

Suzanne Spierenburg had never heard of the Canadian Horse when she was introduced to them by Alfred Cartier. She rode his stallion, Fox, in Spruce



Meadows Battle of the Breeds and was astounded at his jumping skills. “He was a real handful but he had the highest score of any horse there in jumping,” Suzanne comments.

It was enough to get her hooked. Suzanne started training Alfred’s young stock and eventually she and her husband Ron purchased three fillies and a stallion from him. Since 1997, Willow View Canadians has been proudly producing Canadians near Rocky Mountain House. That initial herd of four horses has grown into 30 horses today, with about 25 of them being Canadians.

“They were so easy to sell to begin with. A lot of people really liked them,” Suzanne comments. Fifteen years ago they were considered a rare breed. However, the economy, and the horse market included, has challenged breeders for the last five years. “Any breeder of any breed, everyone is having a hard time making ends meet,” she says.

Suzanne has noticed that most customers want bombproof 8 year olds and they don’t want to pay very much for them. But a tremendous amount of work goes in to training well-broke 8 year olds, as well as a great deal of money in feed and upkeep in what Suzanne considers “a labour of love.”

As a result, Willow View Canadians has changed their business plan and has been breeding fewer horses recently. They currently have 12 horses for sale with two foals being born this year. “If I can’t sell them, I’m not raising more,” Suzanne laughs. “As a responsible breeder, every horse I breed can come back to me.”

Suzanne is well-known for training and preparing her youngsters for sale so they are equipped

for anything with their new owner. “I expose them to a lot of things,” she says. This exposure includes bombproofing, trailer loading, standing tied, having blankets thrown over their backs, regular hoof trimming, ground driving, tarps, and umbrellas.

“I start them when they hit the ground. We do our own version of imprint training which involves touching everyone, everyday. I want to be one of the herd and I want them to be as comfortable with me as they are with their mom.”

Canadians live up to their nickname as “The Little Iron Horse.” “They are so hardy and tough, no coddling is involved,” she comments. Willow View Canadians has around 300 acres with plenty of shelter for the majority of her horses to roam during the winter “living like they should.”

Willow View Canadians continues to expose the breed to the public at events like Spruce Meadows’s Battle of the Breeds, demonstrations at The Mane Event, drill teams, pack trips and parades. Her horses display versatility and compete in all disciplines, ranging from eventing to endurance riding to competitive trail.

“They are such a nice breed to work with; they just warm your heart.”