

Fancy
footwork



THE MESSSENGER

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Rare DUTCH

Geni Dowd/The Messenger
Tyler, a gelding at Tanbark Acres,
stands in the paddock.

treat

Local farmer breeds unique horses

By Geni Dowd
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CANA, Va. At the foot of Fancy Gap mountain, there is a winding road lined with white fence, broken by a wrought iron gate. Following the long drive up along the row of massive, whispering pines, in between pastures and by the big white and black barn, you'll find a farm where a wondrous creature lives — the Friesian horse.

Tanbark Acres is owned by Carlton and Dee Everhart, who fell in love with the Friesian in 1998.

"We used to raise American Saddlebreds, Carlton said last week. After he retired from a career in medicine, he and his wife wanted to get back into raising horses, but he felt that the saddlebred was a bit too hotheaded for them. "We were going to the library and looking up breeds when I saw a picture of a Friesian. I had never seen or heard of them before. I thought it was gorgeous and I called Dee over. I said let's raise those.

Developed in Friesland, a small province in The Netherlands, the breed descended from the ancient Equus robustus, a heavy draft horse. Although it is now considered a warmblood, a cross between a "cold-blooded" draft and the "hot-blooded" thoroughbred, the Friesian maintains



Hittje, the Everharts' first broodmare, and Wekke, a weanling, stand in the pasture with Carlton Everhart.

the thick hair and heavier appearance of its forefathers. The Friesians were used by knights as war horses and also as work horses on farms during the Dark Ages.

Friesians were first imported to North America in the 1600s. They were lost on this continent, however, due to crossbreeding. In the early 1800s, the horse was "bred to be lighter and faster in order to accommodate the popular trotting races in Europe,

according to the Friesian Horse Association of North America, but was nearly extinct by the end of World War II because of crossbreeding in Europe and the industrialization of

farm work." With one remaining stallion and a few mares, the association says, "a small group of people from Friesland undertook the challenge to restore the Friesian horse to its original form." The breed wasn't reintroduced to North America again until 1974, when FHANA was formed and began working with Friesch Paarden-Stamboek, the Dutch organization that maintained the breed.

A few months after first learning of Friesians, the Everharts had a two-day layover in Canada and decided to find a local breeder, meet the horses and learn a bit more. It turns out the farm they found belonged to a mem-

ber of the board of the Friesian horse association who encouraged them to visit another, much larger farm as well. So they did.

"We ended up buying a horse from each of those people, Carlton said with a laugh.

"Tanbark Acres covers 350 acres, with barns, paddocks, riding rings and pasture for the horses. They have seven horses, including a weanling that has been sold and will be leaving soon.

"We operate a very small breeding farm and sell the weanlings when they're born," Carlton said. "The Friesian horse registry is the fastest growing registry in America right now. That doesn't mean there are the most horses, just a lot of horses are being registered each year.

That's a big change from where the breed was a few decades ago when many were concerned about its future. A decade ago there were 1,200 Friesians in North America. Now there are 4,000.

The association describes the Friesian as "very charismatic. His gentle and willing nature provides a strong base for versatile training and his intelligence leads to a rewarding partnership. His handsome appearance and animated action provide a noble presence in any show ring, parade or paddock.

Registered Friesians are always black, but can be of various hues.

See Friesians, back page

County turns to Dobson for utilities

By Angela Schmolz
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DOBSON — Stymied by low water usage and high construction costs, county commissioners agreed Monday night to go back to Dobson in an effort to find some way to bring water and sewer to the Interstates District.

Landowners in the area of N.C. 89 and Interstates 77 and 74 (the Interstates District) have been lobbying county commissioners for nearly a decade to get public utilities to the interchange to open it up to development.

Even with \$500,000 in federal funds and a variety of pledges and other potential grants, the county is looking at a debt of more than \$5 million for the project, an amount that would push rates to \$23 per 1,000 gallons unless growth on the undeveloped land could spread the debt service.

"We're going to have to try to find additional funding. Water and Sewer Coordinator Jack Gardin said. "And as we develop the public utilities to the district, we would have to bring in more users. A large part of the problem in the district is that the average daily flow will only be about 50,000 gallons and one user has 40 percent of that. When you start looking at some of the rates, somebody will be paying a huge water bill.

Gardin presented the board with a copy of Mount Airy's proposed water agreement and some of the sticking points, which if addressed might bring combined water/sewer purchase rates to about \$5.32 per 1,000 gallons. The cost of debt service, however, would make it unfeasible.

Commissioners asked if the two utilities could be separated, since water will be cheaper to provide and has a more accessible solution, but Gardin said property owners couldn't guarantee the new jobs needed to secure some of the grant funds without sewer.

Chairman Craig Hunter said after looking at the proposals, in which Gardin recommended a wetlands sewage treatment system and three wells instead of attempting a hookup with Mount Airy, that he would like to look at Dobson again. "I know we're talking about a treatment plant upgrade, he said, "but with all the projects we're looking at in the Dobson area, couldn't we piggy-back it together and get the rate down?"

