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W E E K L Y

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Aussie first



ALABAR BLOODSTOCK staff got quite a surprise when this little fella was born to two bay parents.

Believed to be the first white standardbred born in Australia, the youngster has already gained a cult following.

See PAUL COURTS' article on Page 3 for more details.



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Spirit horse

a surprise Aussie first



By **PAUL COURTS**

AMERICAN Indians would revere and fear him as a 'Spirit Horse', with his ghostly appearance believed to offer a passage to the 'happy hunting ground'.

Others look at him and see a freak, while some are just bemused or intrigued by the sheer sight of him either way, the friendly colt born at Alabar Bloodstock's Echuca Farm is destined to live life in the spotlight.

Shocking attending workers upon his arrival, the colt is white...that's right white!

With the exception of a few red hairs between his ears and scattered over his body, the youngster is being touted as the first white standardbred born in Australia.

Ironically, he is the second born this year, with one foaled in America last May - maybe it has something to do with global warming!

The more logical reason is he is simply a genetic freak as the celebrity foal is by a bay stallion from a bay mare.

To be more precise, the young fella is by former champion juvenile, Courage Under Fire from Telem Hilda.

As a millionaire, record breaker and the only pacer to win six Derbys, Courage Under Fire needs no real introduction.

An unraced daughter of Presidential Ball, Telem Hilda has a maternal line tracing back to wonderful foundation mare, Lucias Maid.

Originally thought to be an albino, the foal is confirmed as a 'white' horse, which stems from a mutation in a certain gene.

DNA tests have proved his parents, ruling out the prospect of an interloping stallion being involved.

According to American Researcher, Samantha Brooks, PhD, assistant professor and research geneticist at Cornell University's Department of Animal Science's Brooks Equine Genetics Laboratory, the foal has a mutation in a gene called KIT.

"There are about 14 different unique mutations in a gene called KIT. For a reason we

don't fully understand, many of these spontaneous white horses have one of these KIT mutations," Brooks has been quoted as saying.

"Having the colour between his ears, that is typical of a KIT mutation. That is because the melanocyte precursors, the ones that are going to be producing colours, come from a place called the neural crest which runs down the mane."

Brooks also explained the mutation can be passed on to the foal's future offspring, with life as a stallion guaranteed regardless of his racing feats.

Naturally excited by the foal's arrival, Alabar has been inundated with media attention, including a spot on Chanel 10.

Outside of his gene mutation, Alabar's Alan Galloway stated the colt is in perfect health and condition.

"There's nothing average about this guy, he's a magnificent type, a perfect little man and we're just so proud to have him," Galloway said.

"He's not an albino and he's not a grey, because greys are born black and then become grey. He just popped out white and that is extremely unusual, in fact I've never heard of it before in this country.

"To put it into perspective, Alabar Stallions served 3240 mares last season and are on track to do the same this year, we're the biggest breeders in the world and we've never seen anything like it."

In an interesting twist of fate, the white American foal born in New Jersey this year is by one of Alabar's shuttle stallions, Art Major.

Bred and owned by Terry Wait, the white foal already has its own Facebook page and is the subject of a naming competition.

Several suggestions have already been put forward, such as Carrot Top, Unexpected, No Artificial Colours, Casper and Michael Jackson.

Most of the names are focused on the white such as Bianco, Snowy, Blank Cheque, Barry White, White Lightning, White Hot and White Knight.

Add your suggestion via the foal's Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/AussieWhiteFoal>