Sus Implicaciones En El Descubrimiento De America. *"It is clear, because of in the archipelago there did not exist cattle, horses, asses or camels before the (Spanish) conquest and the pre-Hispanic canary sheep had special characteristics (they present hair, not wool), not mentioned in America's farming at this time."* Although these hair sheep are not described any further to give us a clue



as to whether they were related to modern St. Croix sheep, Blackbellys (AKA Barbados), Wiltshire Horn or any other of the known older hair sheep species, these are the hair sheep the Spanish shipped to the Americas. He continues... *“The Spaniards found the Canaries inhabited by a mythic people called the Guanches, coming from the vicinal Africa as was shown by their racial characteristic (Mediterranean) and their language (similar to the Berber language), at though with the precedence of other ethnic groups in a lesser degree (Nordics, Negroids and Cro-Magnon), all of them with a difficultly explicable origin. The Guanches were principally farmers, and the writings there mentioned the presence of goats, pigs, sheep, and a high abundance of dogs, (canines); the last probably gave the name to these Islands: Canarias, from the Latin Canis. The characteristics of these livestock showed a clear African roots.*

*The location of the archipelago as a crossroad between continents and the demand of products from the new colonies brought good commercial profits to the Islands, after the Discovery of America.” “The Canary Islands were a necessary stop on the way to America. In 1404 Castilla occupied it permanently. It was the beginning of their colonization and europeatization.”*

When Spanish livestock arrived on the other side of the Atlantic in the Americas they referred to them as Criollo, a wide all encompassing term applied to all species such as cattle and sheep, and horses, e.g., Cuban Criollo horse, Mexican corriente cattle, and Navajo churro sheep. As time progressed some species took on the names of their specially bred characteristics and others kept the Criollo name. According to I.L. Mason's World Dictionary of Livestock Breeds, Third Edition. C.A.B. International, Criolo is also known as: *“Creole, Chilludo, Pampa, Colombian, Lucero, Tarhumara, Uruguayan, Venezuelan.* The Criollo breed developed in the highlands of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela over hundreds of years. The ancestors of the present day Criollo is believed to be the Spanish Churro, which was brought to this area in the mid-1500. The present day breed has a coarse fleece of carpet wool type. They are typically white, black or pied.”

There are a number of species of hair sheep around the world, both tropical and temperate subspecies. As they specialize, registries are being established and standards set as guideposts for differentiating one from another. For our purposes here I will concentrate on breeds popular to the United States of America, with particular emphasis on the Mouflon, Barbados Blackbelly, and Rambouillet, (French for Spanish Merino), which are the foundation stock of the vast majority of our horned American Hair Sheep breeds; Corsican, Black Hawaiian, Painted Desert, New Mexican Dall, and, Texas Dall to name a few trophy hunt sheep. The Katahdin, Dorper, and St. Croix, which are also hair sheep but, are polled, (hornless), are



considered exclusively meat sheep. The New Mexican Dall is uniquely bred to appeal to both meat and trophy hunt customers with large muscular bodies sporting massive horns.

St. Croix sheep are like the Barbados an old breed brought to the Americas by the Spanish and Portuguese merchants and explorers. Katahdin sheep date back to the late 1950's with the importation of St. Croix sheep from the Caribbean by Michael Piel, to Maine, U.S.A. His goal was to combine the shedding coat, prolificacy and the hardiness of the Virgin Island sheep, with the meat, conformation and rate of growth of the woolen breeds. He experimented with crosses between the hair sheep and various British breeds, especially the Suffolk. Later, he collected a flock of Wiltshire Horned Sheep in the mid 1970's, from England incorporated them into the flock in order to add size, and improve carcass quality even further. He named his sheep "Katahdin" after Mount Katahdin in Maine

### **Barbados Blackbelly Sheep**

According to R.I. Rastogi, H.E. Williams, and F.C. Youssef in their Origin and History of the Barbados Blackbelly, “in tropical America there are two quite different types of sheep. In the highlands there is a woolen sheep, called Criollo, which originated from the coarse-woolen Churro imported from Spain during the period 1548 to 1812. It is a small to medium-sized animal producing a small quantity of coarse wool which is important for the cottage wool industry. The males have horns. Colour is often white but coloured and pied animals are common.

