



*Home of the Missouri Fox Trotter*

# *Cowboy Rolls-Royce*

THE MISSOURI FOXTROTTER



MEMBER OF THE MISSOURI FOX TROTTING HORSE BREED ASSOCIATION  
AND EUROPEAN MISSOURI FOX TROTTING HORSE ASSOCIATION E.V.



## The Missouri Fox Trotting Horse is the “smooth riding” horse-breed, whose ancestry began in the Ozark Mountains of Missouri and Arkansas.

**It has been officially designated as the State Horse of Missouri and is often referred to as the World’s #1 trail horse.**

The Fox Trotting Horse – a horse like any other – is that so? It is true, that they eat grain, like to be on a pasture and love freedom like all other horses. So what is special about this smooth gaited breed, that has its roots in the Ozark Mountains?

### **The History and Purpose:**

The Fox Trotting Horse, like all other horse breeds in the United States, is descended from European stock. The Spanish brought the first horses to America; later, the English and other Europeans imported their breeds. In 1824 the Fox Trotting Horse was mentioned for the first time as “the horse with the special gait”. The history of gaited horses dates back to medieval times, and in fact they were more widely spread than 3-gait horses. They were called Zelter. Most gaited horses have a lateral 4-beat gait, contrary to Fox Trotting Horses, which have a diagonal 4-beat gait, the Fox Trot. The other gaited breeds all have a different name for their lateral 4-beat gaits.

The origin of the Fox Trotting Horse is in the South of Missouri and the North of Arkansas. There the early settlers in the Ozark Mountains started breeding this horse with the “broken gait”, the Fox Trot. In those days, the horse was the primary mode of transportation, whether as a riding horse or pulling a buggy. For breeding purposes the most important aspect was efficiency and practical value. The conformation was designed to guarantee the desired efficiency. In the 19th century it was an advantage to own a horse, easy to ride, with the capability to climb hills and cover long distances efficiently. The horses had to be sure-footed, fast and possess remarkable endurance. Back then, your life could depend on owning a good Horse. It was soon discovered, horses with the broken diagonal

- ① The MFT as a ride – and packhorse
- ② The MFT at full gallop crossing a river
- ③ „Charisma“ jumping over fallen trees
- ④ The MFT on a buggy- fun for everyone



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gait were better, faster and more sure-footed in difficult and rocky terrain. The Fox Trotters were also considered ideal ranch horses, because of their ability to work with cattle. Because of their very comfortable and soft gait, their friendly and honest character, their endurance, sure footedness and mobility they soon became "the horse" for ranchers, sheriffs, doctors and preachers.

Today, as well as historically, many ranchers in the United States, who raise cattle in mountainous terrain prefer the Fox Trotting Horse as their ranch horse. Endurance and comfort gave the Fox Trotter the nickname "Cowboy Rolls-Royce" or "Cowboy Cadillac". This breed offers a great deal for many people, there are some Fox Trotters successfully competing as jumping horses, some are competing in Dressage, and others are being used as carriage horses. The "Cowboy Rolls-Royce" of the Amish people in Missouri is still used to pull a buggy and at the same time acts as a working horse in all sections of the farm. The efficiency of this horse in difficult terrain is undisputed and cannot be achieved by other breeds. Whether being ridden in the Rocky Mountains, on a trail through the Grand Canyon, crossing deep rivers or completing an endurance ride with a low pulse rate, the Fox Trotter accomplishes it all in a comfortable, fast and sure-footed manner. What other horse breed can offer such qualities? Only a mule can follow a Fox Trotter on such distances, but is not as fast or comfortable.

In 2003 a group of 10 European riders crossed the Grand Canyon from the North to the South Rim on the Kaibab Trail, all were riding Fox Trotting Horses from the Miller-Ranch in Arizona. This was the first time, that this trail, normally used by mules only, was opened to horses. A permit for this trail ride had to be obtained from the U.S. Forest Service. The strength of this breed becomes apparent in open country with sure-footedness, endurance, being thrifty and companionable with a healthy drive to move forward. These are all good reasons, why the U.S. Forest Service since the 1960's has preferred the Fox Trotter as riding and pack-horses. When other horses cannot go any further, nor wish to go where asked, the Fox Trotter amply demonstrates its incredible abilities. To this day these essential characteristics are preserved in the breed. The Fox Trotter is a mountain horse breed.



