



# A SURVEY OF MORGANS IN USEA EVENTING COMPETITIONS

*Calculating the Morgan presence in combined training, the sport of eventing, has long been based on assumptions. This definitive research documents—and suggests better ways of tracking—our breed's participation.*

**E**venting, also known as combined training, involves three phases of competition: dressage, cross-country, and show jumping. The United States Eventing Association (USEA), the governing body of the sport in the United States, offers seven levels of competition: beginner novice, novice, training, modified, preliminary, intermediate, and advanced (the modified level was added in 2017). As competitors move up the levels, the dressage tests require more advanced skills, the jumps are higher, the distance and complexity of the cross-country phase is greater, and the speed needed to complete the course without time faults increases. Modified and above are considered the upper levels of USEA competition (this article does not consider FEI competitions).

Morgans and Morgan crosses have been used in eventing for

decades, including a few at the upper levels of the sport. While articles published in *The Morgan Horse* highlighted the achievements of some of them, the extent to which Morgans and Morgan crosses are used in eventing, the levels at which they compete, their performance, and the breeding and other characteristics of these horses is mostly unknown. Addressing these unknowns is the purpose of this article.

**By Jack Stang**

## THE MORGAN PRESENCE

According to records provided by the USEA, 575 horses having a Morgan connection earned a score in sanctioned eventing competitions between 2008 and 2022. This figure included 333 horses identified as Morgans and 242 as Morgan crosses.

Unfortunately, many of the horses identified as Morgans in

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**ABOVE:** The iconic Morgan eventer Dragonfire Kublakhan and rider Jennifer (Chang) McFall.



Morgans representing the breed in open eventing competition include (clockwise from top left) LR Ami Halleluiah, shown with Sophia M. Jean; Crown Indigo, shown with Isabelle Gellner; Merriewold Quintessa, shown with Alice Chan; Ltl Ireland Summr Soldier, shown with Hannah Reeser; and Marana Samson Jaydun, shown with Jennifer Lingeman (photos © Joan Davis, Flatlandsfoto; Holly Gellner; Ride On Photo; Xpress Foto; Brant Gamma Photos).

the USEA records did not compete under their American Morgan Horse Association (AMHA) registered names. The identity of some of these Morgans was found by cross-referencing information provided in the USEA records (name or partial name of sire and/or dam, color, birth year, sex, etc.) with records from the AMHA Registry. Personal contact with an owner or someone familiar with a horse also aided in identification. Often, the USEA record simply left off the Morgan breeder's prefix or included only part of the registered name. Altogether, 238 of the 333 horses that were said to be Morgan horses were verified to be Morgans and identified by their AMHA registered names. The remaining 95 unidentified horses are designated "said to be" Morgans (STB-Morgans) in this report. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some of these horses were never registered with AMHA in the first place.

Naming the Morgan parent of the 242 Morgan crosses was impossible unless its registered name or a close approximation was provided in the USEA records, as part-Morgans are not registerable with AMHA. All told, the Morgan parent of only 43 crossbreds could be verified. These horses are designated as MorganX. The 199 crossbreds whose Morgan parent could not be named are designated as STB-MorganX. The frequency of the diverse crossing breeds is shown in TABLE 1. Sometimes the breed of the non-Morgan was unknown, not named, or was itself said to be a cross.

A majority of the MorganX crossbreds, 28 out of 43 horses, had a Morgan sire. Comparable data is unavailable for the STB-MorganX horses because the USEA records proved to be unreliable for finding whether the sire or the dam is the Morgan parent. Highlighting the problem, the sex of some of the MorganX parents were found to be misstated.

