

SARAH RITCHIE

On the frigid morning of January 23, Sarah Ritchie's prized mare November Fog delivered her first foal, a handsome, healthy colt, with the help of Tim and Susie Drake at Silver Duck Farm in King, Ont. While it marked the third consecutive year that Ritchie, who owns and trains a stable at Woodbine, has bred a horse, the moment was no less special than the first.

"I love babies," said Ritchie, who admits she "skidded" into the breeding side of the Thoroughbred industry but has since fallen deeply in love with it. "This is like a dream, bringing a horse you bred into the world."

Ritchie never intended to expand into breeding when she began her training career about eight years ago.

Born and raised in Beeton, Ont., she gravitated to horses at an early age, riding hunter jumpers and eventers. Her path to the racetrack came unexpectedly when the travel agency she worked for as a young woman went out of business and a friend suggested she spend some time at the track while searching for another job.

"I never left," said Ritchie. "I've always been about caring for horses, and at the track I was given five horses to groom and look after myself. I loved that."

Her first job was with champion trainer Jim Day, who was training for Come by Chance Stable at the time. She later joined Sovereign Award winner Mark Frostad, who trained for Sam Son Farms before opening a public stable. Ritchie served as Frostad's assistant in Florida, and during that period she purchased a filly from one of his clients, Walnut Ridge Farm. That filly, Bourbon Babe, gave Ritchie her first win as an owner trainer.

Bourbon Babe proved to be a turning point. The following year, Ritchie bought her younger yearling half sister by Frac Daddy, splitting the \$5,000 purchase with Richard Moylan. That yearling was November Fog, who went on to be graded stakes placed and earned more than \$260,000 (US).

Another bargain yearling purchase was Anam Cara, a \$2,500 Frac Daddy filly who won the Muskoka Stakes in her second career start and has since earned over \$283,000.

Ritchie took her first true step into breeding when Frostad went scouting on her behalf, along with client and friend Paul Cooper, at the 2023 Keeneland January Horses of All Ages Sale.

“We were taking advantage of the CTHS and Ontario Racing Mare Purchase Program,” said Ritchie. “It’s such a good program and it allows smaller scale people like me to be able to buy a mare.”

Frostad secured Sky High Gal, a daughter of Woodbine Mile (G1) winner Lesroidesanimeaux (Brz), in foal to champion American sprinter Mitole, for \$22,900.

Cooper and Ritchie sold the resulting yearling, nicknamed “Jack,” at last year’s CTHS sale for \$60,000 to True North Stables. Now named Marshalltown, the colt is currently training in Kentucky as a three-year-old.

Sky High Gal has a Silent Name yearling this season, “Tucker,” and is once again in foal to that same stallion.

As for November Fog’s first foal, also by Silent Name, Ritchie joked, “I hope Paul knows we can’t sell him.”

She admits the breeding side of the business can feel overwhelming at first, but credits several of Ontario’s successful breeders for helping her along the way.

“I talked to Glenn Sikura and Ericka Rusnak, and they helped me a lot, as did the Drakes,” she said. “I’ve found the people in the breeding business are so generous with their information and very willing to help.”

Ritchie will begin 2026 at Woodbine with a small stable of runners owned by herself and clients, including Winnipeg’s Barry Arnason and partners. She is also eagerly anticipating Marshalltown’s racing debut.

“I love watching them learn the ropes as yearlings, and it’s rewarding to get them to the races,” she said. “Now, having them from the moment they are born is really special, and seeing them develop their own personalities is icing on the cake.”