

Dartagnan's victory lap



- Dartagnan

The 2009 Ontario Friesian Horse Keuring (inspection) was held in Woodstock Aug. 21-22, which was believed to be the largest in North America.

The event was attended by judges, the majority of who come from Friesland (Fryslan) in the Netherlands to participate in the judging of this yearly event.

Two local horses from Bruce Township did exceptionally well. Dartagnan, a three-month-old Friesian colt and Miledy, a five-year-old Friesian mare, both are

owned and loved by Heather Cooper of Freedom Reins Stables.

Dartagnan, in spite of his young age and competing against older foals, was successful in achieving the reserve championship.

Miledy was the only mare in her category of four years old and older to achieve the coveted Ster (Star) status.

Dartagnan won the hearts of many spectators with his independent and confident presence while performing his "victory" lap on his own.

"Both horses performed beyond my expectations. Breeding Friesian horses (on a very small scale indeed) has enriched my life in so many different ways," Cooper said. "These gentle giants, with their quiet and gracious ways, inspire me like nothing else can."

"Friesians are different from other horses, they choose their owners as much as their owners choose them," she added. "If your Friesian falls in love with you, it will be a match made in

heaven. If not, he will never reach his full potential."

Although Friesian beauty is legendary, it is more than skin-deep. The Friesian is considered a willing, honest, active and energetic horse that is also gentle and docile and is therefore suited extremely well to equine-assisted learning.

Is it the majestically arched neck, the dark friendly eye, or is it the long black mane and the long wavy tail that give this animal its aristocratic bearing? In all probability, it's not just one of these elements alone but the sum of the parts that evoke associations with the far-away past when loyalty and virtue were still chivalrous characteristics.

Due to its flashy appearance, the Friesian has become popular in the film industry. The breed owes much of its current popularity to the appearance of the Friesian stallion Goliath in the 1985 film, *Ladyhawke*, which ignited a worldwide interest in these horses.

Films such as *Eragon*, *The Mask of Zorro*, *Alexander*, *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *300* and have also featured Friesian horses.

Submitted by:

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