The county is looking at an extension across U.S. 601 to serve Surry Acres development and possibly a new school, while the town is looking at its own extension across 601 to Piney Grove. Both projects are contingent upon the availability of grant and loan funding.

Gardin said a line from Dobson to Prison Camp might qualify for USDA funding, if there are sufficient residential customers interested.

Commissioner Jim Harrell Jr. said he'd like to find a way to expand Dobson's facilities and get water and sewer across I-77 at the Dobson exit and north to the N.C. 89 interchange.

"I'm like you," Hunter agreed. "I'd like to figure out how to get Dobson water and sewer expanded. They were the first to the table and they've been willing to work with us.

While Gardin said he had agreed to present a counterproposal to Mount Airy staff, Hunter said during the liaison meeting two weeks ago, Mount Airy told him there would be "no back and forth. They told us, what they presented is it. We had things we wanted to change and what we got was that's not going to happen." The board agreed to allow Gardin to make a counterproposal to Mount Airy but to also begin talks with Dobson about the possibilities of expansions and new lines.

"My concern on the water issue is, we've got to go. Hunter said. "Even if we can't do the sewer, we've got \$500,000 in federal funds and we don't want to lose that.

On our blog ...

Conduct unbecoming

Judge Badgett's suspension should be permanent. Weigh in at surrymessenger.com and click "Blog."

Inside Today



New Swing in Town

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Today partly cloudy

63 high



68 high

53 low



39 low



rain likely Wednesday

Friesians are a breed apart

Continued from front page

White markings are not allowed on the body or legs. They have long, thick, flowing manes and tails and pronounced feleok hair.

There are two styles of Friesian. The medieval, heavier type is called baroque, and the smaller, sportier type is the modern. Tanbark has both.

To be registered, all horses must be inspected by representatives from the Dutch organization. Judges come over once a year for a "keuring, or inspection, and evaluate the horses on conformation and movement. The judging process to become a registered Friesian is very thorough.

"The gentle nature is bred into them," Carlton said. "And they're judged on their characteristics, their trainability, their manageability, not just how they move."

Judges inspect foals in the fall of each year. Each horse is judged as first "premie," second premie, third premie or no premie, depending on how they compare to the standards of the breed. First premie is the best. Horses will first go when they are weanlings. Then they will return at three-years-old and, if they make first or second premie again, they are a "sire." If a mare produces three sters, then she becomes a "preferent."

"It proves they can produce good offspring and makes [a mare] more valuable," Carlton said. Buyers are encouraged to take their horses to keurings and get ster ratings, because it makes the mares more valuable as well.

Stallions go through a much more rigorous qualification process. There are only about 20 approved stallions in North

America. Only about 80 in the world, Carlton said. "So we have to breed by artificial insemination. The closest stallion was in Pennsylvania. There are two now in Maryland, but it's still better to breed by artificial insemination. But that makes it harder to breed and more costly."

The semen has to be shipped, occasionally from very far away, and breeders have to work closely with their vets to insure the insemination is done at the perfect time for conception.

Stallions are first judged as weanlings, and if they make first or second premie, then they come back at age one. If again they are judged acceptable, they come back at age two. If again they are approved, they are sent to the stallion proving station at age three.

Last year was the first time in America that a stallion proving station was set up. Before, all stallions had to go to The Netherlands, in order to be inspected and possibly become approved stallions.

"[I]f [the stallion] was set up in California. Four went and one was approved for breeding. The other three were scratched out," Carlton said. Once a horse has failed approval, he can never be brought back for another chance. He will never be placed on the breeding registry. When taken to The Netherlands, stallions are judged by the hundreds each year.

"They go through an elimination process. A judge looks at each of the horses three times and those that aren't eliminated go to the stallion proving station," Carlton said. From the hundreds,



Tyler and Dahlia trot together around a fenced paddock. Tyler is a baroque style Friesian while Dahlia is a modern style.

30 stallions were accepted. "They keep them 11 weeks. They judge their movement, stall habits, personality; there are 10 things they judge them on. Out of the 30, only six were approved for breeding."

Stallions go through the approval process at the age of three or four typically. Then, once they're about seven, they will return with 20 of their offspring to each be judged.

"They're judged to see if they are improving the breed. If the stallion is putting out offspring that aren't improving the breed, then they are taken off breeding status and never get back on," Carlton said. "It's very expensive and very involved to get a breeding stallion."

While it is difficult and costly, he said it improves the breed dramatically.

"They control hereditary characteristics," he said. "Habits and temperaments, they control conformation. If they want more front end action or a longer back, they breed that into them."

The Everharts take pride in how well trained the foals that leave their farm are.

"When we sell a little weanling, you can lead them on a trailer, trim their ears, pick up their feet, bathe them, lead them. We even put a saddle on their back to get them used to it. You don't have to do much training as far as manners go. That's my job and I love to do it."

The colts at Tanbark Acres

begin training at a week old, and Carlton said that they never forget it. By one month old they'll load on a trailer.

