

Canada's
National
Horse is
Endangered
Again!



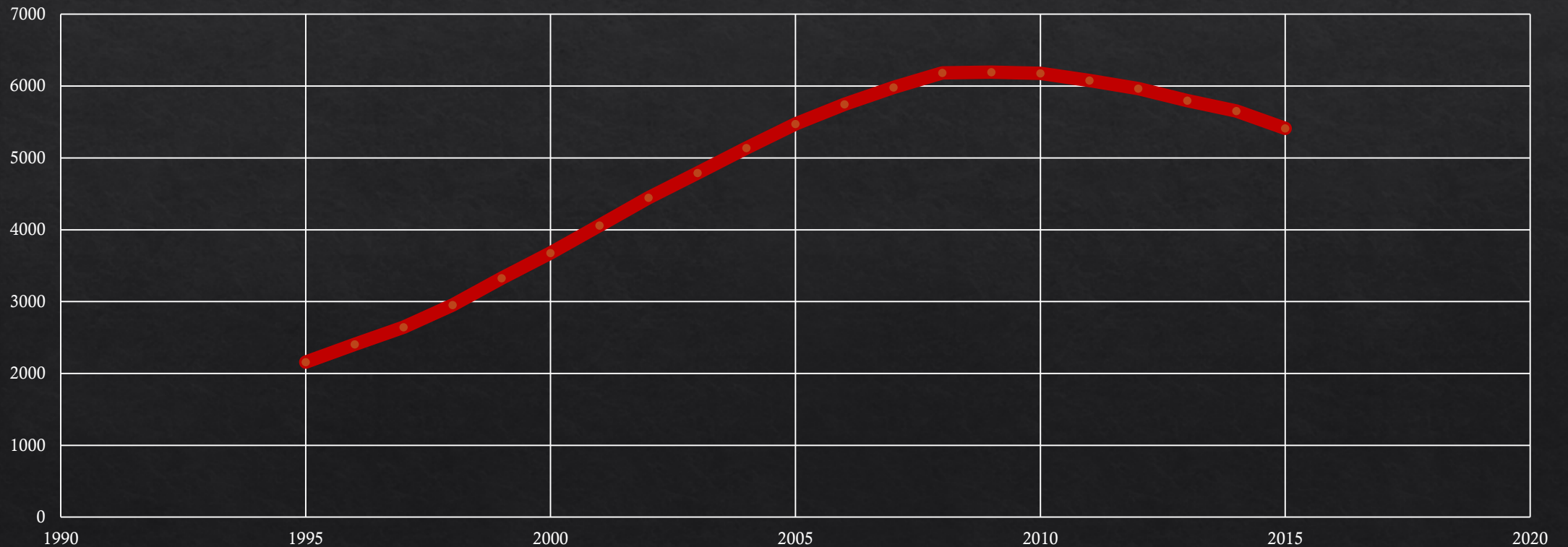
The warning bell is sounding for the Canadian Horse breed



◆ Once again, our country's National horse is on the verge of extinction...

What???

- ◆ The total population of Canadian Horses has been on a progressive decline ever since 2009



How can this be the case when some sources quote the breed number as being over 6000 horses?

- ◇ The sad fact is that many of these horses are deceased however the majority of these have never been reported as such to the breed registry.
- ◇ Many others are aged and past their reproductive years, or are in homes where their owners have no intention of ever producing a foal.
- ◇ The reality is that less than 2000 Canadian Horse mares are estimated to remain in the breeding pool that are able to reproduce and ensure horses for future generations.
- ◇ Add to this the fact that there are many fewer breeders who are producing foals. Due to the economic crisis, many breeders have cut back on their breeding programs or have gotten out of the business entirely.

