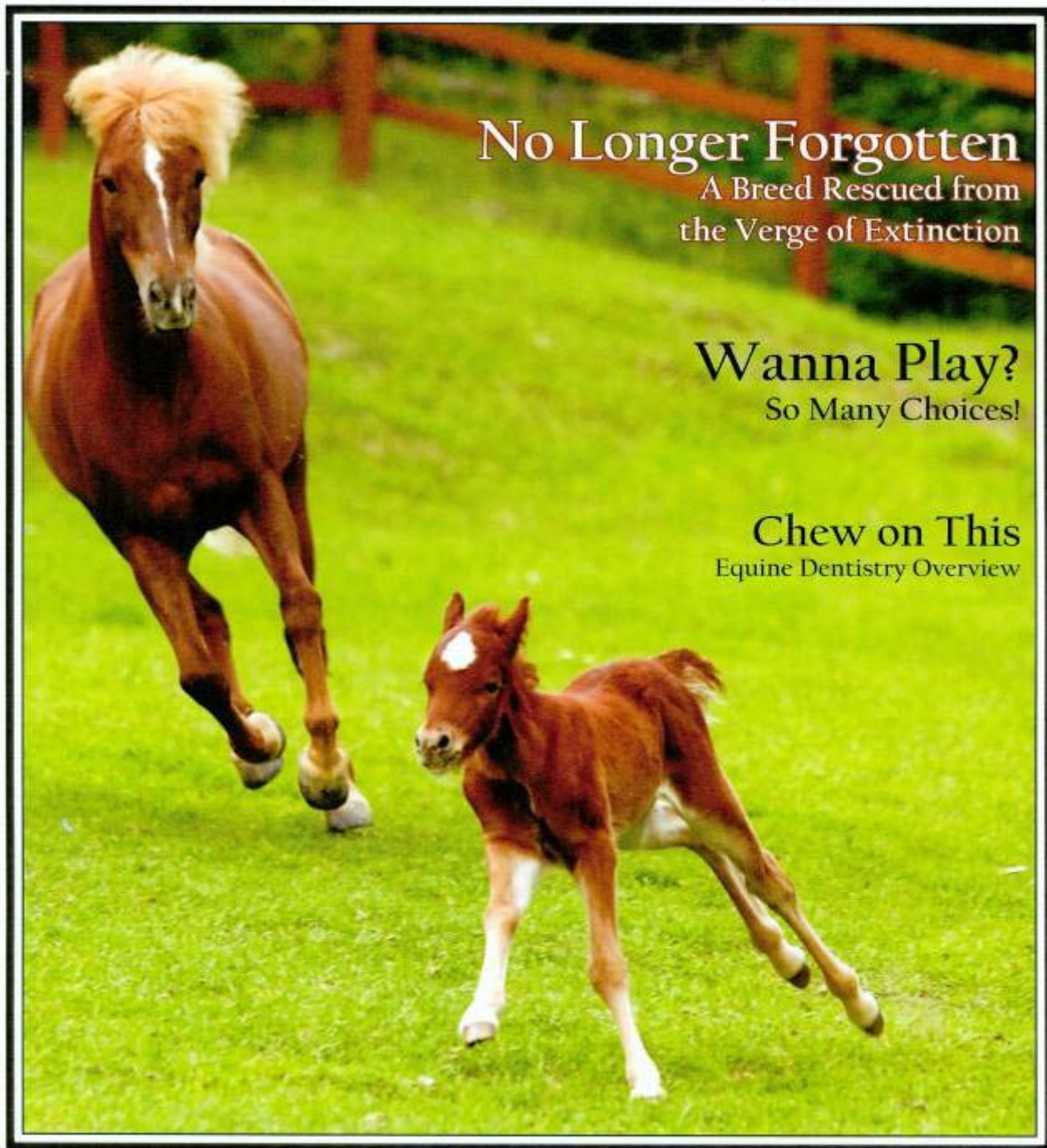


SIZZLIN' SUMMER

NORTHWEST MONTANA
HOOFBEAT
SUMMER 2009 Vol. 1, Issue 2

Complimentary



No Longer Forgotten

A Breed Rescued from
the Verge of Extinction

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Chew on This

Equine Dentistry Overview

TO UNITE AND PROMOTE THE EQUINE COMMUNITY OF NORTHWEST MONTANA

NO LONGER

All foals are special, but few actually make history. RPF Dempsey's Bog Merlin is not only the first Kerry Bog Pony to be born west of the Mississippi, he is also the first foal bred by artificial insemination in the history of the breed. Wait, you say you've never heard of the Kerry Bog Pony? Don't feel too bad, most folks haven't. But it is a pretty interesting story...

