



For Immediate Release

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### **Will Pennsylvania-Bred “Shilhouette” Shine at the 2011 Dressage at Devon Breed Show?**

Devon, PA (June 23 2011) Shilhouette had her first official photograph taken on June 2, 2011 at the innocent age of 2 days. The picture shows a black Oldenburg filly, a horse breed that originates in Germany. Balanced precariously on her non-stop legs, is her petite torso, from which emerges her neck, placed high on a well-sloped shoulder – all signs of success in the dressage ring, according to Maurine “Mo” Swanson, owner of Rolling Stone Farm ([www.rollingstonefarm.com](http://www.rollingstonefarm.com)) in Slatington, PA, where Shilhouette was bred and born. Swanson is planning to enter Shilhouette in the Dressage at Devon Breed Show ([www.dressageatdevon.com](http://www.dressageatdevon.com)), the largest dressage/sport horse breed show in North America, which runs from Tuesday, September 27 – Thursday, September 29. And we’re following her progress from now all the way through the show!

Shilhouette isn’t just any foal. Her sire (father) is home-bred Shakespeare RSF, winner of the 70-day Stallion test in 2009. This test evaluates a young stallion's character, temperament, and willingness to work as well as his athletic ability, gaits, rideability, and jumping ability. This overview determines a stallion’s capacity to improve the sport-horse characteristics through breeding. Stallions who pass the test are awarded with a lifetime breeding license. Her Mom, Fhlora, has also won awards that distinguish her as one of the top Oldenburg mares internationally.

Swanson sums up her feelings about Shilhouette succinctly. “What can I say? The foal is stunning.” In Swanson’s estimation, the neck angle is just one of the many

early indications that this lanky but adorable creature was born for dressage. She was able to evaluate Shilhouette's bone structure in the first couple of days of life; it's yet hidden behind weight and muscle. Shilhouette's hip and shoulder angles, as well as her balanced proportions, indicate that she will have a natural talent for dressage. And like most foals, within just hours, Silhouette was up and running in the field. "You can tell almost immediately how good a mover a foal will be when she matures. It's all there naturally right from the beginning," says Swanson. She sees the rhythmic, balanced, elastic gaits she's looking for in Shilhouette. "She's using her whole body and she moves forward and upward with her steps almost as if she's always going uphill," says Swanson.

The name Shilhouette was chosen based on guidelines from the Oldenburg Association as well as the Swanson's traditions. According to association rules, there are only two choices for the first letter of a filly's name. It has to be based on the first letter of the dam's (mother's) name or the sire's name (a colt's name must begin with the first letter of the sire's name). The Swansons chose the "s" to highlight the foal's relationship with Shakespeare. In addition, no name can be used twice for a registered Oldenburg. The Swansons have overcome this constraint by adding the silent "h" as the second letter in all their horses' names. Rolling Stone Farm also has a theme for names each year. One year it might be literature, the next might be flowers, and in 2011 it's fashion. And silhouette is a term often used in the fashion industry.

Shilhouette is in good company on Swanson's farm. Approximately 100 horses, including the latest crop of 27 foals, dot the rolling landscape. The breeding operation was born more than 30 years ago from Mo's passion for horses when Mo was pregnant herself. "I couldn't ride because I was pregnant," she says, "so I figured my horse may as well be pregnant, too." She now runs Rolling Stone Farm with her husband, Jim, her high-school sweetheart, who retired early from his corporate career to spend more time with Mo. He says he "married into horses," but he adds that "a bad day at the barn is better than a good day commuting to Philadelphia in bumper-to-bumper traffic on the Schuylkill Expressway."

That's saying something because breeding horses takes more than passion. It requires hard work and a willingness to sacrifice sleep during the spring when foals turn up mostly at inopportune times. And after investing time and money into breeding a world-class foal, it just doesn't make sense to leave the delivery completely up to the mare. First, problems can arise that can be resolved with human intervention. Secondly, it's important to the foal's health that she's up within two hours and nursing within three hours.