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- 5 A ditch is no problem for "Velvet's Aladin M.R."
- 6 ...neither a wall
- 7 With a MFT on the trail-safe & comfortable
- 8 Up and downhill, easy for "GMC Black Velvet"



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Mountain horses, unlike desert horses do not immediately flee when danger lurks. A desert horse knows, he has 360 degrees of free space, either desert or prairie in which to navigate. Mountain horses, like donkeys, which live in the mountains, often have only a narrow trail. A blind run can mean sure death for a mountain horse. This fact is the foundation for the development of the Fox Trotting horse.

For these reasons, the Fox Trotter is the ultimate horse for a leisure rider. It is an economical horse with minimal requirements for maintenance and is a sure-footed trail horse. Pleasure riders appreciate, that a Fox Trotter does not become tense or panic if something unusual confronts him.

## The Fox Trotter's Gaits

The Fox Trot distinguishes the breed and gave it its name. This signature gait simulates the specific motion, necessary to navigate rocky and treacherous terrain. Contrary to gaits of other breeds, which demand much upward knee action, the Fox Trot has low knee action and is an efficient gait. Each movement and expenditure of energy serves to efficiently cover distance. This gives the horse endurance and makes it possible to cover long distances with speed, without exhibiting fatigue. The rider enjoys a smooth comfortable ride, due to the flat broken gait and is still comfortable in the saddle, even after an extended ride. The Fox Trot is best described as a broken trot. Closely examined, the horses walk with the front legs and trot with the hind legs.

In addition to the Fox Trot, the Fox Trotter has a fast and ground covering flat walk (Flat Foot Walk) and a very comfortable 3-beat lope and Show canter.

## The Old-timer

The modern Fox Trotter is much faster than an "Old-timer". One hears the name "Old-timer" more often than it actually exists. A Fox Trotter is often described as an "Oldtimer", if it is not performing the desired rhythm and stride, because clearly it does not conform to the current breed standards.

Each newcomer to the world of the Fox Trotters, who wants

- 9 The MFT is born with surefootedness
- 10 "Arizona's Jumping Lady M.R." shows her talent
- 11 The MFT on a trail pattern
- 12 The MFT as working Cowhorse



to buy a “Cowboy Rolls-Royce”, should ride several Fox Trotting Horses, to get an idea of how much this breed has to offer. One should try by all means possible, to ride an excellent specimen of the breed, to get the feeling of what should be expected and what are acceptable variances in the gaits.

All Fox Trotters are friendly and companionable; the breed is known for this. But where the gait is concerned, there is a wide range of acceptable variations. One often hears in the world of horses, that the most important aspect of a horse is the gait. Is that so? But how do you obtain and control the gait? Without a good intelligent mind, the best gait is useless, and the best mind is useless without a good gait. Therefore, there are two things, a rider needs in his horse if he wants to have real fun: a good intelligent mind and good legs.

## The Conformation

The Missouri Fox Trotter is one of the most beautiful horses living today. During breeding of the modern Fox Trotter, attention has been focused on performance and practical value, but has also been oriented to beauty, charm and charisma. A Fox Trotter should not only elate with performance and versatility, but also, with charm, character and a pleasing appearance; it should look beautiful. The height should be between 14 and 16 hands and the weight should be adequate for its bone structure.

The ideal Fox Trotter has a square body form with long angular shoulders, sloped between 45-50 degrees; a short back; a long and angular croup; and withers, reaching into the back. It also should have a large deep chest, legs that are not too long and strong muscles. The hooves must be hard and well-formed and of an adequate size in balance with the overall appearance. The head should be fine, intelligent looking and tapered at the muzzle; the ears small and well shaped; eyes should be large, shiny and good tempered. The slight elevation of head and tail offer a delicate and elegant appearance. The ideal Fox Trotter demonstrates with his whole body the rhythm of its gait. The head should nod slightly with the rhythm of the gait; the ears may also reflect the rhythm of the horse's gait. All colors and markings are acceptable.