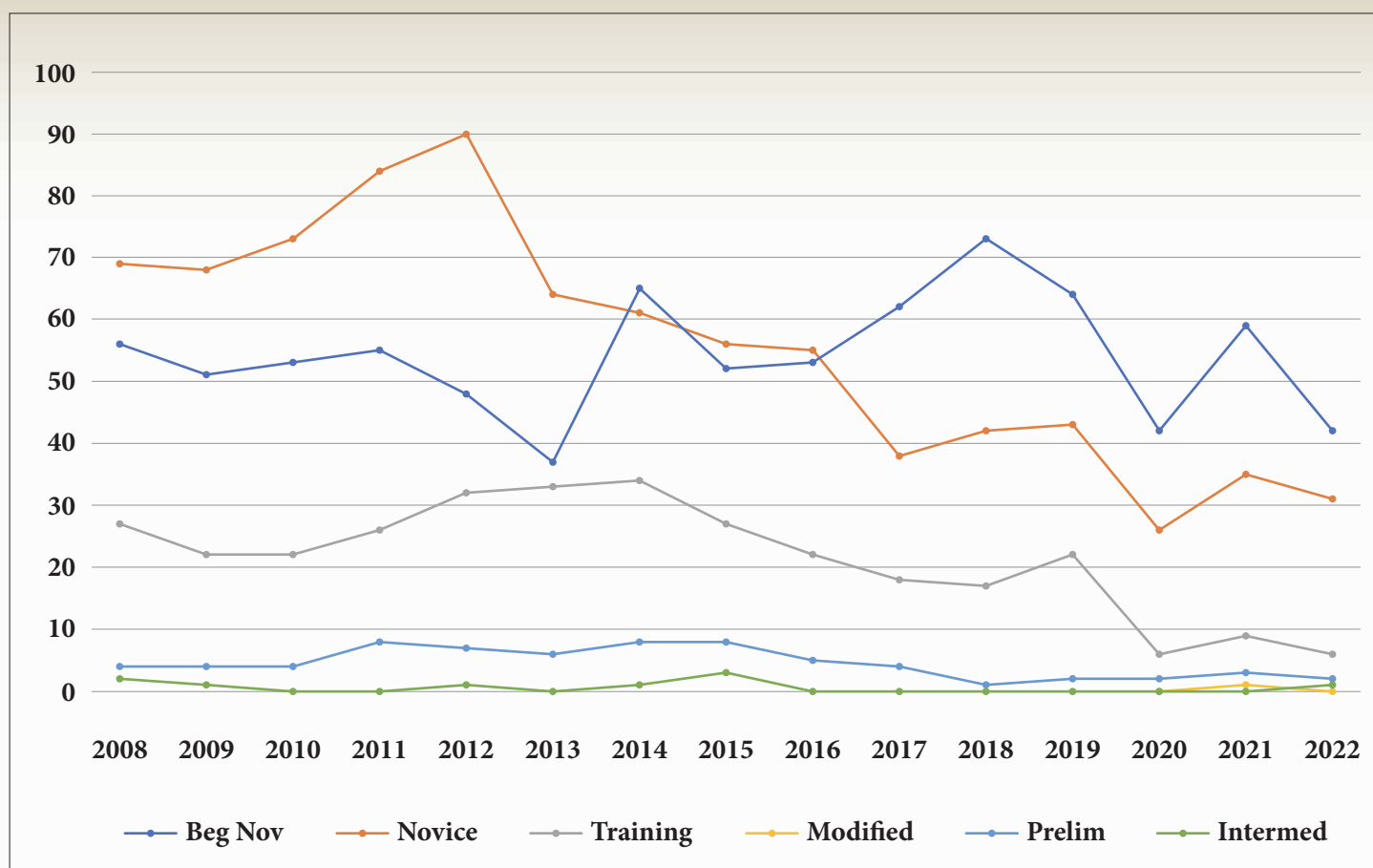
The Morgan Sport Resource website (<http://morgansportresource.com/>) has complete alphabetical listings of the Morgans and MorganX horses that evented between 2008 and 2022. It includes the AMHA registered name of each Morgan, sire and dam, breeder, and overall competition record. The listing of MorganX eventers includes the name of the Morgan parent and its competition record.

