**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 1‑1‑714 SO AS TO DESIGNATE THE MARSH TACKY AS THE OFFICIAL STATE HERITAGE HORSE OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Article 9, Chapter 1, Title 1 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 1‑1‑714. (A) The General Assembly finds:

(1) The Marsh Tacky, a rare colonial Spanish horse breed unique to South Carolina has played a significant role in South Carolina’s history. After abandonment by the Spanish on the South Carolina Sea Islands and along the South Carolina coast some five hundred years ago, the Marsh Tacky survived on its own and developed into a unique strain of colonial Spanish horse. These tough, little horses assisted our forefathers in the development and defense of our state and were the major source of transportation in the Lowcountry before the introduction of the automobile. Marsh Tackies were important to the Gullah community and became an integral part of agricultural life for Lowcountry families. Marsh Tackies were used wherever horsepower was needed; to pull plows, and wagons, herd cattle, hunt wild game, deliver the mail, transport families, and as loyal, sturdy war mounts. Most Lowcountry families had Marsh Tackies in their fields or gardens.

(2) During the American Revolution, Marsh Tackies assisted in the victories of the famous ‘Swamp Fox’ General Francis Marion, whose troops of ‘Irregulars’ had the advantage of being mounted on small, agile horses that were superbly adapted to the Lowcountry’s rough, swampy terrain. Marsh Tackies required little care from the troops, were able to travel long distances without fatigue, and survived on forage reducing the need for supply wagons carrying grain. The sure‑footed Marsh Tacky enabled the militia to out maneuver the British troops who rode larger European horse breeds that could not traverse the swampy forests.

(3) Marsh Tackies served the southern Confederate cavalry during the Civil War. Unlike northern troops who were issued horses, southern recruits were often required to provide their own mounts, which were trained and familiar with their riders, giving an early advantage to the southern forces.

(4) In World War II, Marsh Tackies were used by the Coast Guard’s Mounted Beach Patrol to protect our mainland from enemy spies and saboteurs. The ‘Beach Pounders’ who patrolled the southeastern shore were trained at the Mounted Beach Patrol and Dog Training Center in Hilton Head, South Carolina and patrolled the coast from Florida to North Carolina.

(5) Marsh Tackies have little changed since the colonial period. Relative isolation on the Sea Islands and secluded areas of the Lowcountry, along with owner dedication to the preservation of the breed has allowed the Marsh Tacky to remain relatively untouched. Owners often comment on the built‑in ‘woods sense’ of the breed and how the horses have a natural way of traversing water obstacles and swamps. Many horses display characteristics and primitive markings carried by their Spanish ancestors including dorsal stripes, zebra leg stripes, and lengthy manes and tails.

(6) In 2007, Marsh Tacky owners and enthusiasts across the state formed the Carolina Marsh Tacky Association to preserve and promote the history and heritage of the Marsh Tacky horse. The association works closely with the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy to provide ongoing registry, stud book, and breeding program to ensure the survival of the Marsh Tacky.

(7) With its rich heritage, resilience, and perseverance, the Marsh Tacky embodies the very spirit of South Carolina. The Marsh Tacky is uniquely of South Carolina and remains a living piece of history in its native state, a claim that no other breed can make. The Marsh Tacky has earned the title of State Heritage Horse of South Carolina.

(B) The Marsh Tacky is designated as the official State Heritage Horse of South Carolina.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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