"It's kind of unique with us," he said. "Most breeders are just interested in selling and they're on larger farms. They can't take the time we take with the foals. In Holland, they don't handle them until they're three years old. Then they have a lot of horse on their hands."

As an all-purpose horse, traditionally the Friesian has been used in driving and pleasure riding. They are becoming increasingly popular for dressage though.

"You can train them to do anything and they try to do what you want," Carlton said. "I've even

seen them as Western horses, cutting cattle. They can't do it as well as a Quarter Horse, but you can train them to do about anything you want. There's no foolishness about these horses. They're fun to work with and the horses love people."

Because of the high standards and difficulties breeding the horses can be quite expensive. At Tanbark Acres, they sell contracts on unborn foals once a mare is confirmed to be pregnant.

Those contracts run from \$8-12,000 usually. Newborns are \$10-15,000 and weanlings are \$12-17,000. Mares can be as expensive as \$20-40,000, but a third premie could be as cheap as \$8,000. A registered stallion can cost between \$250-750,000.

News Briefs

Two charged after calling 911

DOBSON Two men were arrested on drug charges Friday night after calling 911 to report someone trying to break into a residence on Caves Mill Road.

Charles Dwight Wilmoth, 52, 1823 Caves Mill Road, reported that two men were trying to get into his home about 11 p.m. He then called back and said there were four men. When deputies arrived, he said there were two men lying in the ditch and that he had chased them off and dialed 911.

The deputy reported Wilmoth's speech was slurred and that when a state trooper arrived to assist they had located another man, Kevin Graham Scott, 27, 2801 Zephyr Road, behind the residence.

Wilmoth said Scott had been with him and was not one of the subjects. Scott's appearance, however, and the discovery of a shotgun on the front porch led

officers to search Scott for additional firearms. Instead, they found six syringes.

In Scott's vehicle, they located a jacket containing another syringe and plastic bags that appeared to contain cocaine.

With Wilmoth's permission, they also searched the house and found another shotgun, drug paraphernalia and a pill bottle containing Xanax and methadone pills.

Wilmoth was charged with possession of drug paraphernalia and controlled substances, all misdemeanors. Scott was charged with felony possession of cocaine and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Accused faces county charges

DOBSON Patrick Loren Towe, arrested last week in Mount Airy for alleged sex crimes involving two young girls, also faces similar charges in Surry County for incidents occurring 11 years ago.

County detectives obtained a warrant charging Towe with indecent liberties with a child last November, but agreed not to release the information as it might impact the police departments investigation.

City police charged Towe, 37, 341 Franklin St., last Tuesday with three felony counts of first-degree rape of a child and first-degree sexual offense with a child for two incidents last year. Those incidents involved two girls, ages 4 and 9, one of whom reported the incident to her mother.

When the incidents involving the young girls were reported, the earlier victim learned about them and came forward.

"She had reported the incident in 1997 to the Department of Social Services and the sheriff's office, but he was not charged," Det. Reta Nichols said. "She returned to the sheriff's office when these incidents came up."

Nichols said the victim of the earlier crimes was about 10 when the incidents occurred.

By Angela Schmall
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Four charged in forgeries

Four Mount Airy women face more than 65 charges after allegedly using stolen checks in a \$1,600 shopping spree.

Additional checks were passed outside Surry County and more local warrants are expected.

Cheryl Anne Lowe of Herring Street reported to the sheriff's office in early February that someone had stolen checks from her residence. The checks were from closed accounts, and she did not realize they were missing or being used until she started receiving letters informing her of the amount she owed to settle debts with stores in Mount Airy and Pilot Mountain.

"She came into the office and said she had received letters and realized the checks had been stolen," Det. Dee Sims said. "We contacted the corporate offices and got copies of the checks and then obtained video and still

shots of the times the checks were passed."

Using the video surveillance, Sims said detectives were able to identify one of the women and began doing interviews. "We did multiple interviews and executed two simultaneous search warrants at two different locations," she said.

More evidence was collected during the searches, including some of the stolen checks and gift cards purchased with stolen checks. "We also found some checks that had been forged, but not cashed," she said.

Jennifer Lee Greene, 39, 287 Herring St., was arrested on charges of felony conspiracy, misdemeanor larceny, two counts of possession of stolen goods, 17 counts of forgery and uttering and 17 counts of obtaining property by false pretense.

Melissa Pope Wisser, 30, 168 Winesap Lane, was arrested on two counts of possession of stolen goods, 13 counts of forgery

and uttering, seven counts of forgery and obtaining property by false pretense.

Jackie Lynn Johnson, 28, also of 168 Winesap Lane, faces two counts of possession of stolen goods and two counts of obtaining property by false pretense.

Warrants have also been issued charging Patricia Ann Gunter of E. Poplar Street with felony conspiracy and obtaining property by false pretense.

"Further investigation is under way in other counties where checks were written and passed," Sims said. "Also, we don't know how many other checks may be out there in local businesses. If any more businesses come forward, we will be issuing additional charges here as well."

Any local businesses that have had a check on a closed account belonging to Lowe should contact Sims at the sheriff's office at 401-8900.

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