This is the principal breed in Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. There are also small populations in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

The second type of sheep is **wool-less or hair sheep** whose colour is commonly tan (red-brown), white, or patterns involving tan. Males lack horns but are characterized by a shoulder and throat ruff of long hair. This hair sheep is found in many Caribbean islands and in mainland countries along the north coast of South America. Populations will be described from Barbados, Virgin Islands, Bahamas, Cuba, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Colombia and Brazil. The hair sheep is of African origin but, in countries where wooled Criollo sheep do not occur (e.g. Cuba), it may be termed “Criollo” which tends to be confusing.”

Rodero's citation of Spanish discovery of hair sheep as being of African origin and “the location of the archipelago as a crossroad between continents and the demand of products from the new colonies brought good commercial profits to the Islands, after the Discovery of America,” makes it reasonably clear that these sheep were exported



and marketed in the Americas by Spanish and Portuguese merchants, beginning with the Carrabean Islands chain between Antigua to Barbados, and St. Croix.

R. Lydekker in The Sheep and its Cousins, London: George Allen Press wrote

about the Guinea long-legged sheep: “Early in the seventeenth century these sheep were carried by the Portuguese to the northern districts of Brazil, while about the same time, or perhaps still earlier, they were introduced by the Spaniards into the West Indies and Guiana....”



Notwithstanding the obvious connection with the Spanish, R.K. Rastogi, H.E. Williams and F.C. Youssef do not credit the Spanish or the Portuguese with the introduction of hair sheep to the Island of Barbados. They do state, however, that, “it is generally agreed that these hair sheep were introduced into Barbados from West Africa. They have existed in Barbados for well over three hundred years.” Another well known African hair sheep introduced in the 1500’s by Iberian explorers is the St. Croix sheep. Instead of creditinig the Spanish or Portuguese predecessors they cite Ligon who guesses that the Blackbelly hair sheep “must have been introduced between 1624 and 1657.” That is the time when British explorer Sir William Curteens during a storm accidentally blew onto on the Isle of Barbados after the Portuguese and Spanish had come and gone.

R.K. Rastogi, H.E. Williams and F.C. Youssef go on to quote Ligon, “we have here, but very few [sheepe]; and these do not like well the pasture, being very unfit for them; a soure tough and saplesse grasse, and some poisonous plant they find, which breeds diseases amongst them, and so they dye away, they never are fat, and we thought a while the reason had been, their too much heate with their wool, and so got them often shorne; but that would not cure them, yet the Ews bear always two Lambs, their flesh when we tried any of them had a very faint taste, so that I do not think they are fit to be bred or kept in that Country: other sheep we have there, which are brought from Guinny and Binny, and those have haire growing on them instead of wool; and are liker Goates than Sheep, yet their flesh is tasted more like mutton than the other”.

“Guinny” is clearly Guinea, the Gulf rather than the present country of that name. “Binny” may be Benin, or Benny on the Niger Delta.

...It is clear that wool sheep did not thrive; nothing is said about the thrift of the hair sheep. The curious thing is that the high fertility is attributed to the wool sheep whereas it is now the hair sheep which exhibit this characteristic. Could



this have been a result of crossbreeding combined with selection? A hundred years later the wool sheep had apparently died out since Hughes (1750) wrote: “The Sheep that are natural to this climate and are chiefly bred here, are hairy like Goats. To be covered with Wool, would be as prejudicial to them in these hot Climates as it is useful in Winter Countries for Shelter and Warmth”.