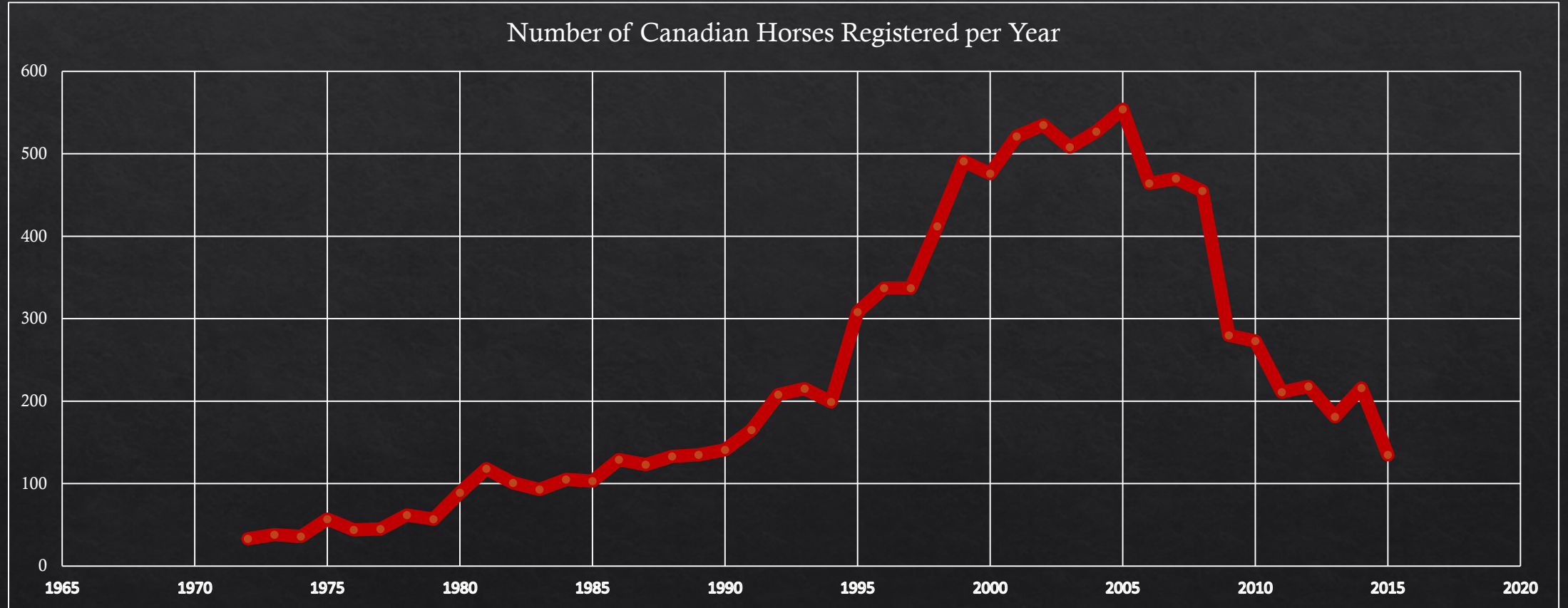
What is happening?

- ◆ Simply put, not enough foals are being produced to replace the adults being lost.
- ◆ In order to maintain the current population (in 2016 estimated to be about 5400), we need to have a minimum of 450 foal registrations per year.

Foal production and registration

- ◆ Since 2008, yearly registrations have been drastically declining, to the point where the breed is consistently at 200 or less registrations per year
- ◆ 2015 had an epic low year of registration of only 135 horses registered.
- ◆ The following graph shows that the number of registered foals produced each year, continues to drop catastrophically, the likes of which have not been seen since before the early '90's.

Number of Canadian Horses Registered per year



How and why is this occurring?

- ◇ The following are factoring into this trend:
 - ◇ Stallion breeding trends and numbers
 - ◇ Mare owner demographics
 - ◇ Stallion demographics
 - ◇ Other factors

Stallion breedings

- ◆ Each year, stallion declarations are sent to the CLRC which note how many registered Canadian Horse stallions were bred to mares of any breeds.
- ◆ In 2014, 100 owners provided 195 declarations.
- ◆ By 2016, despite the 195 stallion coverings being registered, the actual number registered for 2015 was only 135.
- ◆ This number of horses registered in 2015 broke down as follows:
 - ◆ Horses born in 2015 and registered in 2015: 34 females & 16 males (**total 50**)
 - ◆ Horses born in 2014 and registered in 2015: 22 females & 16 males (**total 38**)
 - ◆ Horses born in other years and registered in 2015: 17 females & 20 males (**37**)

- ◇ This means that only 50 foals were registered in 2015, as a result of all of the 195 breedings declared in 2014
- ◇ This translates into only 25% of the reported breedings for 2014 resulting in foals actually being produced & registered in 2015
- ◇ This low number may be due to various reasons:
 - ◇ The stallions were used to cover more mares of other breeds
 - ◇ It may reflect the general aging of the breeding population, thus many of the breedings are not resulting in viable pregnancies
 - ◇ Or that the foals occurring as a result of these breedings are not being registered

