

The Czech Legacy: From Baroque to Blood Horse

In war, ceremony, transport, agriculture, and sport, the horse has labored for centuries alongside the Czech people with dignity and pride. With communism in its wake, the Czech Republic is a land in transition, as is the country's horse industry.

Within the structure of the communist state, there was a distinct place for horses. The government, for instance, owned most of the Thoroughbred racehorses, and trainers were generally paid a set salary by the state. Circumstances within the horse industry changed with the end of communism. Training facilities that were once owned and operated by the state were required to be self-sufficient. While the shift to private ownership is a difficult process, the public has responded, with the Czech Thoroughbred industry growing steadily. Some problems being encountered by the Thoroughbred industry, such as finding owners and investors, are compounded dramatically by the former system. However, the Czech people have a centuries-old tradition of excellent horsemanship, and horses have played key roles in daily life along the way.

The historical significance of horses in the Czech Republic can be seen through the government's support of a national stud for the Kladruby horse, one of the oldest

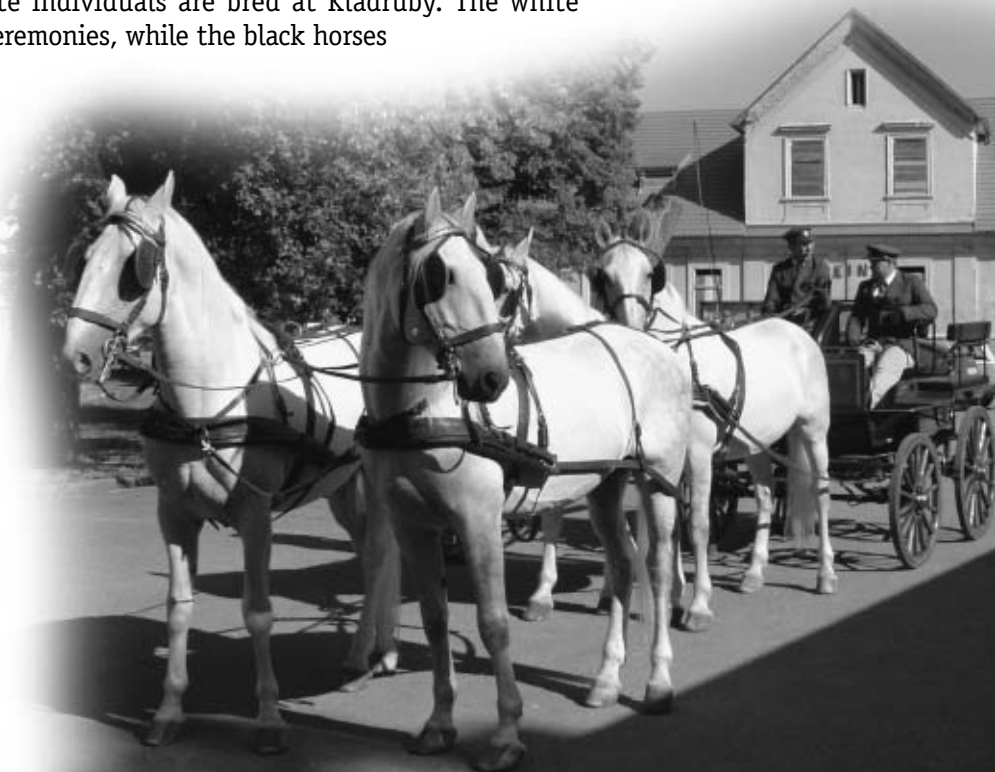
and largest establishments of its kind in the world. The Emperor of Rome and Czech royalty, including King Rudolph II, founded the Kladruby stud in 1579. The government has declared the Kladruby a national treasure and continues to subsidize the stud farm.

All Kladruby horses are descended from imported Spanish and Italian horses crossed with Irish, Holstein, Danish, Neapolitan, and heavier Czech and Oldenburg horses. Andalusian heritage can be found in most of these breeds. Because of this infusion of Spanish blood, the Kladruby is classified as a Baroque breed and is typically heavier boned, resembling a warmblood. A concave profile, a long arched neck, and an animated gait characterize the Kladruby.

