



DARLENE MORTON CANADIAN BREEDER OF THE YEAR



Photo Credit: Courtesy of Darlene Morton

The Canadian Breeder of the Year Award was created to recognize Canadian breeders who have displayed incredible dedication to the Canadian equestrian industry through efforts to improve the quality and enhance the reputation of Canadian bred horses.

In the case of Darlene Morton of Sharon, ON, her goal has been to breed equines that may be small in stature, but are huge in talent and temperament. Together with her husband, Russel, Darlene has been breeding Welsh and crossbred ponies at Morton Stables since 1967 – a vocation she comes by honestly, following in her parents' footsteps.

In the beginning, Darlene's breeding program was strictly purebred Welsh ponies, with her foundation stock being imported from the UK. However, a determination to breed what is current and keep up with evolving markets led Darlene to begin importing British Riding Ponies to cross with Welsh mares, creating a modern type of sport pony. Over the years, the Morton Stables' breeding stock has numbered over 30, and Darlene describes the ponies as "elegant, fabulous movers that are eye-catching and have good brains." She is especially proud of their extraordinary trainability.



Darlene's breeding stock has included several Supreme Champion section B Welsh stallions and broodmares, and ponies with the 'Morton' prefix in their name can be found across Canada, the United States and even Australia. Heavily involved in the breed registration side of the industry, Darlene is the Canadian representative for the North American Sportpony Registry (NASPR), and her imported British Riding Pony, Rosedale Top Cat, was named the NASPR's first foundation sire.

On the competition side, Darlene is credited with building stronger awareness and appreciation of pony power by helping to organize Sport Pony shows within Canada and the United States. She also helps to put on the Sportpony Star Search finals for qualified ponies at the Royal Horse Show in Toronto, ON, each November. In addition to working hard behind the scenes at the event, Darlene is also a top competitor. At the 2019 Royal Horse Show, more than seven Morton ponies were on the leaderboard in the Sportpony Line Classes, including Morton's Kate Spade, who won the Yearling class and was crowned Sportpony Star Search Challenge Cup Champion. Plus, in the Get of Sire class, Rosedale Top Cat progeny crowded the top of the standings, earning first and fifth.

Outside of line classes, Morton ponies are also staples on the leaderboard in pony hunter and jumper competitions at the provincial and national level. Recent stars to come out of Morton Stables include Morton's Catog and Morton's Kitty in Style, who both qualified and placed in the highly competitive Large Pony Hunter national finals at the 2019 Royal Horse Show.

Equestrian Canada commends Darlene on her commitment to producing ponies that raise the bar for Canadian bred excellence, and is pleased to acknowledge her breeding success through the 2019 Canadian Breeder of the Year Award.