

WORLD BREEDS AND A DYING TRADE

An unusual trend is beginning to emerge in the horses and ponies brought into our care. There are foreign breeds turning up as casualties all over the country, where in previous years, we would only have encountered them around the South coast ports. Some of the European horse breed societies operate strict grading schemes, whereby only the very best animals can be registered as pure bred. This results in a surplus of second grade animals, which sometimes finds its way overseas.

In 2009 we saw Dutch Hackneys, Haflingers, Norwegian Fjord ponies and Friesians, not to mention one or two which we failed to identify, even with the assistance of Google! Thanks to the grading schemes, some of these breeds are very distinctive. The Haflingers are a lovely colour, somewhere between chestnut and palomino and Norwegian

Fjords are always dun with badger striped manes and tails. Both of these breeds are strong and hardy; they live out and make sensible ride and drive ponies.

The Friesian breed has provided an interesting project for the East Region. Friesians are black warmblood horses which stand around sixteen hands high. One Friesian horse looks very like another, they are strong with a kind temperament and ideal as carriage horses. Friesians move smartly and cover the ground, but will stand patiently for long periods when required. When one prosecution resulted in six of them being signed over into our care, there was no difficulty in rehoming them. There were three young geldings and three older mares – they have gone to two different homes where they will be used as funeral horses.

The tradition of using horses to carry the dead has never quite



Friesian

gone out of fashion in this country. Even during the nineteen sixties and seventies, when motorised transport had completely taken over from the horse, there were still several funeral directors who kept pairs of black horses. There is nothing quite as imposing as a horse drawn funeral and in the twenty first century, it is more popular than ever.

To run a horse drawn hearse, a

job master needs three horses - a pair and a spare – so our groups of rescued ones just fitted the bill. Our two adopters are thrilled with their rehomed horses and the horses themselves will be cared for in the lap of luxury. A funeral horse's work is slow and steady, and our rescued Friesians should enjoy a long and useful life, doing the job for which they were designed.



Norwegian Fjords



Haflinger

Equine Rehoming in Wales has become a successful process thanks to the support and foresight of the Wales Board. This newsletter will endeavour to keep the Board, and our wider supporters, in touch with problems and successes during the equine year. Any enquiries regarding equine rehoming should be made via the rehoming officer, Sally Learoyd. Sally can be contacted by e-mail; her dedicated e-mail address on behalf of RSPCA Cymru Wales is slearoyd@rspca.org.uk or via the website at www.rspca.org.uk/horsesandponies