For centuries, Kerry Bog ponies were an absolute necessity for villagers living in the deep bogs and wild mountains of Ireland. With panniers full of peat, these lightweight ponies picked their sure-footed ways from bog to village, where they were also used to pull carts or for children to ride. It was a symbiotic relationship until many of the breed were drafted as pack-ponies into the British cavalry during the Napoleonic Wars in the late 18th century. The great Potato Famine in 1845 also contributed to the breed's decline, as many Irish farmers who depended on the ponies either died or emigrated. The increased use of machinery for farming and donkeys for beasts of burden soon sentenced the faithful little ponies to fight on their own for survival in the bogs and mountains, nearly forgotten altogether.

Around 1990 Irishman John Mulvihill was rebuilding a historical Irish village when he realized one of the most impor-



tant historical elements was missing: the pony. He began researching the breed, discovered there were less than 20 of the ponies left, and decided to change history. DNA testing distinguished several unique breed markers, and the effort began to re-establish the breed. There are

now approximately 350 Kerry Bog Ponies in Ireland and the UK, all of whom were results of live cover breeding.

Here's where Montana enters the story! The first Kerry Bog to live west of the Mississippi is stabled in a lovely little barn on Dick and Diane Ward's homey 20-acre hobby farm outside of Whitefish. Last summer, at three years old, Magic went through the process of being artificially inseminated at LaSalle Equine Clinic in Kalispell. This historical event produced beautiful little Merlin, a colt with many "firsts" attached to his life. Expected to grow to be 10-12 hands, Merlin will one day make some child or fairly small adult a wonderful riding companion, or perhaps he will excel at pulling carts and strutting his stuff at driving shows. With such a name, perhaps he can see into his own future, but we at *Hoofbeat* sure hope that whoever becomes the proud owner of this history-making colt lets us know how he's shaping up!

Do you own a horse of an unusual or threatened breed? Let us know - we'd love to share the story with horse owners all over Northwest Montana!



FORGOTTEN

By Andrea Brunz, photos courtesy Round Prairie Farm

Round Prairie Farm

is pleased to announce the arrival of
RPF Dempsey's Bog Merlin,
born on Tuesday, June 16, 2009.



Merlin is a beautiful, fiery-red chestnut colt with a chestnut mane and tail and a white star. Fiery-red also describes his spirit: confident, playful and independent, very much like his mom, TAF Kerry's Midsomer Magic.

Merlin's name connects him to his heritage on two levels. A merlin is a bird that lives in the bogs in Ireland. It stays with the female while she is nesting and helps raise the young. And then with a mom named Magic, well, Merlin seemed like a good choice.

Merlin is very friendly and comes over to the fence or to the door of his stall to be scratched. Magic is trusting of the humans in her life with her newborn. This is her first foal, and she takes very good care of him but also allows the family and visitors to stroke and admire her baby. Magic and Merlin's attitude is one of the many appealing characteristics of the Kerry Bog Ponies.

Merlin's sire, Dempsey Bog (fondly known all over Ireland as the Bogman), was born in County Kerry, Ireland, and is now living in Ohio. He is considered the number one foundation senior Kerry Bog Pony of the breed and was one of seven foundation stallions originally DNA tested by Weatherby's Laboratory of Ireland in the mid 1990's. He was named "Pony of the Millenium" by Ireland's Equestrian magazine. Merlin's maternal grandparents, Kerry Rose and Old Peat, were also born in County Kerry, Ireland.

With Merlin's arrival, there are 29 Kerry Bog Ponies registered with the American Kerry Bog Pony Society, the official breed registry in the United States. A diverse gene pool of these ponies has been established in the U.S. Merlin's birth is an historic event in this rare breed and places Montana in the breed's history book. – Diane Ward

For more information on the
Kerry Bog Pony story, visit
www.roundprairiefarm.com
www.kerrybogpony.org
www.kerrybogpony.ie
or call Dick and Diane Ward at 862-3624