## PARTICIPATION

The number of Morgan-connected horses taking part at each level of eventing between 2008 and 2022 is shown in FIGURE 1. Together, the beginner novice and novice levels accounted for 72 percent to 89 percent of total participation, depending on the year. Training level made up most of the rest of the participation numbers. Only 11 Morgan-connected horses competed at preliminary and intermediate, and none evented at the advanced level during this period.

BREEDS	MORGANX	STB-MORGANX	TOTAL CROSSES
<b>STOCK HORSE</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>59</b>
Quarter Horse	2	40	42
Appaloosa	0	11	11
Paint	0	6	6
<b>THOROUGHBRED</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>DRAFT HORSE BREEDS</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>40</b>
Draft Horse ( <i>no breed specified</i> )	0	3	3
Belgian draft	1	9	10
Irish Draught Sport Horse	1	0	1
Percheron	0	19	19
Clydesdale	0	4	4
Shire	0	3	3
<b>ARABIAN</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>WARMBLOODS</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>18</b>
Warmblood ( <i>no breed specified</i> )	1	0	1
Trakehner	1	1	2
Holsteiner	1	4	5
Hanoverian	1	3	4
Dutch Warmblood	0	1	1
Selle Francais	0	1	1
Oldenburg	0	2	2
Swedish Warmblood	0	1	1
Belgian Warmblood	0	1	1
<b>WELSH/WELSH COB</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>FRIESIAN</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>PONY</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>
Pony ( <i>generic</i> )	0	5	5
Sport Pony	0	1	1
Quarter Pony	0	3	3
<b>CONNEMARA</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>MUSTANG</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>STANDARD BRED</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>NORWEGIAN FJORD</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ANDALUSIAN</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CLEVELAND BAY</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>DUTCH HARNESS HORSE</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>NEW ZEALAND SPORTHORSE</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PINTO</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

**TABLE 1. Breeds Crossed with Morgans in Eventing.** Numbers indicate the number of MorganX or STB-MorganX from 2008–2022.



**FIGURE 1.** Annual Participation by Level of Morgan-Connected Horses in Eventing.

Participation peaked in the early teens and has trended downward since 2015. It dropped significantly in 2020 during the pandemic and although it increased in 2021, participation has remained below pre-pandemic levels, decreasing again to nearly the 2020 level in 2022. The greatest decrease occurred at the novice and training levels, while the numbers at beginner novice were relatively steady. The decline at training level, down to six horses in 2022 from a peak of 34 in 2014, was particularly steep. Comparable data for total participation in eventing over this period is unavailable, but the 2022 numbers at the lower levels were said to be down (personal communication).

### USEA AWARD POINTS

One measure of how well the Morgan-connected horses did in eventing is how many of them earned award points. Points are given to the top 25 percent of starters in a division that have achieved the minimum eligibility requirements: no more than 45 penalty points in dressage, no jumping penalties and no more than 30 time-penalties in cross country, and no more than 16 jumping penalties in show jumping. The number of points awarded is determined by placing and several additional factors. In an average year,

about 46 percent of the Morgan-connected eventers competing at beginner novice level earned award points. The percentage earning points increased to 50 percent of those competing at novice and 53 percent of those at training level. It dropped to 47 percent at preliminary and 22 percent at intermediate. However, the small number of eventers at these higher levels lead to high year-to-year variability in percentages.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF MORGAN EVENTERS

This section takes a more in-depth look at the characteristics of the 238 eventers whose Morgan identity was verified. TABLE 2 shows the sex distribution, height, and their starting age and duration of eventing.

#### HEIGHT

The 15.1-hand median height of Morgan eventers is clearly within the breed standard of 14.1 to 15.2 hands. Success at the upper levels of eventing was not a function of height. Although three of the Morgans that competed to preliminary or intermediate were taller than the 15.1 median (Bridlewood Beau Cheval, who competed at intermediate, was 15.3; DVF Caliente Creek, at 16.1, and Mead's

SEX	
Gelding	64.0%
Mare	33.5%
Stallion	2.5%
HEIGHT (HANDS)	
Median	15.1
Range	13.2–16.2
AGE AT FIRST COMP (YRS)	
Median	10 Years
Range	4–23 Years
NO. OF YRS COMPETING	
Median	3 Years
Range	1–19 Years