The original goal of the Kladruby breeding program was to produce carriage and riding horses primarily for imperial ceremonies and cavalry. The breed is made up of two distinct types based on color. A line of black horses is bred at Slatinany, and white individuals are bred at Kladruby. The white Kladruby horses were used mainly for royal ceremonies, while the black horses were employed for clerical ceremonies.

Slatinany is also home of the Hippologic Museum of the Czech Republic. Housed in a castle, the museum holds priceless equestrian art and historical document collections.

The population of Kladruby horses in the Czech Republic is increasing annually. Today, more than 700 members of the breed reside in the country. While citizens of the Czech Republic use the horses for a variety of sports, the breed has found its niche in competitive driving, with four- and six-horse hitches earning top ribbons in world championship competitions.





Dibaq a.s., one of Kentucky Equine Research's (KER) European partners, provides feed and consultation for the Kladruby Stud as well as many other top equine operations throughout the Czech Republic. Zdenek Stepanek is the current general director of the company and was responsible for bringing what was originally a family-owned company into national prominence in the post-communist era. The firm's reputation is built around the development of premium seed stock as well as the production of feed and nutrition products.

Jan Novak, the equine marketing manager for Dibaq a.s., is well-known as a feed management advisor. He depends on MicroSteed, KER's ration formulation software, to help develop nutrition programs for many of the country's top horse breeders. Dibaq a.s. has recently expanded its operation by forming a partnership with another KER associate, Dibaq Diproteg in Spain.

Dibaq a.s. also offers breeders feed products for horses of all ages and uses under the brand name Fitmin. The company produces high-quality feeds designed to complement the local forages and grains grown in the vast areas of the largely rural Czech Republic. It manufactures concentrated protein, mineral and vitamin feeds, high-fat feeds, and complete feeds along with a full line of equine supplements.


Dibaq a.s. primarily produces extruded feeds. The extrusion process gelatinizes the starch in feedstuffs, which makes the starch more digestible. From an energy standpoint, extruded feeds have the edge in digestibility. Extruded feeds can also contain higher fat levels, as much as 20%.

In addition to their nutritional benefits, extruded feeds offer horse men some feeding management benefits. Horses generally eat extruded feeds more slowly than textured or pelleted feeds, which is especially advantageous for horses that tend to bolt their feed or for those that are at risk for choking. Extruded feeds contain few fines and little dust, so they are ideal for horses with respiratory problems.

Dibaq a.s. feeds many of the best horses in the Czech Republic including the horses of Kladruby and Slatinany, as well as the top Thoroughbreds and warmbloods in the country. The Fitmin feeding system has fueled many race champions such as Peruan, a legendary steeplechaser that won the Velka Pardubicka Steeplechase in 1998, 1999, and 2000.

In 2001 Dibaq a.s. fed the first three horses over the finish line in the famed Pardubicka race. Dibaq a.s. has been feeding the WRBNA Racing Stable for five years. Counted among that stable's accomplishments include a successful campaign of Registrata, a mare that has won the Pardubicka twice. Registrata won the 2003 and 2004 Velka Pardubicka Steeplechase against top-class racehorses from England and Ireland. The trainer, Dr. Cestmir Olehla, has had great success throughout Europe, winning this year's Italian Gran Premio Merano.

Dibaq a.s. operates its own successful stable, which has qualified several horses for the Velka Pardubicka Steeplechase.

Kentucky Equine Research is pleased to be associated with Dibaq a.s. and is proud of the prominent role the company plays in its support of the traditional Kladruby horse as well as the burgeoning new horse industry in the Czech Republic. 

Ústí nad
Labem



Fitmin

Králové

CZECH REPUBLIC

Ostrava

Olomouc

Jihlava

Blansko

Písek

Brno

Znojmo