At present the Ministry of Agriculture estimates that there are something over 30,000 sheep in Barbados; about one-third are purebred Blackbelly ..., another one-third are grade Blackbelly (off-type in colour or with white spots) and the remaining are “others” (see Frontispiece). The last category includes hair sheep of other colours such as, white, tan, black or pied, and crosses with Blackhead Persian and wool sheep (mainly Wiltshire Horn). In fact in or around 1950, simultaneous importations of Wiltshire Horn sheep from the U.K. occurred in Barbados (Patterson, 1976), Tobago (Trinidad and Tobago, 1953) and Guyana (Devendra, 1975) with the objective of improving the quality of local sheep by crossbreeding. It has been estimated in Barbados that about 10 percent of the lambs born from woolless sheep at present are more or less woolly and these are not kept for breeding.

The Blackbelly was the commonest breed on the estates surveyed by Patterson and Nurse (1974). Sixty-three percent had only this breed and on the others the dominant type was Blackbelly crossbred. A few farms kept Wiltshires. The Blackbelly was the dominant breed on all the small farms in the survey; Blackbelly crosses were next in importance and Wiltshires were present on only 12 of the 97 farms surveyed.”

### **North American Hair Sheep**

Finding evidence of any particular subspecies of sheep let alone hair sheep in the literature is a lonely and rare experience because so little history was reduced to writing and so much history was passed on in the form of oral history that more specific details tend to become lost from one telling to the next. Evidently, hair sheep flocks have quietly maintained their existence tucked away behind the scenes in distant pastures on remote farms like so many other livestock pursuits in the isolated state of New Mexico, a saving grace as it turns out in the preservation of many aspects of cowboy/ranching history as well as a saving grace in preserving the almost extinct NM Dahl sheep. New Mexico Dahl sheep share most characteristics with other hair sheep most notably Texas Dall sporting a coat of hair along with a coat of light wool which sheds in the spring and summer. Both breeds’ rams have beautifully horned rams, but the New Mexico Dahl breed is distinctive as it shares some characteristics with Rocky Mountain Big Horn sheep such as horned ewes, larger based horns, muscular body frames, some dark colored hooves, and a more flannel looking pelt. Until DNA tests are administered to NM Dahl sheep to verify Big Horn out crossing



ancestry we live with the theory that during that feral four hundred years in remote New Mexico Mountains and deserts from time to time when NM Dahl ewes were in estrus, Rocky Mountain Big Horn rams answered the call of nature and bred some of these ewes.

Family journals, when they can be found are a rich source of history and should be preserved and published at any cost. The first mention of hair sheep I found was in the family journals (provided in 1998 by the Mascareñas family of Belen, NM) of some of the founding families of New Mexico. Specifically, the family of Juan Lopez Holguin, born in Extremadura, Spain, 1560 who traveled to Mexico City where he married Catalina de Villanueva. Their daughter, Ana Maria Ortiz, born circa 1570, wife of Cristobal Baca, born 1567 in Mexico City refers to one of the few most portable animals salvaged during the 1680 Indian Pueblo massacre as they fled Santa Fe and resettled in the Las Cruces, NM area. She makes a point of identifying los “borregos de pelo” “hair sheep,” as the ones selected to make the trip, as opposed to the slower unshorn “borregos de lana,” woolies, abandoned in Santa Fe. In another later passage, in the early 1700s there is mentioned by Maria Hurtado, wife of Manuel Baca, born in Santa Fe a list of animals brought with them from Bernalillo, NM to the new town of Albuquerque, NM which included, “una media docena de vacas, e once borregos especiales de pelo.” These are the only references to hair sheep specifically which I find documenting the importation of hair sheep in North America.

The wool sheep industry has so dominated sheep ranching in America that there is hardly any mention of hair sheep in historical accounts. An effort to revive the New Mexican Hair sheep breed is being made at Terra Patre Farm, Belen, NM.

Professor Lemuel Goode at North Carolina University experimented with crossbreeding Mouflon, Rambouillette (Merino), and Barbados Blackbelly sheep in 1971. The cross resulted in a subspecies which is generally referred to as the Corsican sheep. It has a wide variety of colors and color patterns ranging from pure black, pure white and spotted combinations. The state of Texas enjoying a healthy “canned hunt” industry has bred these variations in turn into more sub species with larger more impressive horns for trophy hunts. As noted above the black strain is called “Black Hawaiian,” the white, “Texas Dall,” and the spotted, “Painted Desert.” The states assigned to the names are not where these sheep originated. They were arbitrarily assigned as a marketing strategy.

