

American Curly Historical Information- written by Carrie Eddy  
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[The early Curly horses of the Damele Ranch were a lot smaller with chunky round bodies, short necks and long narrow heads, an anteater head, i.e. undercut under the chin.]

In 1942 the Damele family moved across the valley to the Dry Creek Ranch, where Benny still resides today. (note Benny is now deceased) After the move, they kept a big black stud with an ill head (Piccaninny) for one year but did not keep Piccaninny after a year because he came back gelded. He had gotten in with Magee's horses, so Magee gelded him and turned him back out.

The Dameles continued to breed and keep combination horses (big horses for the chicken feed market, but not so big that they wouldn't do well outside and some smaller horses to break), for studs and breeding stock. A buckskin Curly stud was one of these. They also kept both Curly & straight haired mares. At this time there was no intent to breed for curly coats and did not do so until the registry was started and there became a market for them. At that time it is estimated that the ranch had around 300 head of horses running in three different herds (as ranch work depended solely on the horse-power of the four legged kind, this was not uncommon).

It is possible that many Curlies in the Southwest came from 3D stock. Two horse buyers came regularly and hauled 3D stock to California. They wintered the horses there, then took them to New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas and surrounding areas to sell them.

In 1950 the foundation sire of the American Bashkir breed was born. But the copper colored colt by the Curly stallion and a palomino Quarter Horse mare that was to become the sire of the breed was almost lost in the winter of 1952. Harsher and more lethal than the winter that had gone before it, it took a heavy toll of cattle, saddle horses and broodmares. Only around 40 head of broodmares were saved, among them many Curlies. Benny had thought the colt, Copper, lost but found him roaming on a lower flat in the spring with a black Curly mare and a burro. [He was three years old at the time]. They were brought back to the ranch & thus saved. [Copper was broke and at age 7 got with a bunch of mares . At maturity he weighed about 1000 lbs.] Benny during the meantime, had gone to Idaho and brought back a Saddlebred stallion to help build up the herd. Idaho, which he was called, and Copper were the stallions that were left after the hard winter. As the herd began to grow again, Benny's family bred the Curlies more so than in the past. When the herd had regained

much of its original number, they were then running three other Curly stallions, all related to Copper and those few Curly mares that had survived.

In 1961 the Curly breed was to get the greatest contribution ever. It was in the form of Nevada Red, an Arabian stallion bred by Susanne Swanson of California. She and the Dameles were very good and long time friends and in that year she stated that if she had another horse-colt born, she was going to put him in the freezer. Mrs. Damele told her if the foal was a stud-horse instead of a filly, she would fill her freezer full of beef in trade for him. Thus, Nevada Red became a part of the Damele herd and he remained a great influence in it until his death in 1981.

Dixie D, a pinto Curly stallion by Nevada Red and a Curly mare, and Peacock D, a brown Curly stallion who is from the old Idaho and Arab stock, were the two main stallions over the last several years. The broodmare band only numbers around 60 head now and almost all of them are either Curly or have Curly blood in them. Benny gathers the band every October and sells the foals as weanlings. The fillies are highly prized as many buyers are looking for brood stock, but they all make excellent riding stock. At the present time Benny is using Ruby Red King, a registered Morgan stallion, to further improve the quality of the Curly breed. He chose the Morgan stallion because there is a history of the Morgan foals being born with Curly hair. Maybe there was a little bit of Curly blood in Justin Morgan's past?!

The Registry (ABCR) for these horses was begun through the efforts of Sunny Martin, Glenn Kugler, Suzanne Swanson, Jay & Pat McKendry and the Damele family, in the fall of 1971. They felt that, as these horses were a distinct breed, they should be recognized. They wrote many letters, did much research and encouraged anyone who owned a curly-haired horse to respond & help in the organization of the registry. The response was greater than they had hoped and as a result, the horses were acknowledged as a breed. This saved the lives of many horses across the country. Many people who had never before seen or heard about Curlies thought they were genetic defects and slaughtered them. With the formation of the Registry, people began to realize that the curly-haired horses were, in fact, a breed. There are around 300 registered Curlies in the United States at this time and if you search their pedigree, you will find almost everyone of them is descended from the original Damele herd. The Curlies are found nationwide, from Alaska to Florida, but the largest numbers are still found in Nevada (Damele '86).

In 1983, the Registry received an invitation to participate in the 1984

Tournament of Roses Parade. The horses were so popular that they were invited back again. This was their third year of participating in the Rose Parade and they continue to stir interest where ever they go. Many of the breeders are showing how versatile this breed is by taking these horses to open shows and competing in a wide range of events from Western Pleasure and Trail to Jumping and Driving. More and more people are becoming aware of the qualities these horses posses. They have come a long way since that long-ago day when they were first seen running wild on Robert's Mountain. [WSCN Vol.1 Issue 6 Nov. 1988]