

## *The Cow Horse Champion*

Kelli Caves is from Altoona, Florida and is the 2006 Saddle Series Champion FRCHA (Florida Reined Cow Horse Association) and United States NATIONAL CHAMPION! Her 9 year old gelding "Silverbrook Pep" or "Chippers" as he is popularly called, is an American Quarter Horse. Kelli has previously shown Paso Finos had 5 National Champions and assists fiancé Dr. David Burba part time in his Veterinary practice and helps with a 350 head, cattle herd.

## *The Breed*

The American Quarter Horse, is a breed that officially traces its origins to the late 1700's as the colonists came across a horse that combined the English horses with the Chickasaw breed, which was a descendent of the Arabian and Barb, brought into the southeast United States by the Spanish. What they had was a small, sturdy horse that was quick and nimble and showed signs of superior intelligence and a willingness to work. As flat land horse racing became popular, this fast animal, achieving speeds of up to 55 miles per hour over short distances soon dominated the quarter mile track and was aptly named the quarter miler, or quarter horse. Today, some Quarter Horses are trained to race while others are trained as cow horses, that is to say, to herd cattle

The reined cow horse and its rider the "cowboy" has a romantic history know to most Americans through movies and associated in folklore with the Western expansion of the United States following the Mexican War and the California gold rush.

Through the formation of what has come to be called the National Reined Cow Horse Association, the original training methods of the Spanish vaquero, the first cowboys of what is now the American West, survive virtually unchanged. The traditional vaquero training program included numerous phases - spanning several years before a horse was considered "finished" and capable of performing the various maneuvers required on ranches, roundups and cattle drives.

To test a horses' cow working abilities, the competition consists of three events: herd work, rein work, and work with a single steer "down the fence," typically called cow work.

In the herd work the horse must cut one steer from a small herd of cattle and keep it from returning to the herd. The horse blocks the movement of the steer in much the same way a sheep dog is used to herd or separate a sheep from the flock. In the rein work the horse maneuvers through a pattern of figure 8's, straight runs, lead changes, sliding stops and 360 degree spins. In the cow work - the most challenging of all - the horse must control the movements of a single steer at a dead run, heading it off and turning it both ways along the fence, then bringing it into the center of the arena to circle it once in each direction.

A horse's total scores in each of the three events - herd, rein and cow work - are added together to form an overall combined score. Kelli Caves horse, "Chippers" is a national champion cow horse and can be seen at Equifest in Lake Helen on April 14<sup>th</sup>.

### *Glossary Terms:*

**Reining:** Type of Western riding in which advanced movements such as spins and slides are executed in various patterns.

**Equus Caballus:** The scientific name for the horse

**Farrier:** A horseshoer or blacksmith