

2015 collection of foals at Mount St. John

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It is always interesting to know how the most successful breeders are doing and therefore we just caught Emma Jane Blundell from the British Stud Mount St. John about her expectations for 2015, stallions and new additions.

Expecting 27 foals

"We are super excited to have our biggest year of foals to date due in 2015! This is due to our popular demand of all colts being sold by May this year & also due to us investing in some new mares to add to our breeding programme."

Were more of your choices for 2015 based on the "out-come" of 2014?

"Breeding is an evolving education all the time. The outcome of each choice must contribute to the next but on the other side because many of our foals are born by embryo transfer we do not have to wait until one years foal is born before we start breeding for the next year. This means sometimes the outcome of one breeding will only have effect on the second year after or one of the later embryos in the season if it is a mare we do multiple breedings with."



Some of the mares enjoying the mild winter at Mount St. John (photo credit: Emma Jane Blundell)

Your only been using Finest as the only new young stallion. Why not using more young stallions?

"Finest is the only new stallion in our list & that is in fact the only foal due that we didn't breed as we bought diva Dannebrog in foal to finest from Dorthe hep peso of DMJ horses who is a very accomplished breeder & I'm sure you can ask her why she chose that stallion for her. I'm also excited about that offspring & happy for her to be pregnant with him. In the future at MSJ diva will only breed by embryo transfer & we will try to put her back in sport as she's a young & exceptional mare.

I also would have liked to use Govenor (Totilas / dam is full sister of Parzival) but he wasn't available in the UK with chilled semen so hopefully that will change for 2015. I think he's a super stallion for breeding & with a good sport potential so I will now look at his first foal crop with a lot of interest, but really hope to use him on a few of our mares next year. It is good to have a top Totilas son with such an interesting damline for the breeders to use."

Do you as a top breeder think it is enough competition record for a stallion to be active in the sport as a youngster?

"I think we as breeders can learn a lot from seeing the stallions in sport both as young horses & in the future as advanced horses & competing internationally. I think it's important to have good ride ability & soundness in mind & body, horses going a long time in sport or with many offspring doing the same can help recreate that in their offspring which is something that I value in my breeding programme."

How do you evaluate in general about the breeding from a specific stallion?

"When evaluating a stallion I will always look at himself standing & in movement, then see him ridden ideally both in training & at a competition to see how he copes under pressure & his attitude. Then I will always most importantly look at the offspring & see how they compare in all of the above & try to figure out what traits he consistently passes on or doesn't."

You normally keep the fillies for your own future breeding program. Will that be the same about your 2015 foals?

"To date we have kept nearly all the fillies from our breeding programme but we don't have infinite space & as we have the biggest foal crop to date due in 2015 we will have to sell some fillies. We also will now start selling some of the existing fillies to make way for new

ones being born as we must for everything to go on. I have to admit I'm not looking forward to it though as I really love the fillies & get very attached to them from birth.

You've purchased new mares for your breeding program. Tell a bit about the background for these additions and what are your plans for breeding them? How do you make sure the mares are able to be pregnant - thinking about if you buy a riding horse there are certain vet checks to do. Can you do something similar about fertility?

When investing in new mare lines for our breeding programme we are super selective, going through everything as per the stallion selections & more. Firstly the mare has to make me very excited when I see her & on paper; secondly she must have very exciting offspring that I have seen & loved. Quite often I buy mares based on the quality of offspring they have produced for example Ehrendame in our breeding programme was purchased as a direct result of seeing one of her offspring as a foal who turned out to be not for sale. That filly named Deevoice went on to win the 2014 3 German national mare championship before being bought by an international rider as a serious riding horse for the future. Thirdly I must like the people I am doing business with & want to become part of their breeding programme to continue with their line.

I think it's so important to be able to work alongside honest people who share the same values & then it is an absolute pleasure & there are no unexpected surprises as everyone is very honest & easy. In return we pay fair money & have acquired some very special mares & hope to work for a long time together with the breeders of those mares & their former owners, to continue to develop that relationship & learn from them. So many breeders I have found to be very generous people who are happy to share their time, experience & knowledge with someone who is genuinely interested in learning about their breeding & that which they know of others.

I have learnt so much or what I know from countless people in this way & am eternally grateful to them but I still keep coming back to discuss new stallions or bloodlines with them."

"When buying a new horse even for breeding we always use our own vet & take X-rays etc so we know evrrrythihg about her before we breed with her. We also do a routine breeding check to make sure everything seems normal in her uterus, cervix & vulval confirmation. We also always take swabs & blood tests to make sure she wouldn't be carrying any diseases into our stud. We also would do all these tests with a prospective sport mare as all of our mares need to be able to breed even if only by embryo transfer."



Winter time at mare barn at Mount St. John (photo credit: Emma Jane Blundell)

Danish mares

"For the new mares my dream is to breed a Don Schufro from Atterupgaards Dallara (no 1 mare in the Danish stud book 2014) & I would love a Dimaggio as a second option. D blood has always complimented the S blood through history so I won't try reinvent the wheel. I plan to mainly use D blood stallions with her although I have seen a number of other top youngsters out if this mare by a range of stallions.

Diva (from Dorothe M. Jeppesen) already being by Don Schufro means I can't use D blood on her. My aim is to breed her to Govenor with second option being Don Juan de Hus as she has amazing character & top ride ability so I think she can take stallions such as these to give her a little more."

Before you have seen the 2015 editions do you already now have new stallions in mind for your 2016 foals?

"Yes as we speak I am shortlisting the stallions for 2016. I have around 3-5 stallions per mare on the list which may change when the next foals are born. We have some new stallions in the list & some affected by later born foals this season. I can't wait for another round of breeding & to see all those 2015 foals!!"



Yearlings at Mount St. John (photo credit: Emma Jane Blundell)