Florida Cracker Horse

A Different Breed

When you think about Florida, certain images come to mind: palm trees swaying along glistening beaches, orange groves extending to the horizon. But like many people who visit or live in the state, there may be one missing image. From Miami to Jacksonville, Ocala to Hallandale, and Tampa to Tallahassee, Florida is horse country.

Everywhere around the state Floridians raise, train, and ride horses. Horses are big recreation and big business. Hundreds of miles of public riding trails snake across state lands. Dozens of tracks are home to thoroughbred and harness racing events. Kids learn about horses at riding camps, in 4-H clubs, and as Future Farmers of America. There’s no shortage of polo players or horse shows or riding programs for people with disabilities.

Florida has all kinds of work for all kinds of breeds. You probably recognize many of their names: Arabians, Tennessee Walkers, Morgans, Clydesdales, Quarter Horses, and more. But one horse might have escaped your attention. It’s the Florida Cracker horse, a stock breed that once roamed the state in large numbers but has almost vanished over the last 7 years.

Small and Sturdy

The Cracker horse is smaller than most other stock breeds. Horse size is measured in “hands”—the distance from the ground to the withers, which is the highest point on the horse’s back, just below the neck. A hand is four inches or 10.2 centimeters.

While the giant Clydesdale can measure 18 hands (about 72 inches), an average Cracker horse stands only about 13.5 hands. The Clydesdale can weigh up to 2,000 pounds, while a mature Cracker horse weighs about 800 to 900 pounds.

The Cracker horse has a small head, wide set eyes, crescent shaped nostrils, and a tapered muzzle. Its narrow chest and short back make it ideal for carrying a lot of weight over long distances. Cracker horses are legendary for their strength and endurance, their herding instinct, and their quickness.
Dear Florida Explorer:

Are you tired of running out of things to do? Do you find yourself saying, “Mom, I’m bored,” a lot? Would you like to have lots of action—that doesn’t involve a video game—at your fingertips? If you answered yes, your humdrum world is about to change. I’d like to introduce you to a brand new magazine just for kids in Florida. This magazine is all about fun activities in your backyard, your neighborhood, your city, and your state. Need a good place for a camping trip? A quiet spot for freshwater fishing? A new swimming hole? Florida Explorer Magazine has all this and more.

Unlike other publications, Florida Explorer Magazine helps you find ways to explore what you live with every day. Subscribe to Florida Explorer Magazine, and each month you’ll learn all about Florida’s rich history, like

- How the United States acquired Florida from Spain.
- How the Seminole Indians coped with mosquitoes.
- Where you can go to live the life of an 1870 Cracker cattle hunter.
- Why the Timucuan Indians built a mound of snail shells.
- Where you can go to “school” to learn how to be a Revolutionary war soldier.
- Why NASA chose Cape Canaveral for the space center.

Each issue of Florida Explorer Magazine is full of exciting news, lively features, and spectacular photography of the Florida we live in. From our April feature on Apalachicola River camping to our June article on the Florida Mummy, each issue brings you pictures, interviews, and profiles of the people and places that make Florida a great place to live.

Not ready to plunk down your money yet?

That’s O.K. we’ll send you a free copy to review. In fact, we’re so sure you’ll love Florida Explorer Magazine, we’ll also send you: 1. A free copy of the Florida Explorer guide to the springs of Florida, including information on the history, facilities, and wildlife of each spring. 2. A foldout map of the counties of Florida, featuring local attractions, 3. A one-year pass to the state parks of Florida, good for cost of admission and parking.

Why are we making such a generous offer? Because we’re sure Florida Explorer Magazine is something you will not want to miss.