

Moon Madness: a Study in Genetics

By Elizabeth Kopplow

The goofy gene, though not isolated by science, has been repeatedly captured on film.

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MFT gelding, MOON'S JET COMMANDER, known and loved as Jet. Owner, Dave Morris, Suffolk, Virginia.



MFT filly, MOON'S PEACE PIPE, known and loved as Smokey. Owners, Arthur and Nancy Owens, Quiet Manor Horse Ranch, Hempstead, Texas.

MFT stallion, PRINCE MOON BEAM, known and loved as Moon, best friend of Elizabeth Kopplow, Seguin, Texas.



MFT gelding, MOON'S MOVIN' OUT, known and loved as Rascal. Owner, Alanna Sommer, Bartonville, Texas.

When the photos started arriving from the owners of offspring sired by a particular Missouri Foxtrotter stallion, there seemed to be an obvious and reoccurring theme. I couldn't help but wonder if this unusual similarity amongst the foals was genetic. I had noticed these tendencies here at the farm, and attributed it to how my foals were handled. But the foals in these photos are spread out all over the country, some being raised by large breeders, some pleasure horse owners and for some, these were the owners' first attempt at raising a foal. It seemed that no matter what the circumstance, the foals all had a very well developed sense of humor.

PRINCE MOON BEAM, the sire of these colts and fillies, has graced the pages of *The Gaited Horse Magazine* on several occasions, to show off his prowess in the kitchen, on the computer and to help illustrate an article on Artificial Insemination. (His personal favorite.) He is an unusual stallion, there is no doubt, but the surprise has been his ability to pass on this "Goofy Gene".

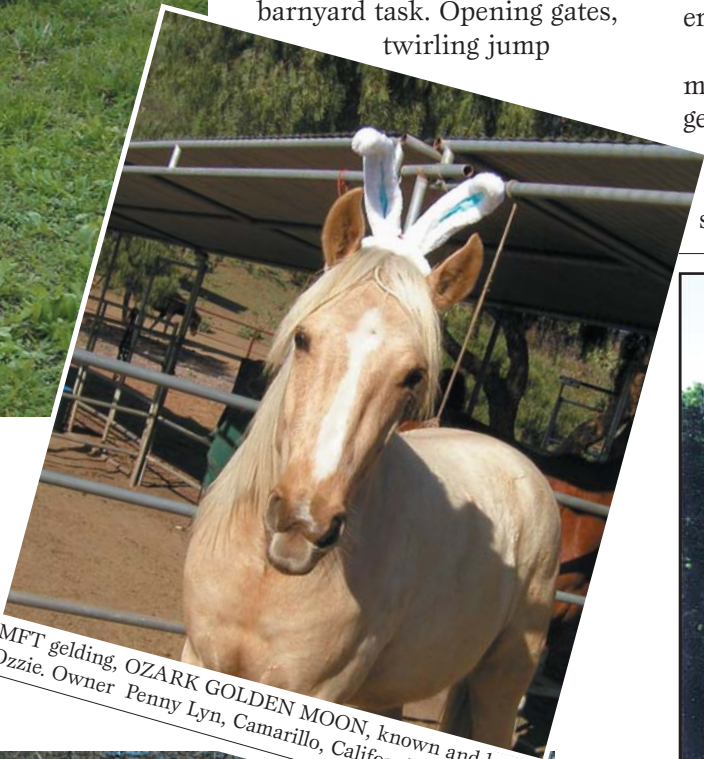
There have not been any attempts to isolate this gene in the laboratory, there are no tests available to see if it is present, but it manifests itself in several unmistakable ways. We are seeing foals with a

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MFT/Arab colt, MILES TO GO, known and loved as Miles. Owner, Dorothy Murray, Magnolia, Texas.

desire to fetch objects, walk into homes, garages and tack rooms, wear clothing and costumes with pride, and in general help with each and every barnyard task. Opening gates, twirling jump



MFT gelding, OZARK GOLDEN MOON, known and loved as Ozzie. Owner Penny Lyn, Camarillo, California.



MFT filly, LILY'S MOON PIE, known and loved as Ally. Owner, Diane Ingledue, Cottonwood, Arizona.

ropes, "borrowing" tools (including the vets medicine box) are also signs the gene is present. It seems very possible that this "Goofy Gene" could also be isolated in humans, as it does appear that soon both foals and owners begin to participate equally in these activities that could only be described as general buffoonery.



Rascal Recycles.

There is much work to be done before the mapping of the equine genome is complete. It is reassuring for me to know that Moon is doing his part to increase the number of horses that carry the most important gene of all, the one that increases smiles and causes great laughter.



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