**TABLE 2.** Characteristics of Morgan Eventers.

LEVELS	TOTAL MORGANS	NO. EARNED POINTS	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
Beg. Novice	80	36	45%
Novice	111	56	50.5%
Training	36	16	44%
Preliminary	7	3	43%
Intermediate	4	2	50%

**TABLE 3.** Number of Morgans by Highest Level Ridden and Number Earning Points at Highest Level.

Traveler, at 15.2, both competed at preliminary), the median height of the 11 Morgans that competed at the upper levels was only 15 hands. Notably, two of the intermediate level eventers, Artistic Flaire and Temple, were 14.2 and 14.3 hands, respectively.

#### COMPETITION CHRONOLOGY

The median age at which Morgans competed in their first sanctioned eventing competition was ten years. A horse must be at least four years of age before it competes in a sanctioned event, but only four out of the 238 Morgans started eventing this early. At the other extreme, one Morgan entered his first competition at age 23. The median duration of their eventing career was three years, but 69 of the 238 Morgans competed for only a single year. Conversely, 18 evented for ten or more years. Morgans notable for the duration of their eventing careers include KRP Montana Gold Eagle (19 years), LVM Blazin Candle Light (16 years), Peppermill Puppet (16 years), and Artistic Flaire (14 years). An interesting characteristic of these four horses is that all were smaller than the 15.1-hand median for Morgan eventers: 14.1, 15, 15, and 14.2 hands, respectively. The 11 Morgans that reached the upper levels (preliminary and intermediate) started eventing earlier, the median age of the first competition being seven years. They also evented for a longer period, the median duration of competition was nine years, and two are still competing.

#### LEVELS AND AWARD POINTS

Moving up the levels and earning award points are indicators of a rider's skill and a horse's aptitude for eventing. TABLE 3 shows the number of Morgans by highest level ridden, and the percentage of them that earned award points at their highest level of competition. Novice was the highest level reached by about 47 percent of the Morgan eventers, with 50 percent of them earning award points at this level. It is noteworthy that although only four Morgans competed to intermediate, two of them earned points.

The cumulative points earned by each Morgan and MorganX

over the 2008 through 2022 period can be found at the Morgan Sport Resource website (<http://morgansportresource.com/>).

#### OWNERS AND RIDERS OF THE MORGAN EVENTERS

USEA records show that the principal rider of most Morgan eventers was the horse's amateur owner or, based on a common surname, a relative of the owner. Only 26 of the 238 eventers were ridden primarily by someone having a different surname than the owner, although it is still possible some of these riders could have been relatives of the owner. The eventers more likely ridden by someone other than their owners were those still owned by their breeders. Someone else rode three out of eight such horses.

A comparison of USEA and AMHA records shows that 87 of the 238 Morgan eventing horses were owned by an individual not listed in the AMHA records (recognizing that an owner's surname might have changed due to a change in marital status, attention was also paid to first names). In other words, the ownership of 36 percent of the population changed hands without an official transfer of ownership being submitted to the AMHA Registrar. The more often the ownership of a horse changes, the more likely it is to lose its Morgan identity. Given the fact that half of the 238 Morgan eventers changed ownership at least three times, it is not surprising that the identity of the 95 STB-Morgans was lost.

#### PARTICIPATION BY MORGAN EVENTERS IN BREED SHOWS

Eventing competitions and Morgan breed shows may seem to exist in different equine worlds, however, 94 of the 238 Morgans (40 percent) that were used in eventing were also shown at some point in their careers at Morgan breed shows. The principal breed show classes were dressage (classic and Western), hunter pleasure, working hunter, road hack and hunter hack, and jumping. A smaller number were shown in sport horse in-hand, carriage, Western pleasure, English pleasure, pleasure driving, and trail classes. Most of them competed in more than one division.



