

Grunden Ranch Morgans
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For those in the Morgan horse industry, Grunch Ranch Morgans is a house name. However, it took many years of careful breeding to create such a reputation.

The ranch was started in 1969 by Harvey Grunden. He concentrated the breeding program by using Flyhawk. "Flyhawk was well known as one of the greatest sires of the Morgan breed – he sired many great Morgans and his influence is still seen in many breeding programs who seek his big, ground-covering trot, dense bone, toughness and athleticism," according to Sport Morgan Breeders Ltd.

The other stallion's bloodlines that are concentrated in the herd are those of Jubilee King. According to Sport Morgan Breeders Ltd., "Jubilee King was a big golden chestnut with flaxen mane and tail. He was rich in the blood of Daniel Lambert and is remembered for his superb style and his highly carried tail. His naturally high carried head was topped with tiny ears and gentle eyes. These characteristics as well as his springy step and big, wide-open trot are found in his descendants through many generations."

The ranch is now owned and operated by Harvey's son Harlan and his wife Tammy. Harlan is the 3rd generation on the ranch, located in Curtis, Neb. They still strive to breed high quality Morgans, and have kept the ancient bloodlines alive.

"The Morgan disposition is superb. They have a nice, easy, smooth ride, which intrigued us. Since Dad brought home the first Morgan in 1969, we have been hooked. We have realized this will be a part of our life forever," said Harlan Grunden.

The Grundens currently have 82 horses, which consist of 3 standing stallions, brood mares, and young horses. "We have a lot of young horses who are not in production this year. We also had 16 foals born this last year," he said.

The horses the Grunden's own are the foundation horses for many other breeders across the country.

"We constantly breed for strong bone, straight legs, and good confirmation. Since our horses are on free range, they have common sense bred into them. They know how to negotiate hills, tree branches slapping them and know what deer, turkeys and other wildlife is," said Harlan Grunden.

The Grundens still use the concentrated Flyhawk genetics, because of his consistency. Born in 1926, Flyhawk was very popular in his time because he had a lot of characteristics that people really liked. He had a long reaching, extended ground covering trot which he was famous for, according to Grunden.

Harlan believes in breeding consistent horses, rather than chasing fads. "A breeder in Kansas told my Dad not to chase fads, because people will always come back to the foundation. That's what we have done. We want to breed good quality horses with good confirmation and a sound mind," he said.

The Grunden's have sold horses to twenty-six states and Canada. One of the main things they breed for is disposition. "Good disposition is the utmost importance. You need to have a kind, gentle horse to make you want to be a part of their life. This is enhanced even more by our special attention they get from imprinting and halter breaking at a very young age (birth to two weeks)," said Grunden.

They have also sold foundation horses internationally. In 1979, the Grundens sold a stallion named Funquest Meddler to a gentleman in Germany. That was the first Morgan horse that was introduced into the country.

“We had the very first Morgan that set foot on German soil. The gentleman we sold the stallion to worked for the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, and was over in Germany promoting U.S. products. He had to start his own Morgan Horses Association in Germany, just to be able to bring the stallion over,” said Grundens.

There are still Morgans in Germany, and they work with the American Morgan Horse Association to double register horses that are in Germany.

The Funquest line is another line that the Grundens own. They picked up a lot of animals when the herd was dispersed in the 1980s. “I am one of the largest breeders who has the most concentrated Funquest herd. I don’t know of anyone else who has that many pure Funquest horses,” he said.

Funquest Farms was one of the major developers of the Morgan breed. “Steward Hazard had a plan and a goal in mind. He always bred to compliment. He was quite a developer of the Morgan horse for refinement, and structural correctness,” said Grundens.

This foundation has allowed the Grundens to consistently produce high quality animals. The horses that the Grundens sell are used for a variety of different disciplines, from western to English, and from trail classes to driving. They are also used as a cow horse, as well as buggy horses for the Amish.

He said, “The first thing a person sees is the head. If this horse has a good head with a big and gentle eye, you will automatically continue to look and like what you see. Remember, it costs just as much in feed to care for a good horse as it does a poor headed and confirmation horse.”

The Grundens are also very active in the show ring, and breed horses for competition. They have had horses compete internationally at the Combined Driving Events, and they have won. They have also been exhibited in Western, English, Pleasure Driving and Carriage classes.

“We show in three or four local classes a year, and then we also show at the Nebraska State Fair, as well as Nationals. Since the Morgan horses started showing at the state fair in the early 1970s, I am the only member who has never missed a fair. I show in Western pleasure, a Western class and a driving class,” said Grundens.

Harlan has help in showing from his two children, Megan and Hance. Both children started showing in the lead-line class at the age of 18 months. This past year, Megan show RG Regency Chester, a gelding she was given when she turned eight, at the Grand National Morgan Show. The pair was World Champion English Trail, National Champion Western Trail Open, National Champion English Trail Amateur, National Champion Western Trail Amateur and Reserve National Champion English Trail Open. They also finished third in Western Trail and Versatile Morgan.

In addition to the horse operation, the Grundens also operate a 350 head commercial Angus cross cow/calf operation. The cattle graze on corn stalks in the winter months, and on pasture the rest of the year.

However, the horses operation is where his real passion lies, and Harlan hopes to continue to breed high quality Morgans. “I want to continue to breed the common sense type Morgan horse, and continue to concentrate and preserve the old lines,” he said.