

# Built To Do The Job

## BARREL HORSE SIRE



Photo courtesy of Sandy Budge, Stellation Station

By JW Equine

**W**hen Reiner joined Chick as the second horse by Docs Paradise (1983) to win the \$50,000 run at the Calgary Stampede and make it four years in a row for his progeny, I got curious. And when Chick won the 2004 Canadian Finals Rodeo, I knew I had to find out more. I wondered what it was about Docs Paradise that made his offspring such good barrel racers.

From there the logic was to compare him to other sires of barrel horses to see what they had in common. For this article, the comparison stallions — Fire Water Flit (1978), On The Money Red (1978–2001) and Sun Frost (1979) — were chosen for no other reason than they have consistently sired top barrel horses.

From limited opportunities Docs Paradise, owned by Herb and Minnie Krause of

Medicine Hat, Alberta, has a few other barrel racers to his credit, but his Stampede winners, Docs Leo Lee (Reiner) and Chicado Doc (Chick), are his most successful to date. Fire Water Flit, owned by Vicki Adams' Fire Water Creek Ranch of Texas, sired among others Fire Water Fiesta, NFR qualifier and winner of over \$500,000. On The Money Red, owned by Danny Ray's Victory Farms of Oklahoma, was leading Barrel Sire several times thanks to horses the likes of Speed Money, an NFR qualifier on several occasions, WPRA Horse of the Year three times, and a winner of the \$50,000 round at the Calgary Stampede. Sun Frost, owned by Cowan Brothers LLC of South Dakota, has a list of top progeny including Bozo, the 1994 and 1996 WPRA Barrel Racing Horse of the Year.

### Was It In Their Blood?

Bloodlines are one of the first things that come to mind when trying to find what these stallions have in common, yet one could not refer to these horses as closely related. The closest bloodline relationship is Doc Bar, who appears as the paternal grand sire of both Docs Paradise and Sun Frost.

The only other relationship found within four generations is Leo, who appears in the third generation of Fire Water Flit, the fourth generation of On The Money Red and the fourth generation of Docs Paradise.

As sires, Fire Water Flit and Sun Frost crossed with a variety of mares. On The Money Red crossed well with Easy Jet and Doc Bar mares, but according to Danny Ray, "Bugs Alive in '75, even though he's a top broodmare sire of barrel horses, did not

Opposite: Doc's Paradise, 1983 Sorrel stallion.

work. That was not my number one cross." Docs Paradise sired his best barrel horses out of mares by Chickie Book, but prior to 2004, he only bred a few outside mares.

### Size and Conformation

Three of the stallions are 15.2 hands, while On The Money Red was an inch or two shorter. All are well muscled without being overly bulky.

Krause describes Docs Paradise as "our type of horse. We like his conformation. He's got a good wither, deep girth and he's not too low to the ground." Carol Schaffer of Bassano, Alberta's Sandy Ridge Stallion Station, where Docs Paradise was collected for the first time in 2004, added, "He's not your typical barrel horse. I like to see that amount of bone."

Adams describes Fire Water Flit as "a little bigger than most Flit Bars," adding, "He's not chunky, probably more middle of the road. He has a inverted 'V' up front, a big gaskin and forearm, a long sloping shoulder, a long neck and is low-hocked."

Ray describes On The Money Red as having "a long body and straight legs. He had a level croup and he did not sire pretty heads or low hocks. He was not a halter horse or a sire of halter horses. They had their own look, but I've never seen an ugly horse in a win picture, so, he was structurally correct."

Tork Cowan describes Sun Frost by saying, "We think it is pretty hard to pick him apart. He's a pretty well put together horse and he's got good bone." His brother, Treg, says, "He's hard to fault. He has square legs and a heavy shoulder, deep girth, big hip and

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a shorter than normal back." The other brother, Tigh, adds, "They are wide from hock to hock and their hocks set up underneath them. They have a low set stifle too."

### Similarities Emerge

Several of the conformation points mentioned above, a deep girth, a good wither, a long sloping shoulder, good bone and a short back, are all visible in the photos of each of our subject stallions. From a functional point of view, a deep girth means a good lung capacity, a well-defined wither helps hold the saddle in place, a long sloping shoulder adds to stride length, good bone aids in soundness and a short back adds to strength and athleticism.

### The Motor

The functional aspects of the skeleton are beyond what most people look at when judging a horse, but if we do examine them with function in mind, we find commonalities in these stallions. When we look at the skeletal structure of these four stallions they start to be more alike than different.

When viewed from the side, all four have a stifle placement that is just below the level of the sheath. This stifle placement is lower than

a pure sprinter would normally possess, and a lower stifle helps produce a longer stride.

All have open hock angles, or a relatively straight hind leg. Docs Paradise, Fire Water Flit and On The Money Red all exhibit a fairly level croup, while Sun Frost has a bit more slope to his.