More Morgans in eventing competitions include (clockwise from top left) Canequins Leatherstocking, shown with Nancy Johnson Hayes; Artistic Flaire, shown with Claire Jan; Avatar's Jazzman, shown with Lauren Chumley (photo © Brant Gamma Photos); Harwich Attila, shown with Kerry Estes (photo © Brant Gamma Photos); Kennebec Rugby, shown with Kathleen Bailey; and Ragtime Rio Bravo, shown with Hannah Reeser (photo © Brant Gamma Photos).

Three of the 11 Morgans that evented at the upper levels also competed at Morgan breed shows. Artistic Flaire, who evented at intermediate level, was shown in dressage, jumping, working hunter, hunter hack, and Western pleasure classes; Temple, who also evented at intermediate, competed in sport horse in-hand in the Morgan show ring; and, Kennebec Rugby, a preliminary-level eventer, competed in dressage, Western dressage, jumping, and working hunter classes.

#### BREEDING PROGRAMS PRODUCING MULTIPLE EVENTERS

Twenty-one breeding programs produced two or more eventers (TABLE 4). Margaret Gardiner's Kennebec and Ann Mears' LR Ami(e) prefixes each appear five times on the list of Morgan eventers. The Kennebec horses include Kennebec Rugby, plus three that reached novice and one that competed at beginner novice. The LR Ami(e) eventers include four that competed to novice, and one at beginner novice. Six program prefixes have three horses on the list and 13 prefixes appear twice. Many of these farms were known to have sport-focused breeding programs. Overall, these 21 programs produced 54 of the 238 Morgan eventers; the remaining 184 were produced by 184 different breeders. However, ten of the 11 Morgans that competed at the upper levels, including all four that competed at intermediate, were from breeders who produced only one listed eventer.

#### SIRES AND DAMS PRODUCING MULTIPLE EVENTERS

Twenty-four stallions sired two or more eventing horses (TABLE 5). Two of them sired both Morgan and MorganX eventers and two others produced only MorganXs. The most prolific sire was Dragonfire Kirin, who produced eight eventers, including five Morgans and three MorganXs. As could be expected, many of the sires listed in Table 5 are associated with farm prefixes identified in the previous section (Table 4): Statesmans (Chief Of State), Ragtime (Edelweiss Magic Man), Canequin (Equinox Locomotion), Harwich (Harwich Tyrant), LR Ami(e) (HRM Eye Of The Tiger and MLF Dreams Of Glory), Kells (Kells Above R Xpectations), Ltl Ireland (October Fox), Spring Hollow and LBF (Statesmans Silhouette), Kennebec (Triple S Dark Eagle), UC (UC Doc Daniels), and Seven Palms (Windflower Justa Digger).

Five of the listed sires merit special mention because they produced upper-level eventers. The two most notable are HVK Vibrance and MEMC Tequila Cuervo, each of whom sired a horse that competed at intermediate. Triple S Dark Eagle, Dragonfire Kirin, and Wintergreen Don Diego each sired a horse that advanced to preliminary. The eventers sired by the latter two individuals were out of Thoroughbred mares.

Three of the listed sires were themselves eventers: Hellcat's Reveille competed at intermediate, and MLF Dreams Of Glory and October Fox competed up to the novice level.

It is noteworthy that four mares produced two eventers each:

PROGRAM PREFIX	LEVELS				
	BEG. NOVICE	NOVICE	TRAINING	PRELIMINARY	INTERMEDIATE
Canequin		2	1		
Crown	1	1			
Danville	1	2			
Exeter's	1	1			
FRM		2			
Harwich	2				
Icon		2			
Indiana		3			
Kells	1	1			
Kennebec	1	3		1	
LBF (Little Brook Farm)		2			
LR Ami(e)	1	4			
Ltl Ireland		2			
Merriewold		2			
Partridge Hill	2				
Ragtime		1	1		
Seven Palms		2			
Spring Hollow	1	1			
Statesmans		3			
UC (University of Conn)	2	1			
Wintergreen	1	2			

**TABLE 4. Breeding Programs (Prefixes) That Have Produced Two or More Eventers.**

Abby Darling, Roman Elite, LR Ami Spring Fever, and Equinox Allemande. The eventers produced by the first three mares were from the same crosses: October Fox x Abby Darling; Equinox Locomotion x Roman Elite; and MLF Dreams Of Glory x LR Ami Spring Fever. Equinox Allemande is particularly notable because she produced two eventers by different sires.