Late twentieth century experiments with Rocky Mountain Big horn/domesticated crossed sheep even with AI, (artificial insemination), programs the offspring were born without sufficient immune systems to combat domestic sheep diseases, particularly pneumonia. The lambs died off before reaching sexual maturity. However, early twenty first century programs have successfully out crossed wild Rocky Mountain Big Horn and Alaskan Dahl, Ovis Dali Dali, sheep with Mouflon and other domestic hair sheep.



## **RAISING “HAIR” SHEEP VERSUS RAISING “WOOLIES”**

At this point readers who are considering getting into the rewarding sheep business are begging the question “what next.” This section provides an overview of the pluses and minuses of raising hair sheep.

### **Selling Points:**

The hair sheep industry is experiencing a wave of popularity since the synthetic fabric industry has displaced much of the wool industry. Several relatively new breeds have emerged that have spurred more interest. Consequently hair sheep numbers have shown a dramatic increase in numbers.

Hair sheep have several unique traits that appeal to livestock producers who want to diversify their enterprises.

- They are easy keepers, being more hardy and disease/parasite resistant than woolies; lambs having fewer birthing complications and being more vigorous with low mortality rates.
- Their meat is tastier, leaner, and healthier.
- They make money for the producer. By comparison, they are cheaper to feed as 20% of food consumption goes into the production (growth) of wool in woolen breeds.
- They are cheaper to feed also because they require lower levels of protein to achieve the same weight gains and growth, surviving on low quality grasses and weeds. In fact they thrive on low nutrient browse that other sheep breeds would suffer and die on, and prefer weeds and short grasses that horses and cattle will not eat.
- They are compatible with most other livestock in terms of shared space and diet.
- They are non-seasonal breeders, more prolific than other breeds, (greater twinning fecundity), with strong mothering instincts.
- They are easier to manage than goats.
- They are more alert and possess a strong herding instinct which reduces losses due to predation. Rams frequently will turn and fight feral dogs and other canines.
- Pelts of these sheep produce high quality leather that has a high potential for sales. This market is in the early development stage.
- The growing ethnic market demand for sheep has made them a desirable enterprise with increased cash flow by the October through Easter price premiums for sheep.
- Taste studies show a preference for the taste of hair sheep meat over the mutton flavor of woolen breeds.
- They are less labor intensive as intact males may be desired, so docking and castration practices are minimized. They require little or no worming depending on pasturing practices.



- Numbers of available breeding animals for most hair sheep breeds are limited, so demand and prices are high. Trophy ram prices range between \$500.00 and \$3,000.00 each!

In short, these breeds normally have strong tendencies for no wool, internal parasite resistance, prolific lamb production, good mother habits, grazing low quality forage and browse. A recent comprehensive literature review (by D.R. Notter at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg 24061-0306 and published in the American Society of Animal Science, 1999) discusses these traits and origins in more detail. All domestic hair sheep in the U.S. originated from hair sheep from Africa first imported by the Spanish and Portuguese colonists beginning in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

These sheep tend to store fat internally, reach market conditions on forage, and contain more healthy fatty acids with less fat on commercial cuts with a unique desirable flavor. Thus, they have their own unique market for meat. That market is the ethnic market which is as high and seasonally higher, price wise, as the traditional lamb market. Very light lambs are often in high demand in this niche market. Meat associated preponderance such as fatty acid contents, HDL/LDL cholesterol levels and total fat show in early studies of hair sheep, the pure hair sheep breeds have been shown to have a more healthy meat that is similar to goat meat. Both animal species tend to store their fat internally.

