

Marilyn Vander Wekken and her husband Bernard breed Morgans from their picturesque location in Picture Butte, Alberta. Bernard focusses on their dairy operation Woolywind, but supports Marilyn in her equine pursuits at Marana Farms.

She has been working with Morgans since her father, John Leskosky Sr., purchased one and began breeding in 1984. Marilyn comments, “Apples don’t



fall far from the tree!”

In 1994, Marilyn made the decision to breed purebred Morgans. The stallion Petanio Arr Pride was purchased in 1997. According to Marilyn, that was the horse that really put them on the international map: “Petanio has produced progeny that have gone on to do dressage, eventing and jumping in North America. His greatest contribution to the breed is the progeny that head other breeding programs in North America and Europe.”

Marilyn continues to breed Petanio’s lines from his daughters and granddaughters. She also currently stands Nemaha Hill My-T Atticus, a Lippitt stallion and a dun stallion Mirabellas Mondo.

“I have always had a love affair with unique colored Morgan horses,” says Marilyn. “And in 1998 I purchased our first palomino Morgan mare. This led to additional colorful Morgan purchases and ultimately among the breed’s rarest of colors dun and grey.”

Since 1998, colour genetics have played a major part of the breeding program at Marana Farms: “However, color isn't our goal - we know a good horse comes in any color. And we breed and stand traditional colored Morgans as well, “Marilyn says.

It may not be the only goal, but Marana Farms has enjoyed successes in the rare colour arena. DM Aimee Farrah, Canada's first verified dunskin filly was born at Marana Farms. (Prior to 2008, Marana Farms used the prefix DM.)

In 2010, another rare colour arrived at the farm in the form of Marana Olympus, aptly named because he was born during the Winter Olympics in Vancouver. His barn name is Alex, named after Alex Bilodeau, the first Canadian to win gold on Canadian soil.

Alex is sired by buckskin stallion Dahlongega Dillon and is out of dam FPS Frosted Creme Brulee, affectionately known as “Kari.”



Alex's birth was not typical. Marilyn comments, "Around 301 days I noticed Kari had developed a small udder and her teats had waxed. Concerned, I consulted our vet. At 306 days she foaled a healthy colt. What a blessing to have a healthy mare and foal with a short gestation period no less!

"I assisted with delivery and noticed that wet in the sac the colt looked like a buckskin. Once I had the sac off of him - an odd shade of palomino and finally, when dried he was a double dilute cream. Confused on exactly what color he was I sent off a hair sample to UC Davis in California, USA. They confirmed his coloring - grey perlino! The first known in the entire Morgan breed! All the coat color variations I saw - buckskin, odd shade of palomino and double dilute cream were signs that the colt also had the rare grey modifier."

Alex has been a farm favorite ever since. "Alex has been a sweetheart since birth and has become a personal pet of mine. He is well behaved and easy going for a young colt," comments Marilyn. He starts light saddle work this autumn and is beginning his career in the breeding shed.

This spring saw another exciting announcement with the birth of Marana Macey, the Morgan breed's first known homozygous dun filly also confirmed through coat color testing.

To date, Marana Farms has bred 110 purebred Morgan foals since 1995, exported 57 Morgans since 1997, and since 2000, has imported 23 Morgans. Only time will tell what 2013 and beyond will bring.

Marilyn says, "My greatest success is placing a Morgan with an owner who appreciates the horse and understands what they have. And that the horse brings that owner happiness and enjoyment."