#### A TYPICAL MORGAN EVENTER

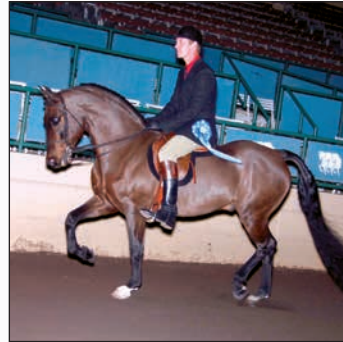
Based on the preceding information, a profile of the typical Morgan eventer comes into focus. He was a 15.1 hand gelding that probably was not bred by a farm that had a significant sport-focused breeding program. His third owner was an amateur who was looking for an equine partner for eventing and found what they were looking for in this Morgan. He competed in his first USEA-sanctioned competition when he was 10 years old and evented for three years, reaching as high as the novice level. The

pair occasionally did well enough to earn award points.

#### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Although Morgans comprise a small share of eventing horses, they have proven to be a good fit for the sport. Most of them have been ridden at the lower levels, beginner novice through training—the levels at which most eventers compete. About half of the Morgans competing at these levels have earned award points. Notably, 11 Morgans have continued up the levels to preliminary and intermediate over the 2008 to 2022 period, indicating what talented Morgans can do when in the hands of riders with advanced skills.

The eventing community appears to be relatively indifferent to the breed with which they compete. Indicative of this indifference is the widespread use of crossbreds, the minimal and sometimes questionable breed-related information provided by owners when they register their horses with the USEA, and a



These Morgan stallions are among those that have sired two or more eventers. They include (clockwise from top left) Dragonfire Kirin; Harwich Tyrant; Hellcat's Reveille; HVK Vibrance; MEMC Tequila Cuervo; MLF Dreams Of Glory; Triple S Dark Eagle; and Wintergreen Don Diego (photos © Howard Schatzberg, Bob Tarr, Casey McBride).

lack of breed-specific programs in the USEA. Given this general mindset, many of the eventers competing on Morgans probably were open to different breeds or crossbreds when selecting a prospect. The fact that they chose a Morgan, or a Morgan-cross, is gratifying because it shows that the breed's suitability for the sport has been recognized within eventing circles. Personal interaction with some of these individuals has revealed that although they were not necessarily looking for a Morgan when searching for a horse, now that they have one they have become enthusiastic about the breed and its potential in eventing. On the other hand, the relative lack of breed-focus among eventers has resulted in many horses losing their identity as registered Morgans and becoming STB-Morgans. Their owners did not use, and may not have even known, the horse's AMHA registered name and they usually supplied no pedigree information when registering them with the USEA. They have little reason to pay the AMHA to officially transfer a horse's ownership because eventing occurs in open competition, and the USEA does not offer anything comparable to the United States Dressage Federation All Breeds Awards, a practice that encourages dressage enthusiasts to keep the registered identity of their horses. The large number of STB-Morgan and STB-MorganX horses is unfortunate because it represents a loss of valuable information about the Morgan bloodlines and breeding programs in eventing.

The extent to which Morgans and Morgan crosses have been competing in eventing and their success in the sport may be surprising to many in the Morgan community. They are not likely to have seen Morgans compete in eventing because unlike dressage,

Western dressage, and reining, eventing is not included in Morgan breed shows. There is no eventing organization within the breed comparable to the Morgan Dressage Association or the National Morgan Reining Horse Association to promote the sport, serve those taking part in it, and be its liaison to AMHA. Finally, many of the individuals eventing on Morgans have not been involved with AMHA and its programs (i.e. the Open Competition Program) or with the breed community in general, making them invisible to Morgan people.