All four have a lumbosacral joint either directly over or very nearly over the point of hip. This strong coupling allows horses to transfer the power they produce in the hindquarters without putting undo stress on the muscles and ligaments of their backs.

An open hock angle, a relatively level croup, a stifle at or below the level of the sheath and a well placed lumbosacral joint are also common traits in top reiners and dressage horses. Reining and dressage at the upper levels demand that a horse be able to move well under himself with his hind legs and to support additional weight on the hindquarters so that the forehand is lighter. These abilities are also advantageous for running barrels.

### Running Style

The same hindquarter qualities required for top performance in other venues also hold

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Right: Vicki Adams describes her Fire Water Flit's talents as explosive short speed, a quick step, a long stride and agility. "They plant a hind leg and are in and out of the turn. They have a natural big stop and most run in snaffles."

Below: The mare Chicado Doc (Chick) by Docs Paradise.

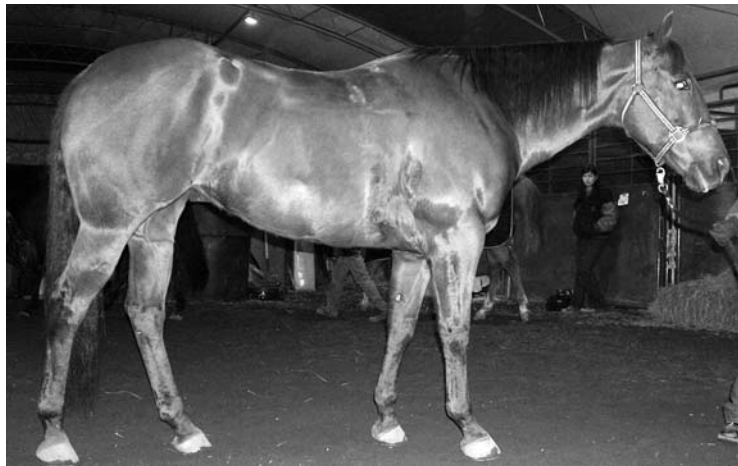




Photo: Speedhorse

On the Money Red (1978- 2001) sorrel stallion.



Photo: Lea Watson

Fire Water Flit, 1978 palomino stallion.



Photo: Larry Larson

Sun Frost, 1979 palomino stallion.

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true for barrel horses, and may explain why horses by these stallions garner the following descriptions when it comes to running style.

Ginger Besplug describes her daughter's three-time Calgary Stampede champion mare by Docs Paradise by saying, "She's a bit straight behind for a barrel horse, but it's part of her athleticism, how she uses herself." The ground at Stampede Park is notoriously poor.

Adams says, "Fire Water Flit and his offspring run a one-step turn. They plant a hind leg and are in and out of the turn. They have a natural big stop and most run in snaffles. They

can handle bad ground and never have any back problems. As a matter of fact, he ran on a lot more crappy ground than good ground."

Regarding the On The Money Red offspring, Ray says, "They aren't the run-around-the-barrel types, and they could handle deeper dirt. They set themselves and just do the turn."

Regarding the Sun Frost offspring, Tigh Cowan says, "They look like they're gliding, and they can handle a lot of different footing."

**Up Front**

All four stallions have room between their elbows and their rib cages, which is also a

trait in reiners and dressage horses. That room allows for flexibility of the forehand, especially for lateral movements and sharp turns. The inverted 'V' comes from a relatively high point of shoulder, which also lightens the forehand.

Each member of the foursome is considerably shorter over the top than underneath, in part due to the slope of the shoulder and the placement of the lumbosacral joint. This "short over the top and long underneath" construction is a quality often sought by barrel racers. In conjunction with that sloping shoulder, each has a long humerus and a long forearm, all of which add to stride length.

**Imagine the difference on the clock between two horses of equal stride rate, but one has a longer stride.**

**Speed and Stride**

Stride length and turnover rate are the two components of speed. Imagine the difference on the clock between two horses of equal stride rate, but one has a longer stride. It may well be the difference between winning and placing out of the money.

Krause says he knew Docs Paradise "had lots of speed." Adams says Fire Water Flits have "explosive short speed, a quick step, a long stride and agility. They have to be able to run quick and have a long stride in different arenas." Ray says he's "never seen an On The Money Red that couldn't run." And the Cowan brothers say that Sun Frost was bred for the speed he produces.

**The Total Package**

First and foremost, each of these stallions has, or sires, a mind for the sport. Secondly, despite slight differences in conformation, all four stallions are structurally designed to be efficient in their ability to generate power, to transfer that power forward, to maximize stride length while maintaining a quick turnover rate and to be flexible enough to bend around a barrel. In other words, they are built to do the job. ●