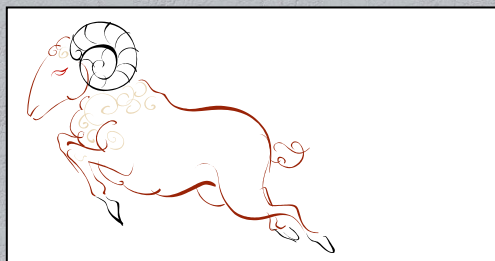
Minimally, you can expect 150 percent lamb crop (one lambing) with the ewes which bear a single lamb, and three lamb crops in two years. Ewes which consistently twin will produce twice those numbers or 300 percent lamb crop.

The potential value of the pelts in the leather market is improving as buyers are more and more recognizing that hair sheep pelts are of a better quality, comparable to goat leather.

On the negative side with the exception of Wiltshire Horn, Stumberg, and New Mexico Dahl in general, these breeds are smaller, thin muscled and slower growing than many of the woolen or woolen crossbreeds. They are generally more stressed when in confinement such as maintenance work or pen feeding.

## NEW MEXICAN DAHL SHEEP

New Mexico Dahl sheep appeal to both the meat and hunting industries, sporting trophy size horns on large muscular bodies. They are characterized by all the attributes outlined in the list of selling points above. These sheep are described as **never** shear, white in color, (sometimes colored) with both ewes and rams horned, ewes' horns no longer than about nine inches. They are excellent flockers, with high lamb survivability. Majestic Rams quickly grow long beautiful horns with massive horn bases. Their average weight ranges between 160 and 250 pounds, roughly 50 to 100% increase in size over other hair breeds. The ewes are excellent mothers that are prolific and year-round breeders. They do well in feedlots or on the range. They are being bred selectively to include these good qualities as well as their frequency of multiple births. They are being selectively bred to exclude the spindly, bloated appearance of some otherwise handsome trophy hunting breeds.





## CATTLE

By the late 1700's, ranchos along the Rio Grande supported over 150,000 cattle. The cattle introduced by the Spanish, (a hardy breed referred to as "Corriente" Spanish for "common or native"), prospered so well in the Southwest and northern Mexico that a shortage of vaqueros created a need for the Spanish Rancheros, (in what is now modern-day Mexico, New Mexico, and Texas) that they needed to teach cowboying to Indians, (which was against Spanish law), and recruit Americans from the east coast. The hardy Corriente cattle allowed to free range in the 1600's evolved through the process of natural selection and some help by Spanish ranchers in two hundred years into a breed which is now termed "Texas Longhorn." In reality the Texas Longhorn would more accurately be called the "Spanish American Vaquero Long Horn." Since the 1800's the Long Horn cow has been further developed to an even larger body and horn size. Corriente cattle, the original cattle brought to the New World in 1494 and New Mexico in 1598 almost completely disappeared after the railroad eliminated the need for hardy cattle drive breeds. In Baja California it is referred to as Chinampo. In some parts of Mexico the term Criollo is used referring to the descendants of the one time largest cattle raising enterprise in the New World the Franciscan missions of the 1500's Fray Geronimo de Zarate Salmeron. Horn & Wallace Publishers, 1966. New world Catholic priests did not take vows of poverty. Historic archives show priests in the states including New Mexico, (Belen & Tome areas) who became wealthy operating large livestock enterprises. The Spanish Corriente cattle and horse were introduced to Saint Augustine, Florida in 1565 but the cattle did not fare well. The few remaining cousins of these cattle have since adapted and are called, "Piney Woods, Native, Scrub, or Cracker" cattle. Rodero – "the introduction of livestock from other points of Spain it is obvious after the end of the XVII Century. For this reason, we admit that the Criollo Cattle is not a Breed, even though has a common origin in Spain and Portugal although lacking a very heterogeneous pool of genes. According to Serrera (1977) a great part of the criolla breeds of cattle that originated in Mexico during the colonial period in a greater or lesser degree formed a part of a primitive common trunk of cattle, the Retinto breed or the Guadalquivir breed, brought over by the Spanish in the first decades of the colonization of the territory. We are in accordance with Primo (1990) in his opinion that the ancestors of the New World cattle were Andalusian animals shipped from the Canary Islands and with De Alba (1987) who thinks that the Tropical Criollo have their origins in animals from Andalusia and the Canaries. The similarities found by Rouse (1977) are known between the Criollo Cows



and the Andalusian Retinta and Berrendas breeds. Finally, we coincide with Tudela (1987) in his opinion about the caprine livestock in the New World; they had a wonderful adaptation and dispersion on this continent, populating hot and cold areas, and sometimes becoming wild. All of them must have come from the Canaries, from Andalusia, and other populations from Cabo Verde and Guinea. The similarities between the present American breeds and the occidental population is still evident at the present time.”