The limited engagement of eventers with the Morgan community is unfortunate. Besides the fact that eventers and the sport of eventing do not receive the recognition they deserve in the Morgan world, AMHA may be left unaware of significant Morgan achievements that could be part of breed promotion. In addition, a lack of interaction with eventers deprives the Morgan community of knowledge and insights about eventing that would benefit Morgan sport breeders and others trying to produce and sell eventing prospects. Figuring out ways to strengthen the relationship between the eventers competing on Morgans and the breed community would seem to be a key step toward advancing the presence and performance of Morgans in eventing.

Eventing is among the most challenging equine sports, for both horse and rider. When Morgans compete in this sport, move up the levels, and earn award points, they highlight in a compelling way the versatile athleticism of the Morgan breed. Those who seek to promote and improve Morgans in the sport disciplines certainly owe thanks to the Morgans and their riders who have taken up the challenge. ■



**LEVELS**

<b>SIRE</b>	<b>BEG. NOV</b>	<b>NOVICE</b>	<b>TRAINING</b>	<b>PRELIM</b>	<b>INTERMED</b>
<b>Chief Of State</b> (The Statesman x Fleur-De-Lis)		2			
<b>Courage Of Equinox</b> (Chasley Superman x Katy Bennfield)	2				
<b>Declaration</b> (Courage Of Equinox x Quietude Martinique)	1*		1*		
<b>Dragonfire Kirin</b> (Cedar City Penbrook x Dragonfire Chi Lin)	2	2+1*	1+1*	1*	
<b>Edelweiss Magic Man</b> (Suetor's Lendon x Dark Debonette)		1	1		
<b>Farceurs Falcon Morgan</b> (Farceur Morgan x Braves Faith)	2				
<b>Harwich Tyrant</b> (Ryegate Major x Indigo's Rosebud)	3				
<b>Hellcat's Reveille</b> (Foregone Conclusion x GF Cheri)		1*	1+1*		
<b>HRM Eye Of The Tiger</b> (TVM Prince Steven x Funquest Lady Liza)		2			
<b>HVK Vibrance</b> (Noble Flaire x HVK Radiant)			1		1
<b>Kells Above R Xpectations</b> (Spring Hills K C L x Kells Moonlight Serenade)	1	1			
<b>Lyonhil Quasar</b> (Lyonhil Quintessence x Briarwood Audrey Ash)	1	1			
<b>MEMC Tequila Cuervo</b> (Triple S Bald Eagle x Twine Pines Sara)		2			1
<b>Radiance Command</b> (Deer Run Command x Bar-T Windsong)	1	1			
<b>Statesmans Silhouette</b> (Chief Of State x Meadowrock Melanie)	3	1			
<b>Top-T Beamish Ace</b> (Top-T Illini Beam x Melitas Glen Bonnie)			2		
<b>Triple S Dark Eagle</b> (Triple S Gold Eagle x Circle H Nopalita)	1	2		1	
<b>UC Doc Daniels</b> (UVM Elite x UC Topaz)	2	2			
<b>Windflower Justa Digger</b> (Shagwood ShiningHero x East Of Eden)		2			
<b>Windhover WinterHawk</b> (Beamington x UVM Witchcraft)	1	1			
<b>Wintergreen Don Diego</b> (HVK Santana x Ladonna)		1*		1*	
<b>DAMS</b>					
<b>Equinox Allemande</b> (Equinox Adage x Maple Ridge Sonatina)		1	1		
<b>MATINGS</b>					
(Equinox Locomotion [by Wales Farm Gaylite] x Roman Elite [by Oldwick Crusader])		1	1		
(MLF Dreams Of Glory [by KEW Glory To Glory] x LR Ami Spring Fever [by Saddleback Sealect])	1	1			
(October Fox [by Radiance Command] x Abby Darling [by Wales Farm Echo])		2			

**TABLE 5. Sires and Dams Producing Two or More Eventers.** *Equinox Allemande produced two eventers by two different stallions. Asterix (\*) denotes Morgan cross.*