

Horse breeds which are recognised and managed in France

A quick look at the 54 equine breeds, either French or foreign, which are recognised and managed in France.

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Technical level : 



Breeds managed in France

When speaking of breeds managed by the IFCE, we refer to those breeds with a stud-book or register in France (branch of the birthplace of the breed) and a breed association or selection committee approved by the ministry of Agriculture. If the selection committee so desires, the SIRE guarantees the implementation of the stud-book rules, and ensures edition of identification documents for these breeds.

Warmblood and pure breeds

Twenty five breeds of warmblood and pure bred horses recognised and managed in France

These breeds are very diverse and include horses with very different uses. From racing to sports, from leisure to territorial horses, each breed has specific characteristics which are all part of equine diversity. The Arab horse is one of the oldest breeds of horse : bones found in Mesopotamia show that horses close in conformation to the Arab horse lived as far back as 4500 years ago. Today, the Arab horse is used for endurance, showing, and flat racing.

The Thoroughbred horse (or English thoroughbred) and the French Trotter horse are mostly used for racing. The TB horse is used for flat racing and obstacle racing, and is used to improve nearly all the warmblood breeds. The French trotter is a more recent breed selected on its suitability for trotting races, either mounted or harnessed.

The Selle Français and the Anglo-arab are the main French sport horses, although Anglo-arabs also take part in the flat and obstacle races reserved for them. Originally bred from the Thoroughbred and Arab horse, the Anglo-arab is particularly appreciated in the discipline of eventing. The Selle Français is a cross between native mares and Thoroughbreds.



Anglo-Arabe © PC

Other breeds are more specifically used as leisure horses, such as the Camargue, the Merens, or the Henson horse. The Camargue horse, is still used to herd cattle, and lives in herds in the marshes of the Camargue region. The Merens and Castillonais, small, hardy and resistant horses from the Ariège area, are well suited to their environment. They are used for driving and outdoor leisure riding. The Henson, originally from the Baie de Somme, is a cross between Fjord ponies and warmblood horses (Selle Français, Anglo-Arab). The Corsican horse, and the Auvergne bred horse joined the number of breeds managed by the IFCE in 2012, followed by the Anglo-Norman sports horse in the middle of 2014.

Some foreign breeds, now recognised in France are particularly suited to dressage (Lusitanian, Lipizzaner, French Dressage Horse), or trekking (Barb) or western riding disciplines (Cream).

Pony breeds

Eleven pony breeds recognised and managed in France

The Poney Français de Selle is the most representative of the French pony population, with nearly a third of the registered births. Originally a cross between French bred pony mares with Arab or foreign breed stallions, this animal is used for leisure and competition riding.



Poney Français de Selle © E. Guyard

The other two native French pony breeds, Pottok and Landais are used more for leisure and driving. The Pottok lives in free ranging herds in the Basque mountains.

British and Irish ponies are also often used for leisure or competition riding, especially the Connemara pony from Ireland, and the British native breeds (Dartmoor, Highland, New-Forest, Shetland, and Welsh ponies).

Other breeds are used for riding or driving, breeds such as the Fjord pony from Norway, with its dun coat and clipped crested mane, or the Halflinger, originally from Austria, with a typical chestnut coat and flaxen mane.

Draft horse breeds

Ten draft horse breeds are recognised and managed in France

Draft horses were traditionally used for their motive power, mainly for agricultural tasks. After the second world war, their population declined sharply, and they became primarily a source of horse meat. This change of orientation led to adding weight to their conformation, which was detrimental to their physical capacities. For the past twenty years, there has been another change in their destination moving at least partially towards leisure and work animals.



Comtois © ANCTC

The most represented draft breeds on French territory are the Breton and the Comtois, mainly bred in their original birthplaces in Brittany and Franche-Comté respectively, they are also produced in locations such as the Pyrenees and Auvergne, areas specialised in meat production.

Some draft breeds have very low headcounts today, particularly the Trait du Nord, the Poitevin, the Auxois and the Boulonnais.

Breeds of donkey

Eight breeds of donkey are recognised and managed in France



Ane Bourbonnais © Association française de l'âne bourbonnais

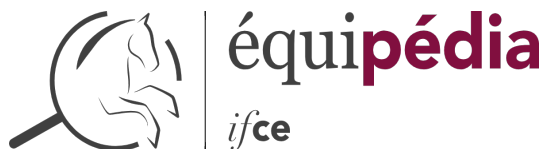
Donkey breeds are for the main part local breeds and are all of French origin. The breeds with the highest headcounts are the Cotentin donkey, and the Baudet du Poitou.

The least represented breeds are the Bourbonnais donkey (around fifteen births per year) and the Pyrenees Donkey (around sixty births per year).

France's donkey population is for the main part made up of cross-bred donkeys whose parentage is not recognised, as they were not registered at birth.

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