

# Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick



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### Hey Editor!

Karen Wimbush, associate professor, Agricultural Technologies Division, Ohio State University Agricultural Technical Institute, Wooster, reviewed this column.

Dear Twig: Tell me about draft horses. I saw some at our county fair. They were huge!

Draft horses are big — sometimes REALLY big. Some are 19 hands high, or six feet-plus at the withers (the point between the shoulder blades). A typical non-draft horse is shorter — say, 15 to 16 hands high.

And draft horses are strong — REALLY strong. A single Belgian, the most common breed in the United States, can move five tons! That's a lot of huckleberries. Other breeds include Percheron, Clydesdale and Shire.

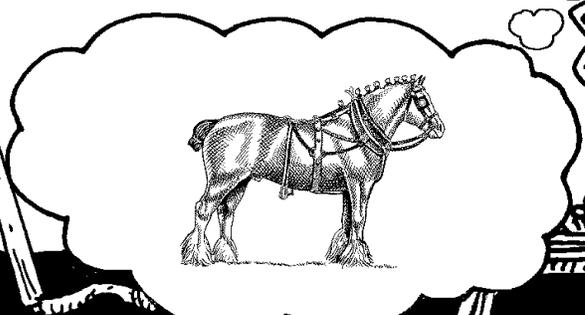
In the old days, draft horses pulled plows, hauled crops, even carried knights in battle.

Then tractors came along. Lots of U.S. draft horses lost their jobs. Many were slaughtered. Some breeds neared extinction.

But draft horses have bounced back. Today, some small farms still use them. (Amish farms are one example.) Breed associations support them. And people raise them for fun and the love of the animals — to show in fairs or for pulling contests.

Draft horses are also finding new, "eco-friendly" uses. When hauling logs or maple sap, for example, they do less damage to the woods than tractors. Another reason to call them gentle giants!

*Twig*



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