So while the Swansons would like to know when a foal is being born, the mares are on their own schedules. They have a degree of control over when they give birth and tend not to cater to a nine-to-five work day. Through years of history, mares have developed an awkward habit, perhaps better classified as a "survival mechanism," of giving birth during the night when their offspring is easier to hide from their many natural predators. In fact, Swanson estimates 95% of foals are born at night. On top of this, the mares like to give birth in private. After all, her instinct says that her precious

creation is safer when it's just the two of them. Fhlora made life a little easier for the Swansons than most. She came in from the field, had her afternoon meal, and promptly introduced Shilhouette to the safety of her stall.

Not to be outdone by nature, humans have adapted too. "I never could have bred this many foals years ago," says Mo, "but with today's technology it's possible. I don't have to camp out in the barn and peek in on expecting mares every 15 minutes." Each of the mares' stalls has a camera in it which feeds the live action to closed-circuit televisions in the Swanson's bedroom. And because of their alert system, the Swansons don't have to stay up all night with their eyes glued to the monitor. A birth-alarm strap is placed around the mare's belly and when she turns on her side to give birth, it transmits an alarm to a receiver in the Swanson's bedroom. For those less likely occasions when the mare decides to give birth in daylight, the alarm triggers an auto dialer which calls the Swansons and delivers the message: "a foal is being born." They still have to be ready to run to the barn at all hours, but at least they're able to take care of other chores and sleep (if only intermittently) in their home.

The Swansons started to work with Shilhouette when she was a week old so she would become accustomed to people and learn to trust them. For example, they pick up her feet and tap on them. She has to become used to this sensation since it will be a routine part of grooming and shoeing. They put on her halter and lead her out to the field to be with Fhlora. In addition, they play with her ears and put their fingers in her mouth so it will be easier for her to adapt when she has a bridle put on (and for the dentist visits!). They make sure to handle her all over, scratching her withers and hindquarters. Foals love to be scratched and it helps them forge a bond with humans. Breeding is part of ensuring a good personality as well, helping to ensure that the horses fit in well with their equine and human communities.

After a couple of months it will be time for Shilhouette to hit the show circuit. She will participate in the Great American/USDF Breeders' Championship Series program which is designed to promote breeders and showcase quality sport horses. To qualify for the year-end awards, a horse needs to have competed in three events. Those anointed as champion or reserve-champion filly, colt/gelding, mare or stallion in these shows are then invited to compete in the final event of that series, where the Great American Insurance Group/USDF Breeders' Championship Series Grand Champion and Reserve Grand Champion Filly, Colt/Gelding, Mare, and Stallion are crowned.

Shilhouette's first event will be close to home: the Dressage Sport Horse Breeding Show on July 31<sup>st</sup> at Bucks County Horse Park. She then travels to New York for the Maplewood Warmblood's Breed Show in early August, and back south to Dressage at Stone Tavern at The Horse Park of New Jersey in Allentown in September. Later that month she will face competition from across North America when she is presented at Dressage at Devon. Reserved seating to see Shilhouette, the Breed and Performance Show at Dressage at Devon is available at <http://dressageatdevon.org/shop/> and general admission tickets will be available at the show grounds only from 9/25/11 to 10/2/11.

## About Dressage at Devon

*Dressage at Devon ([www.dressageatdevon.org](http://www.dressageatdevon.org)) has been the premier North American Equestrian event since its founding by the Delaware Valley Combined Training Association in 1975, and became a separate organization in 2006. It combines world-class dressage competition and the world's largest open breed show with the international Fall Festival show and special activities for the entire family. The six-day event attracts more than 700 horses and 35,000 spectators each year.*

*Dressage at Devon, a 501(c) (3) PA non-profit organization, benefits Thorncroft Therapeutic Horseback Riding Inc., the oldest and largest therapeutic riding program in the nation. Since 1991, Dressage at Devon has raised in excess of \$1,000,000 for Thorncroft.*

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