13 The MFT offspring awake and attentive

14 “Velvet’s Charisma M.R.” beautiful and elegant

15 “Velvet’s Cheyenne M.R.” pretty, versatile and powerful

16 Two WGC, father & son, “GMC Black Velvet & Velvet’s Aladin M.R.”

# The Missouri Fox Trotters' gaits

## 1. Fox Trot (breed goal)

The Fox Trot is a diagonal 4-beat gait. The Fox Trot is a stylish gait; the horse walks in an elegant manner with the front legs and trots with the hind legs. This rhythmic motion travels through the whole body from nose to tail. The front legs should not show any high knee action. The hind legs should perform a sliding movement, during which the hind hoof steps into or over the track of the front hoof. The head should be slightly elevated and convey the rhythmic motion of the hind legs. The tail is to be carried in a naturally elevated manner and should also move in rhythm with the gait. The gait should be flat, in good rhythm and must be consistent over distance.

## 2. Flat Foot Walk (breed goal)

The Flat Foot Walk is a 4- gait in lateral step sequence. The track of the hind hoof should over stride the track of the front hoof. When executed correctly, one can hear the steady equal four beat cadence of the hooves. The up and down motion of the head in the walk is stronger than during a Fox Trot. The gait should be flat consistent over distance.

## 3. Canter/Lope (breed goal)

The Canter is a rhythmic 3-beat collected gait. The definition "Canter" and "Lope" are interchangeable. The canter of the Fox Trotter should be rhythmic, ground covering and of moderate speed. It is similar to the lope of a Western Horse and should have a slightly rolling motion. The horse should appear relaxed and move freely on a light rein.

## Show Canter (required during Performance test, in Europe beginning with 6-year old horses)

The Show Canter is a rhythmic 3-beat gait. It should be performed collected. The horse should go slowly and composed at rider's hand. The rocking chair motion allows the horse an expressive demonstration of its head as counter balance to the 3-beat gait. The head reaches its highest point, when the outer hind leg hits the ground and the lowest point, when the inner front leg hits the ground. Shown correctly, the Show Canter is not faster than the Flat Foot Walk. Too much elevation in front, failure to maintain forward motion, four beat canter, excessive speed and excessive pumping with the reins are not appropriate.



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17 The MFT with grace, charisma, spirit- always safe no matter where

18 The MFT working as a ranch horse



## Tips for Newcomer

1. You have to appraise your horsemanship skills: experienced, intermediate, or beginner?
2. You have to know what you want: a trail/leisure horse, a distance horse, a horse for shows/tournaments, or a horse for breeding or a combination of these.
3. You have to do extensive research: contact approved breeders with approved offspring and adequate success in shows or the discipline in which you are interested.
4. No matter what kind of Fox Trotter you are looking for, it is important to ride very good or even excellent horses, before making any decision in order to get the unique feeling, that comes with riding a good Fox Trotter.
5. If you have a horse you are interested in, ask for it to be shown in a freestyle riding, at the Flat Foot Walk, Fox Trot and Lope. It is always an advantage to have a video, which allows you to examine the horse later in privacy of your home, before making a decision.
6. Before purchasing a Fox Trotter ,it should be Understood, that the registration papers from the MFTHBA will be provided as well as all information concerning veterinary care history, dental care history, saddle fit, and description of horseshoeing care including hoof angles. Naturally the seller should be willing to provide documentation of vaccination, worming and dental care.
7. Ask the breeder whether his brood mare and/or stallion have an EU-registration-certificate from the EMFTHA and whether his breeding horses have finalized a positive Breeding Suitability Test (ZTU). It is desirable, to have at least one of the parents, registered in the EMFTHA Studbook, Class I, II or III, especially when considering a high quality and high priced Fox Trotter.
8. When you intend to import a Fox Trotter from the USA, ask for a confirmation that this horse was not shown as a 2-year at a show or tournament. Ask for a ZTU or a ZTU conformation pre-purchase appraisal.



19 "Velvet's Black Orchid", foxtrotting in a Model Class

20 The MFT cutting in the show

21 The MFT on an endurance ride, fast and comfortable



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