Mare demographics

- ◇ With a current breed population of about 5400, this means there are currently less than 3000 mares 20 years of age and younger left in the breed
- ◇ Of this number, probably at least 1000 (or more) are too old or too young to be used for breeding
- ◇ Recent surveys of horse ownership done in Quebec and BC indicate that nearly 50-60% of all mares owned, are in homes where they are used as the primary riding horse and that there are no plans to breed them
- ◇ This means that the entire breeding population of mares left is likely much fewer than the 2000 initially estimated and quoted
- ◇ Realistically, there are now likely less than a 1000 mares left in the breeding population which have the potential to contribute to the breed!

Stallion demographics

- ◆ These same grim numbers coincide with declining stallion ownership.
- ◆ Prior to 2008, there were between 20 - 30 Canadian stallions standing at stud in BC. According to a recent survey, there are now only about 10 stallion owners left in the province who are currently breeding
- ◆ Of these, the majority are located in remote areas of the province and do not offer shipped semen, so these stallions are not easily accessible to the majority of mare owners
- ◆ Thus, in BC, there are currently only 3 or 4 stallions that are centrally located and that offer comprehensive breeding services making them readily available to mare owners
- ◆ This drop in stallion ownership is multi-factorial.
 - ◆ Stallions are challenging to keep, so many chose not to
 - ◆ With a pool of 1000 mares or less that may potentially be bred spread across Canada and the US, and of these very few per being bred, this results in very few mares being booked to each stallion. As such, economically they are very expensive to keep and house with minimal financial return
 - ◆ Horse husbandry skills and the experience to handle a stallion are becoming increasingly rare

Other factors

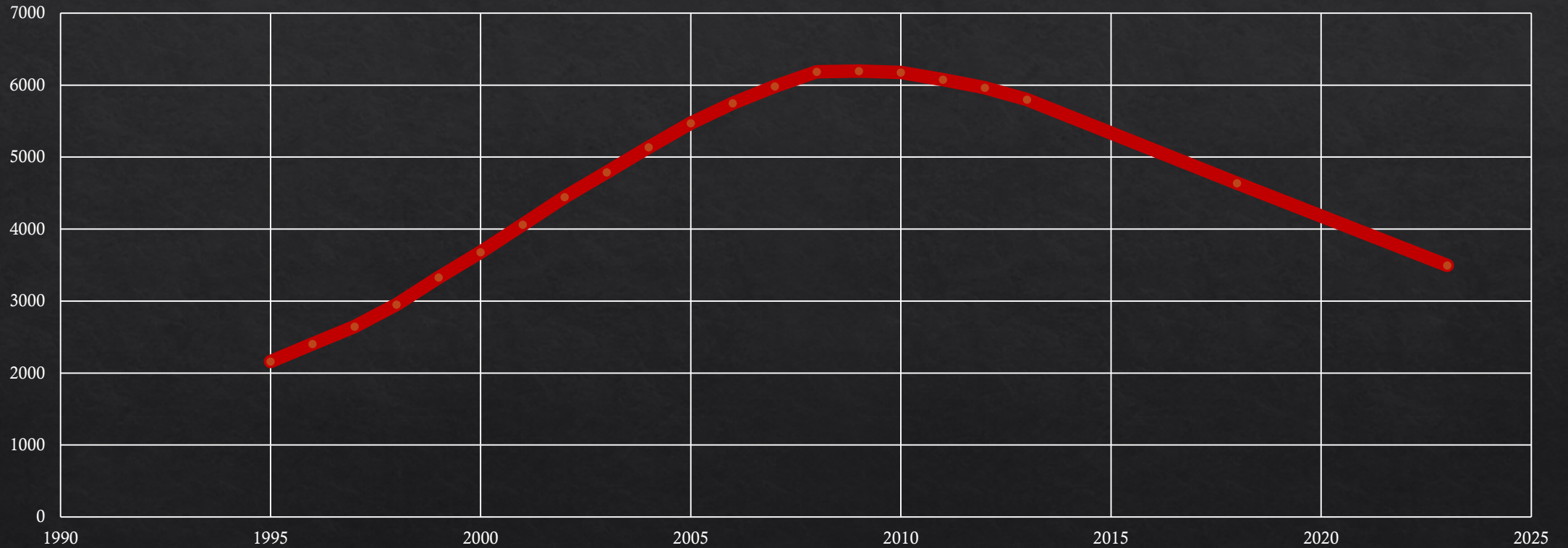
- ◇ Since the economic downturn of 2008 where the horse economy crashed, the shift in ownership profile has very much changed
- ◇ Prior to 2008, there were a mix of individual owners, and small scale breeders, as well as some large reputable breeders from whom people could reliably obtain horses
- ◇ Since 2008, many of these small AND large breeding operations are now gone – victims of the economy and the rising costs of horse raising in a poor sales market
- ◇ With the changing ownership profile, most Canadian horses are now owned singly as riding horses
- ◇ This includes the vast majority of mares in the breed who are now in homes where there are no plans to breed them, EVER

Population forecast

- ◆ At the current rate of registrations, the breed population is currently dropping by 250-300 per year and will soon be dropping by about 500
- ◆ This doesn't seem like much however in a breed of less than 5500 in total this is a loss of about 5-10% of the total population per year
- ◆ Since 2011, the breed population has already dropped from 6000 to a currently estimated 5400
- ◆ At this rate, in less than five years time, the population will likely be down by another one third, to approximately 4500
- ◆ In another five years, it may drop to less than 3000, which means we will have lost HALF of our treasured Canadian Horse breed in just one decade!

Projected Canadian Horse Numbers

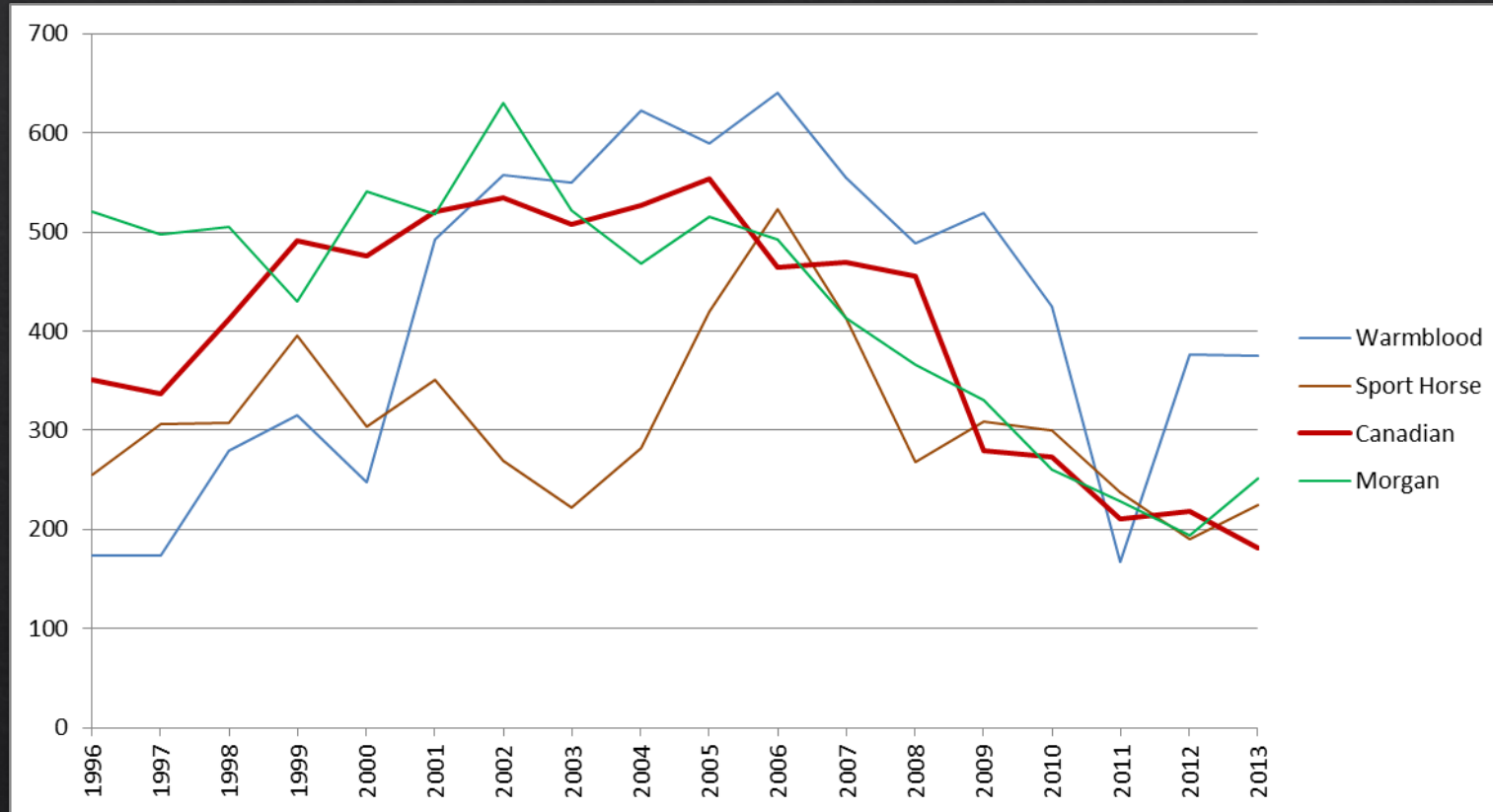
Canadian Horse Population by year Population



