

ELUSIVE SPIRITS!

Feathered Gold Stables
Gypsy Vanner Horses
By Ruth Johnson, Editor
Photos by Denise Krause





Gaze deep into the eyes of a Gypsy Vanner Horse and behold the mysterious legacy of the wandering roots locked within their memories, drifting in their very souls.

Nomadic European Gypsy tribes developed these uniquely rare steeds over the centuries, under a veil of secrecy so extreme, they were not officially discovered, recognized and registered as their own unique and truly majestic breed until after 1996.

Persecuted in Europe for centuries, Gypsies are a secretive society of peoples never really assimilating with cultures they encounter.

They communicate family history and information verbally rather than in a written format to provide further protection.

Gypsy Vanners horse breeding originated from the Gypsies' need for a smaller yet strong, hardy horse capable of pulling their richly ornate 'Vardo' caravan living wagons, which weighed up to 5,000 pounds (representing the family's entire possessions).

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Opposite Page: Denise Krause, owner of [Feathered Gold Stables](#), develops Photoshopped representations of various seasons and holidays for her Gypsy Vanner horse fans. This Halloween version shows Janessa Lepak on Buck. **Above:** Denise Krause on her stallion, Diesel of Feathered Gold, at the 2013 Gypsy Vanner Horse Society Evaluations, Harriman, TN. **Middle:** Like all Gypsy Vanners, when Feathered Gold Lady Romance aka 'Flirt.' runs, her showy foot feathers and full, rich mane and tails reveal their true glory. **Bottom:** Denise's foals like Feathered Gold Promise, shown here, are exuberantly lively, even on a wintry day.





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HERITAGE

These magnificent creatures were strictly developed not just for strength through greater bone density but also specific coloration, spectacular beauty, intelligence and friendly temperament.

An amazing mixture drawn from the bloodlines of Shires, Clydesdales, Dells and Fell Ponies (DNA proven), ethereal Gypsy Vanner horses are easily recognized by long, flowing manes and tails and signature lower leg feather.

When they run, they are pure poetry in motion, a spectacular delight, exhibiting beautifully fluid gait and movement.

They are also excellent at dressage, competitive jumping, English or Western riding and, of course, driving.

Their incredibly sturdy broad build and pronounced muscle tone derived from draft breed traits, produces incredible stamina and durability.

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Above: Gypsy Vanner mares are touchingly gentle, inspiring mothers. Castleknolls Bella Notte, shown here, is a typical example of how they continually strengthen motherhood's bond while simultaneously providing superior parenting for foals like Spring Promise. **Middle:** Novel is a beautiful study in 'yin-yang' coloration. Gypsy Vanners exhibit a full range of 'piebald' colorations. **Bottom:** Seraphim watches her new foal Silver Angel's innocently delightful fascination with an emerging snowfall.





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Fans love these extremely agile horses for what their traits embody - freedom, spirit, perseverance, adventure and mystical enchantment.

They are gentle, loyal and fierce friends, exuberant performers and the ultimate travel companions.

The Gypsy Vanner's magnificent face and loving eyes convey its kind, gentle, alert and intelligent spirit. Prominently placed on the sides of the head, the eyes maximize peripheral and forward binocular vision, perfect for wagon pulling.

INSIGHT

It was not until 1996 that the first Gypsy Vanner horse was imported into the United States. There are now 3,205 Gypsy Vanner Horses registered with the Gypsy Vanner Horse Society in the United States, a small number when you consider there are over 120,044 horses in Wisconsin alone*.

I first became aware of the Gypsy Vanner horses while serving previously as Editor for Neighbor's magazine.

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Above: A stirring, "posterized" version of winter features Kimberly Casey on Henry of Feathered Gold. **Middle:** Denise Krause, holds stallion Mickey Finn on a beautifully Photoshopped representation of Spring. **Bottom:** Kimberly Casey poses with Jackpot for a quick photo before a refreshing Fall ride.

(*According to the National AG Statistics Service of the USDA, February 2008.)





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I wanted an article featuring animals and a friend told me some [Feathered Gold Stables](#) in Ogdensburg raised an unusual breed. I contacted owner, Denise Krause, and arranged for a visit.

Nothing could have prepared me for these horses' absolute beauty as well as their extremely docile disposition. They act more like affectionate pet dogs rather than horses.

Their smooth, powerful gait belied their unexpected playfulness and easy grace.

I marveled at their silky smooth skin with flowing manes, tails and leg feather flowing iridescently as they cantered in the warm, winter sun.

I felt I was glimpsing elusive forest creatures perhaps straight from some medieval fairytale.

Denise, a professional breeder and equestrian, caught her first glimpse of these gorgeous horses online, "Initially drawn to their magnificent attractiveness, I was quickly even more captivated with their incredibly compliant nature, intelligence and vigorous athleticism. I decided we needed one so we purchased our first Gypsy Vanner, Feathered Gold Moe."

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Above (left to right): Beautifully clothed in Gypsy-style attire, Joy Price, Kimberly Casey, Tracy Wildenberg and Justin Krause parade down the entryway towards one of their 2013 Midwest Horse Fair appearances. **Middle:** Emily Hermes on Paddy's Dream displays the Gypsy Vanner's full beauty at the 2013 Midwestern Rodeo Parade, Manawa, WI. **Bottom:** Kimberly Casey on Paddy's Dream, models her stunning gypsy costume at the 2013 Vilas County Fair.





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BUSINESS SENSE

Denise owns and manages [Feathered Gold Stables](#) with her husband, Derek. Their son, Justin, assists with the operation, particularly in the area of foal training.

