

STATE AMBASSADORS

By Katherine Walcott

SOUTH CAROLINA: Marsh Tacky, State Heritage Horse since 2010.

Unique to South Carolina, the Marsh Tacky has been in the state for more than 500 years. When the Spanish colonies there failed, the horses lived on, adapting to the marshy terrain of the state's lowcountry. During the American Revolution, Marsh Tackies helped colonial troops navigate the swampy region and ward off the British troops mounted on larger European breeds that would have found the environment difficult. Later, the Marsh Tacky was used to patrol the beaches during World War II. It also played an important part in the agricultural livelihood of farmers on the islands off the coasts of South Carolina and Georgia. Today, it is estimated that there are fewer than 150 pure Marsh Tackies remaining. To promote and celebrate the breed, an annual Marsh Tacky race is held on the beach at Hilton Head. The American Livestock Breeds Association and the Carolina Marsh Tacky Association are currently working together to improve the breed's status.

Since South Carolina currently boasts a variety of breeds and equine activities, the designation of "Heritage Horse" avoids showing favoritism. At the same time that the Marsh Tacky was named the State Heritage Horse, South Carolina recognized the mule as their State Heritage Work Animal.