How does this compare to other breeds?

- ◆ Despite the fact that other breeds are showing recovery and resurgence in numbers, for some reason this doesn't seem to be the case with the Canadian Horse

Canadian Horse compared to other breeds



Why are the other breeds faring better?

- ◆ Registrations for other breeds such as the Warmblood, Sport Horse and Morgan are all showing improvements in numbers whereas the Canadian is not
- ◆ This is likely due in part that the numbers of Canadian Horses were so much smaller to begin with
- ◆ Couple this with the fact that when many of Canadian Horse breeders stopped breeding, they were gelded their best stallions and sold their breeding stock to non-breeding clients. Although this was done out of economic necessity, this unfortunately in many cases, permanently removed these animals from the breeding pool
- ◆ So the reality is that, as with the other breeds, there is once again increased interest in the Canadian Horse. However without foals being produced, buyers are discovering a scarcity of animals available on the market...
Without horses being produced there can be no recovery

What do all these numbers mean?

- ◆ As per the Livestock Conservancy, a breed's status is classified to be Critical once it meets the following criteria: *Fewer than 200 annual registrations and an estimated global population less than 2,000*
- ◆ Despite the fact that there are currently more than 2000 individuals left in the breed, with some lobbying, the breed status has now been pro-actively changed to “Critical” status as of now. This was done to reflect the lack of breeding animals left in the reproductive pool combined with the precipitous downwards trend in registrations, and the rapidly decreasing population that is clearly unable to sustain itself.

Critical Status

- ◆ As of 2015, the Canadian Horse breed status was changed from “threatened” to “Critical” by the Livestock Conservancy
- ◆ This reflects the significantly less than 200 registrations per year that are currently the case
- ◆ Despite these troubling statistics, Rare Breeds Canada has not yet changed the breed status and continues to list the Canadian Horse as “Vulnerable”
- ◆ With registration numbers continuing to be this low, the breed is simply not sustainable; there are not enough new individuals being born to replace those being lost

What will the loss of the Canadian Horse mean?

- ◆ The loss of the Canadian Horse is more than the loss of a rare breed or genetic diversity. It's the loss of our national identity!
- ◆ This breed is both something uniquely Canadian and an integral part of our national heritage
- ◆ The Canadian Horse has been in Canada for over 350 years - longer than many Canadian people and their own family generations

What will the loss of the Canadian Horse mean?

- ◇ They helped to settle the country – fields were plowed, children taken to school on their backs, sleds were raced on the weekends, and families driven into town all by Canadians
- ◇ It helped to found many of the other North American horse breeds such as the Morgan horse, the Saddlebred, Standardbred, and even the American Quarter horse
- ◇ This breed is truly and uniquely ours and has been officially declared as such by parliament – **Our National Horse of Canada!**

What will the loss of the Canadian Horse mean?