Following the first article on Feathered Gold Stables in Neighbors March 2011 premiere issue, Neighbors showcased Feathered Gold Stables in their March 2012 Anniversary issue.

Denise became one of Neighbors' contributing writers and was published in several leading equine magazines.

At the time of the March 2011 Feathered Gold Stables article, Feathered Gold Stables had about 6,000 [Facebook fans](#).

Due to Denise's extensive marketing skills and stellar reputation as a breeder/trainer of the highest quality Gypsy Vanner foals, Denise's Facebook page now has 57,558 fans, far more than most regional businesses.

Today, Denise has waiting lists for adopting her newborn foals.

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Above (left to right): Jill Rodgers is riding Feathered Gold Tadgh aka Tiny, Justin Krause on Kree, Kimberly Casey on Paddy's Dream, Janessa Lepak on SR Just Bucking Around aka "Buck" as they present traditionally ornate gypsy style at the 2013 Vilas County Fair.

Middle: [Nighthawk of Feathered Gold](#) majestically demonstrates his full glory at the 2013 Gypsy Vanner Horse Society Evaluations, Harriman, TN. **Bottom:** Gypsy Vanners were bred for gentleness. They often helped 'babysit' the gypsy children at night while their parents gathered around the campfire. They are quite adaptable to young riders like Jenna Kukanich, riding Henry of Feathered Gold at the 2013 Vilas County Fair.





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Denise, Derek, Justin and their trainer team strive diligently to educate the public about Gypsy Vanners by participating in shows, parades, expos and educational seminars. Often, they are the first Gypsy Vanners to compete in equine events.

Over the years, 63 foals have been born at [Feathered Gold Stables](#) with 12 more foals due beginning Spring 2014. Their numbers range in size, depending on the time of the year, between 30 and 45 horses.

FOR LOVE OF FOAL

The Krauses all love their foals, treating them almost as family pets and find it quite difficult to part with them as they journey to their new 'forever' homes.

Denise explains, "We want our horses to do well in their new homes. We do not sell in utero because we prefer to fit each horse with the right buyer."

"Our buyers come from all lifestyles, age groups and rider types," she continues. "77% of our clients purchase more than one Gypsy Vanner horse from us. Two clients each, purchased five horses from us over a three-year span."

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Above: Relatively new to the show circuit, Gypsy Vanners, bred for easy training and performing abilities, are a natural contender, even against established show breeds. Courtney Casey readies Diesel of Feathered Gold for required judging paces. **Middle:** Denise Krause's husband, Derek, co-owner of [Feathered Gold Stables](#), is a very active show participant, as shown here with Mickey Finn. **Bottom:** Jill Rodgers on Feathered Gold Tadhg loves the breed's mellow disposition, flowing beauty and steady gait



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2013 HIGHLIGHTS

According to Denise, "We focused this past year on sharing the breed with the public as much as possible through public events like County fairs, demonstrations and parades, aimed at educating potential owners and fans regarding the benefits of the breed."

- *Wisconsin Natural Resources* Magazine feature article.
- Ten foals (seven fillies, 3 colts) born from March 20-June 6.
- Midwest Horse Fair, April 19-21.
- Midwestern Rodeo Parade, Manawa, WI, July 6.
- The Sisters of Fraternite Notre Dame from Chicago visited [Feathered Gold Stables](#) on July 31 to create a Feathered Gold Gypsy horses' film for a special TV event, presented on the Sisters' Chicago Access Network Television cable channel and webcasted to the Order in France.
- Wisconsin State Fair - first appearance ever. They were hired to appear in the Fair's Agstravaganza Exhibit, August 3-5.
- Vilas County Fair Breed Demo, Educational Seminar, Eagle River, WI, August 10.
- Diesel of Feathered Gold and Nighthawk of Feathered Gold competed with Denise in GVHS Evaluations, Harriman, TN.

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Above: Justin Krause personally cares and coaches for the new foals, grooming them for future 'forever' homes. Here he cuddles with Feathered Gold Silver Angel while Feathered Gold Turbo Charged nudges him from behind. **Middle:** The Sisters of Fraternite Notre Dame from Chicago filmed Feathered Gold Stables' Gypsy Vanner horses this past July for a special TV event presented on *Fraternite Notre Dame's* Chicago Access Network Television cable channel. **Bottom:** Picasso of Feathered Gold has distinctive markings and coloration that are quite popular with potential Gypsy Vanner owners.



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WORLD IN A WAGON

No article about the Gypsy Vanner horses would be complete without a few words about the Gypsy Vardo wagons, for which they were bred to pull.

Prized for practicality merged with exquisite beauty, the vardo's design includes large wheels set outside the body, with outwardly sloping sides and varying roof styles.

Painted in brilliant, jewel-tones, the intricately hand carved woodwork was often accented with gold leaf sheathing.

Living accommodations normally included cast-iron stoves built-in seats, cabinets, wardrobes, bunks, storage areas and a glass-fronted china cabinet.

In closing, Denise relates her commitment to the highest degrees of quality. "We handpick our mares and stallions for pedigree, conformation to breed standards and pleasant disposition, traits fully reflected in their offspring. That is why we have such a high percentage of referrals." 

Left: The [Gordon Boswell Romany Museum](#) in England exhibits the largest public display of Romani Gypsy history with special emphasis on their elaborate Vardos lovingly restored to their full glory as shown here. [Click here](#) and go to Page 11 for more photos of Vardos.



Imagine owning your own Gypsy Vanner...

*Enjoy their beauty
and grace in the ring
and at home!*



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