



Musical Ride and Equitation

Overview

Horses have always been an important part of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In the early years they were used for transportation, but now they create a world-renowned spectacle that is a living symbol of Canada — the Musical Ride.

History

The Musical Ride developed from a desire by early members to not only have some fun but to display their riding ability and entertain the local community.

As most of the original North West Mounted Police members had a British military background, it was inevitable that the series of figures they performed, and which form the basis of the Musical Ride, were traditional cavalry drill movements.

In 1966, recruit equitation was discontinued in the training of new members. Now the horse, the scarlet tunic and the lance of the Musical Ride are among the last links with the Force's early history.

The first known riding display was given in 1876 and the first Musical Ride performance was held at the Regina barracks in 1887.

Regular public performances of the Ride started in 1904 when a troop

trained by Inspector Frank Church performed at the Winnipeg, Brandon, Qu'Appelle and Regina fairs. During the 1920s and '30s there were two Musical Rides; one at Regina and one in Ottawa.

Today

The Musical Ride is based at the RCMP Rockcliffe, Ontario facility and is performed by a full troop of 32 riders and horses.

Members of the Ride are first and foremost police officers who, after at least two years of active police work, attend a 5-week basic and a 6-month intermediate riding course. Members only stay with the Ride for three years and this ensures an annual rotation of about 33 per cent of the riders.

Community Support

The Musical Ride is an important tool used to assist RCMP detachments in delivering their community policing messages.

Detachments are always involved with any visit of the Musical Ride. Along with their organizing committee, local officers attend pre-tour meetings with the Ride to act as hosts and to coordinate the enormous task of on-site logistics.

Quick Facts

- Annually, the Musical Ride helps over 40 communities raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for a number of causes.
- Thirty-six horses, 35 riders, a farrier, a sound technician, 3 NCOs and an officer in charge, travel with the Musical Ride.
- Besides the riders, 28 regular members, civilian members and public service employees make up the equitation staff.



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Equitation

The equitation staff is responsible for the horse breeding program, remount training, equitation courses, ceremonial escorts, parades, displays and of course, the Musical Ride.

The Horses

The RCMP breeds its horses at Remount Detachment near Pakenham, Ontario. They are 16 to 17 hands high; weigh between 523 kg (1150 lbs.) to 635 kg (1400 lbs.) and up until recently were 3/4 to 7/8 Thoroughbred, the stallions being registered Thoroughbred while the broodmares were part Thoroughbred.

In March 1989, Black Hannoverian broodmares and stallions were purchased to improve the horses' bloodlines.

Young horses, called remounts, begin their training at three years of age. When they turn six, they start Musical Ride training and take their first trip.

The horses' saddle blankets bear the fused letters MP (RCMP's registered brand) in the Force's regimental colours of royal blue and yellow.

The maple leaf pattern adorning the horses' rumps is created by using a metal stencil and brushing across the lie of the hair with a damp brush.