For Immediate Release

North American International Adds Haflinger Show: A Family Affair

By: Caitlin McClure

LOUISVILLE, KY – November 15, 2014 – The North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) added a new breed of draft pony, Haflingers, to competitions for the first time this year. Haflingers, although similar to most large draft horses, are set apart by their small size and spirited personalities. A draft pony may compete in several competitions, including cart, two horse, unicorn, four horse and six horse hitch.

For the Mangels family of Oak Ridge and Orion, MO, the inclusion of Haflingers is more than just another competitive show. It’s a full family affair.

In 1969, Charlie and Verla Mangels started showing large draft horses. Their three sons, Westin, Kent and Steve, quickly fell in love with the activity as well, turning this into a family tradition. Fifteen years ago, the family expanded their team and began showing Haflinger draft ponies, because their size was more suitable to the third generation of Mangels showmen. Charlie and Verla’s five grandchildren, Darla, Reece, Garrison, Tessa and Shelby, have since grown up showing draft horses and Haflingers.

Although the Mangels are no rookies to the NAILE, having shown and even judged Belgian shows previously, Kathy Mangels, Steve’s wife, said the family is more than excited that Haflingers are now included at the NAILE. When they heard about the show, the Mangels made it their goal to keep their horses in shape longer than usual to make the NAILE their twelfth and final competition of the year. Grandchildren, Reece and Garrison, made it their personal jobs to work the horses seven days of the week and even hitch them completely up four of the seven days to prepare. It paid off. Garrison was announced the first-ever winner of the Haflinger Two Horse Hitch class at the North American International. Barely old enough to show in the open show, sixteen-year-old Garrison had no words for the winning feeling other than, “It feels pretty awesome,” with a smile from ear-to-ear.

Since it is just the first year for the competition, no junior show was included. Kathy Mangels said she hopes the NAILE Haflinger show is a big enough success that a junior show will soon be included. Although almost all their grandchildren have aged out of the junior show, or are now old enough to compete in the open show, Kathy has watched all of them fall in love with showing Haflingers. It has been an integral part of their growing up. Kathy wants other juniors to have the same opportunity as her kids, niece and nephews. The Mangels say they will absolutely be back to compete in Haflinger competitions at the NAILE again next year.

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