- ◆ Not only will the nation of Canada lose a valuable part of their culture, identity and history, so will people as a whole lose
- ◆ More than any other breed, Le Cheval Canadien has the affectionate, people oriented temperament that is much needed in an increasingly technological world, where people are less connected to nature, and more disconnected from each other, than ever before
- ◆ Canadian Horses are accessible and suitable to a wide variety of people – ranging from little kids, experienced horsemen, mature adults returning to riding, those having horses for the first time, senior citizens, and for people with disabilities
- ◆ As the experience of CHHAPS members has shown over and over again, the Canadian Horse has a unique capacity to enrich people's lives. They want to connect with people – in fact they demand it!

In Summary

- ◆ We are on the verge of once again losing our beloved national horse
- ◆ These same grim statistics are echoed in each Canadian province
- ◆ Registrations are at an all-time low, many breeders have gone out of business, no one wants the “bother” of keeping stallions any longer, and the vast majority of mares are in the hands of single owners who have no plan to breed them, or to preserve their lines in the breed gene pool
- ◆ There is no question that the breed is in serious trouble!

What can be done?

- ◆ Victoria Tollman, Executive Director of the Equus Survival trust very eloquently summed up the situation. She says, “Every worthy mare should be in purebred production and contribute at least two foals (or more if you can support that) back to the gene pool. Every mare should also have a good daughter to replace her in the breeding program when the mare is retired.” “Still each person's situation is their own, and they must act accordingly. Only you know what you can support. And if you can't support any [foals] during the breeding life of your horses, I suggest you lease them out, trade them for a gelding or senior Canadian in need of a retirement home, or sell or gift them to breeders who can. You owe that to your breed. So, no ... it's not easy being a rare breed steward. The sacrifices are many. The challenges tough. The rewards? Priceless ...”

You can each do your part!

- ◆ Those of us concerned about the breed's preservation urge Canadian mare owners to seriously consider Victoria's suggestions.
- ◆ To ensure that the breed continues, and that every mare's genes contribute to the gene pool, we hope that all mare owners will consider breeding their mares at least once or twice in her lifetime.
- ◆ In order to make the best contribution to the breed, it's not enough to choose a stallion based on convenience or the most affordable stud fee. Be open to using shipped cooled or frozen semen to achieve this. And be sure to choose the highest quality stallion possible, and which best compliments the mare.
- ◆ Register your foals after they are born, and especially before they are sold.
- ◆ Do your part to help to maintain Canada's beloved National breed before it is too late!

For those looking to buy

- ◆ For anyone looking to buy a Canadian, they should be aware that the availability of well-trained mature horses is extremely limited.
- ◆ For example, the chances of someone finding their “ideal” black, 16 hand, 7 to 10 year old, well-schooled Canadian gelding are very slim, especially considering that there have been fewer than 50 geldings per year registered since 2008.
- ◆ Those looking to buy now will most likely have to purchase a youngster, however by doing this, they will not only support the breed, they will also help to support those mare owners trying to do their part to perpetuate the breed.
- ◆ If you are not experienced an end up buying a youngster, do make sure you get someone experienced to help train both you and the horse

For those looking to buy

- ◆ If you end up buying a mare, consider the ethical responsibility this places upon you. Be cognizant of the dire situation regarding the shortage of breeding mares. In order to help the breed to continue, and to be a good breed steward, do your part by ensuring that your mare at least produces a foal or two in her lifetime in order to replace herself.
- ◆ If you are not in a position to produce a foal yourself, consider putting her out on a breeding lease.

When buying

- ◇ And for those who say Canadians are too expensive, remember the old adage “you get what you pay for”
- ◇ Yes, well-bred animals are going to cost more to purchase, just as they cost correspondingly more to produce
- ◇ But by buying a quality animal from a reputable breeder, not only will buyers be investing in an invaluable part of our Canadian history, you are also going to end up with an awesome, sound, sturdy horse who will be your faithful companion for many years to come!

Support your breed organization

- ◆ If you want more information on the Canadian Horse breed and our efforts to promote and try to preserve it, please see the Canadian Horse Heritage and Preservation Society (CHHAPS) webpage at <http://www.chhaps.org/> or Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Canadian-Horse-Heritage-Preservation-Society/483475991706071>
- ◆ If you are a Canadian Horse owner or lover, please consider becoming a member and helping us to support and preserve our beautiful and uniquely Canadian Heritage breed!
You can find our membership form at: <http://www.chhaps.org/membershipapplication.pdf>