The first English speaking settlers in the Mexican province of Tejas, (Texas), arrived in the year 1821 lead by a man named Steve F. Austin. They relinquished their U.S. citizenship swearing allegiance to the new government of Mexico to become citizens of Mexico, the first English speaking Mexicans. Texas was a completely foreign environment for them. Free ranging Corriente Long Horn cattle were so abundant that the new Anglo settlers needed only throw a rope and register a brand to become a cattleman. Anglo Texans took cowboy lessons from the Mexican ranchers/vaqueros who had been developing the sheep and cattle ranching industry for three hundred years, or by apprenticing to seasoned vaqueros as wranglers until they learned the "ropes." An avid student of the cowboy and ranching life, Austin and many other Mexican converts and eventually Texans "to be" learned, and borrowed everything Mexican from their Vaquero teachers, the methods of working cows, the vaquero clothes, music, language, even his registered brand bears a striking resemblance to the Christian crosses brand of Hernan Cortez, click on [2nd Brands Figure](#) for Cortez brands, and [U.S. Brands, Figure 2-B](#) for U.S. Brands. Ranching spread throughout the U.S. Great Plains between 1865 & 1880. In 1868 construction on the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe railroad began in the south aimed at the west coast. Anglo settlers began establishing successful ranchos of their own. By 1869, Texans drove more than 300,000 head to the railhead in Abilene, Kansas for sale and shipment to their meat hungry families in the eastern U.S.A. In contrast, on the Eastern Seaboard of the U.S. in areas like Virginia by 1784, cattle from Virginia in small numbers, (less than 100 at a time) were being driven into the Ohio Valley for summer grazing. Mounted herdsmen were virtually unknown compared to the system of using numbers of trained dogs more commonly applied to manage the cattle. Davy Crockett wrote in his autobiography that he took a herd of cattle 400 miles, afoot, across the mountains of Tennessee into Virginia. In 1850 the English Thoroughbred was introduced to the U.S. Although superior in speed to the Spanish pony, it was not intelligent enough to work cattle.

### **Cowboy Heraldry - Brands**

Within ten years of the introduction of livestock to the North American continent by the Spanish in 1519, there was such an abundance of live stock that it became necessary to organize the first cowboy stockmen's association or "Mesta" on June 16,



1529. The Mesta, (cowboy/sheepmen's or stockmen's association), required that all ranchers register their brands in books kept in Mexico City. Click on [1st Brands Figure, 2-A, Brands MMM, pg 24, The American Cowboy, pg 139](#). The first brand used in the Americas, was the three Christian Crosses of Hernan Cortes. Some sources claim his was also the brand of the largest sheep and cattle ranch in history. However, other sources say that Don Luis Terrazas was the largest ranch in the world covering the greater part of the state of Chihuahua, Mexico. Click on [2nd Brands Figure](#) for both Terrazas and Cortez brands (and others). Terrazas used to claim that given a month he could deliver then thousand head of cattle of any particular color, gender, or age. The system of brands and brand registration was three-fold. First, the fierro or iron brand was burned into the animal's flank hide, second was the senal or ear-mark. Lastly, the venta or sale brand was stamped on the animal's shoulder as a bill of sale. The new brand was burned below the venta brand and the new transaction was recorded. Some of these brands may seem a bit over done considering the price the animal had to pay but they are considerably less elaborate than using half the side of the animal required to place the full coat of arms used on Spanish ranches prior to the time of bringing livestock to the Americas. Great Haciendas and ranchos spread throughout New Spain, which included New Mexico.