



STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSES' MOUTHS

Half-brothers Bill and Bob moved to Historic Wagner Farm last April. As they settle in to their new home, we thought you might like to know a few things about our newest draft horses.

Q: Would you rather be a draft horse working in the fields or a race horse working on your next Kentucky Derby qualification?

Bill: When I was younger I thought I might get to run for the roses, but as I got older my genes were working against me. All horses fall into three classifications: hot blood, warm blood and cold blood, which describes their temperament. Percherons, like us, are cold blooded. Because of my size and super strong muscles I am not very fast, but can pull a lot. Unlike those hot-blooded thoroughbreds, I'm pretty chill.

Bob: I always knew I was destined to follow in my family's hoof prints and work in the field of, well, fields. What is so neat about working at Wagner is we get to do the field work, but also get to meet people through wagon rides and classes.

Q: What do you like to eat?

Bob: Both of us would say our favorite thing is the apple flavored horse treats that Todd sneaks us for doing a good job. After that, we both agree that we like oats and first cutting Timothy hay.

Q: What are your hobbies?

Bill: I guess I would have to say I like to hang out with Ned, Jeff and Bob and gossiping about the people on the other side of the fence. We make up stories about what they are doing or talking about, especially those people who baby talk to us.

Bob: 'Who's a pretty horsie? You're a pretty horsie!'

Q: Are you really half-brothers? Who's older?

Bill: Don't we look like brothers? Both of us have the same father, but different mothers. Our father was considered a very strong and well-built horse. So Amish farmers from all over invited him to their farms. He has the same star marking on his forehead as Bob does. I got stuck with this white blob that Todd tells people looks like the state of New Jersey. I have never been there but it must be amazing like me. As for age, Bob is one year older than I am. Did you know mother horses, or mares, are pregnant for about a year before giving birth?

Bob: I am 10 years old and Bill is only 9. We are definitely in our prime, as horses can live to be to 30 years and older.

Q: What's your astrological sign and what's your birthdate?

Bill: Capricorn. Interestingly, we officially have the same birthday—January 1—as all horses in the Northern Hemisphere. This got started for racing purposes, to group all horses born in the same year together. Nowadays it's pretty common to classify all horses, whether they race or not, as having January 1 birthdays.

Q: Who's the alpha-male? Bill or Bob?

Bob: Of course I am, I'm older and wiser.

Bill: I let Bob think this but ask him who is the alpha between him and Jeff our roommate???

Q: What is your dream job?

Bob: I would have to say Wagner Farm is a pretty good gig. Our last job was at an Amish farm in Minnesota. That was hard work with no apple treats. Wagner Farm portrays an early 20th century farm when horses helped plow the fields. So we get to do that, plus we get to meet some really nice people through wagon rides and classes. We even have a special equine veterinarian, a nutritionist and a draft horse farrier who makes sure our hooves are cleaned and trimmed and our shoes fit.

Bill: Someone said we're turning into spoiled "Northshore" horses, but I don't know what that means.

Q: What do you like to do in your free time?

Bill: Actually we like it best when we get picked to be the team that gets to work. It is our favorite thing to do. However, when you weigh about 2,000 pounds, your second favorite activity is to eat, especially fresh grass.

Q: Do you prefer mornings or are you more of a night owl?

Bill: I think people are surprised when they find out we only sleep a handful of hours every day. If I slept 5 hours total in a 24 hour period, that's a lot. I generally take "cat naps." You could say that's a genetic trait, because we are considered prey animals in the wild. To stay safe, we prefer to sleep standing up. I have to confess, when the kids come and do the grooming class I usually fall asleep because it feels so good. At least I don't drop my lower lip and drool when I sleep like Ned does. How embarrassing is that!

Q: Do you prefer to work as a team or alone?

Bob: Because we are "herd" animals we always prefer to work in groups, but both Bill and I have done solo work with garden cultivators and buggies. At Wagner, we always work together.

Q: What did you do last summer?

Bob: This exact time last year we were making hay. Even though it was an Amish farm, they had a V-8 motor mounted on a special cart that pulled a brand new square hay baler. This was a hard pull and took four horses to make it through the field.

Bill: Don't forget we also spent a lot of time cultivating corn. Because the farmer didn't use herbicides, all of the weeding had to be done with a two-row cultivator. When you're talking about a couple hundred acres of corn, it was a lot of trips back and forth in the field. Cultivating is one of the jobs that the Yoder kids get to do and we liked spending time with them. Most Amish boys are working in the field by themselves by age seven or eight.

Q: Do you plan on retiring soon? Yes or No?

Bill and Bob: Naaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa