

... but Working for the FUTURE

Preserving the Cultural Heritage of the PAST ...

**Second Kuwait Arabian Horse
National Championship Show
February 16-18, 2011**

text by: Monika Savier | photos by: Erwin Escher

For more than a thousand years, the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula lived in symbiosis with their desert horses. What arose from that was not only a very special relationship between humans and horses, but also a very special breed of horse, shaped by the tough conditions in this extremely hot and dry region. The small country of Kuwait, partly an oasis herself, was historically a place where the Bedouin tribes withdrew to from the blistering heat of summer, erecting their tents near the sea, while in the winter months, they disappeared in the vast desert-pastures of the Arabian Peninsula together with their horses, their sheep, and their camels. For the caravans from Basra, Mesopotamia, Medina, or Mecca, Kuwait offered the important access to the Gulf of Persia which they needed, intending to load their merchandise onto ships sailing all around the world. It is hard to imagine that scene with the skyline of modern Kuwait City looming over you. But in the harbour, there is a witness of the old times, a museum of Dhows, the ancient ships made of wood. Despite the riches and the modernity of the country, many Kuwaitis are very much aware of their history, treasuring the memory and preserving the traditions. Many spend their weekends in tents in the desert, even if today, they get there by steering their Jeeps along the motorway instead of riding there on horses. The horses, however, are an all-important topic in this country today, even if they are no

longer needed as companions of their owners in trying to survive in the desert. The descendants of the Bedouins, today's Kuwait's breeders, have recognized the significance these horses hold for them and their history. The care and devotion they spend on their horses, the passionate discussions they have on horses and their pedigrees – it's impressive to see for the international community of horse breeders. But they do more than just declare their love for Arabian horses.

In 1980, they founded the first State Stud of Kuwait. When Iraq attacked the country in 1990, it did not only mean shocks and suffering for people. Horse breeding was severely set back as well. – But immediately after the liberation, as soon as 1992, 1998, and 2003, fresh horses of Egyptian blood were imported from Germany, the US, and from Qatar, laying top-quality foundations for more breeding. In 2007, however, the responsibility for managing the state stud was handed over to the passionate breeder Mr Mohammed Al Marzouk who laid the foundations for a project named Bait Al Arab, the House of the Arabian Horse. Together with his innovative general manager Klaus Beste and a highly motivated team for the departments of Administration, Education, and Horse Health Service, a comprehensive concept for protecting and preserving the original Arabian Horse and for stimulating Arabian Horse breeding in Kuwait was developed. From now on, everything went quickly:

- *The first show in Kuwait, the National Championships,*



was held in February 2010, using the facilities of the Hunting & Equestrian Club in Kuwait City, and managed by the Bait Al Arab team. This first ECAHO show was enthusiastically accepted by Kuwait's breeders. They brought 225 horses to the show ring to be judged by an international panel of judges. The show as well as the cultural programme framing it were a tremendous success.

- After that, Bait Al Arab state stud brought one of their assignments as an educational institution to fruition, launching the Arabian Horse Letter in Arabian and English. With interesting topics and information, the breeders of Kuwait are to be re-introduced to the intricacies of successful Arabian Horse breeding.

- On the premises of the state stud, a horse hospital was established, to be at hand with help and advice for all breeders and their horses.

- The Bait Al Arab website (www.baitalarab-kw.com) provides every breeder with a platform to make themselves known internationally, and to put their own horses and breeding strategies online.

- Seminars, clinics and ongoing education for breeders were offered and implemented.

- The most important task of the state stud, breeding and

keeping Purebred Arabian Horses of Egyptian bloodlines, was continued successfully (see chapter xx).

The Championships in February 2011: Is it possible to even better the success of the 2010 show? Which horses will we see? Questions asked by many breeders and the international community of fans of Kuwait horses who had arrived to see the championships.

Again, the show was held under the patronage of the Amir of Kuwait, HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He was not the only great man to shelter the event under his fostering hands, as there were the crown prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the prime minister Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah, and the president of the Hunting & Equestrian Club all joyously giving their public support to the National Championships for Arabian Horses. The enthusiastic horse breeders of Kuwait seemed to have waited for just an event like this one: they enrolled 275 horses for the show.

Looking back: where did these horses come from? Thirty years ago, the first re-imports of Arabian horses into the Gulf region were noticed. While in the beginning most of the horses were intended for the racetrack, some breeders were quick to develop an interest in searching for original noble bloodlines from the Arabian Peninsula and in bringing these back home. It was well known that 150 years ago, the Egyptian pashas



had imported the best horses, and particularly the most beautiful Arabian horses from the Nejd area in today's Saudi-Arabia, into Egypt. They are still bred in the Egyptian state stud of El Zahraa. One of the first breeders from the Gulf states to visit El Zahraa in the 1980ies was Sheikh Abdul Aziz Bin Khaled Al Thani from Qatar. He did not only find the horses he was looking for. He also learned that during the 1960ies and 1970ies, breeders Judith Forbis from the US and Dr. Hans Nagel from Germany had exported important foundation horses and used them to establish Straight Egyptian breeding populations in their own right that had meanwhile earned the right to be called milestones in Arabian horse breeding. It did not take long for the first horses from Judith Forbis's Ansata Stud, Dr. Nagel's Katharinenhof and Cairo's El Zahraa to reach Qatar and found the Al Rayyan Stud of Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al Thani there.

The neighbours from Kuwait, and particularly the horse fans of Al Wafra Oasis in the southern part of Kuwait on the border to Saudi-Arabia, were enthusiastic about the imports. Al Rayyan farm did not only become a role model for a lot of new breeders in Qatar, and quickly at that, but their concept and successes impressed the neighbours as well. It did not take long for the first Kuwaitis to visit Ansata Stud, Katharinenhof Stud near Bremen in Germany, El Zahraa and a handful of other studs breeding horses of the bloodlines Kuwait was looking for. Mohammed J. Al Marzouk was one of the first breeders of Kuwait to build up and base his Ajmal Stud on

this gene pool. His foundation sire Ansata Hejazi was a major influence on the new generations of Egyptian horses in Kuwait. In rapid succession, several more important studs emerged, concentrating exclusively on breeding Straight Egyptian horses. There is Al Jazira Stud of Mr Talal Abdullah Al Mehri who is highly successful with his stallion Sinan Al Rayyan, there is Ezzain Arabians of Mr Usamah Zaid Al Kazemi owning that extremely typey stallion NK Qaswarah, there is El Adiyat Stud of Mr Mahmood Al Zubaid, there is Al Sharg Farm of Mr Talal Khaled Al Nisf, and there is Al Rayah Stud of Mr Al Roumi. There were also Al Danat Stud of Mr Mohammad Sulaiman Al Omar, Safinat Farm of Mr Khaled Fahad Ben Shokor, and Mubarak Arabian Stud of Mr Mohammed Al-Mubarak which, together with several more studs, found locations around Al Wafra Oasis and settled there with their horses. The horses owned by Bait Al Arab and the Arabians at the Sheikhah Sarah Fahad Al Sabah's Al Arab Stud are definitely to be included in this group, even if they are not located in Al Wafra, but housed on the premises of the state stud in Kuwait City.

What distinguishes this core group of passionate breeders is the fact that if they compete at all, they do so in a very friendly and cordial manner, supporting and advising each other. Sires, for example, are at everybody's disposal free of charge. Once a week there is a general get-together, with all of the breeders discussing horses and breeding strategies. There are other



collective events such as stud tours, all of which demonstrate to all the rest of the breeding world that hobbies and passions can be shared on a positive basis instead of reaching a state of splendid isolation by competing. This is Judith Forbis' comment on the social cooperation of the breeders of Kuwait:

„Progress is born of love, dedication, and perseverance. Nowhere in the Arabian horse world is this more evident than among the Kuwaiti breeders. Their Cooperative ventures with each other, as well as with other breeders in the Gulf, have fostered remarkable camaraderie within the Arabian horse community“.

The result of this amicable cooperation of breeders is a classic Arabian horse, somewhat substantial, mostly grey, with a good type, a harmonious body and enormous movements. As they are based on a comparatively small gene pool, it is almost justified to dub them the Kuwaiti Arabians of Al Wāfra.

For the first National Championships in Kuwait in 2010, it was quite safe to assume that class wins and championship titles would be almost a "family affair", but things went differently. The winning streak which certain bloodlines displayed Europe-wide on ECAHO shows, having their more extreme heads and necks genetically consolidated by now, had not eluded the Middle East audience. Some Kuwaiti breeders had reacted to that and bought the corresponding show horses. This was how in 2010, both the Champion Mare and the

Champion Stallion were non-Egyptian horses, namely Faraula J (Ekstern x Fīfa) and Aja Sanagor (FS Bengali x Bey Santeyna). Both had been imported by Mr Khalid Abdulaziz Al Nughemshe. The filly and colt championship titles were won by horses bred in Kuwait out of Egyptian bloodlines, namely two-year-old Shalwa (Sinan Al Rayyan x Al Galya) and also two-year-old Naif Al Danat, both owned by Al Danat stud of Moh. Al Omar. There was no ill humour of the kind to be observed on other shows. "We are all friends of each other, we share a great passion for Arabian horses, and we are all going to celebrate that success together" was the comment from other exhibitors.

The 2nd National Championships were organised and carried through on the premises of Bait Al Arab state stud. Cheered by fans and friends, the 276 horses were presented to the spectators – the grandstands were almost packed every day of the three days of the show – and an international panel of judges consisting of Mr Jerzy Bialobok (Poland), Mrs Silvie Eberhardt (Germany), Mr Nasr Marei (Egypt), and Mr Peter Upton from the UK. During the run-up for the show, experts on Kuwaiti Arabian breeding asked themselves whether the championship titles would this time be shared by the Egyptian horses of Al Wāfra, or whether the Abdahli, Kabd, and Farwaniya oases would successfully make a run for the titles with the horses they would bring to the competitions. Would the horses from Egyptian bloodlines have an advantage, or rather those from the modern show lines? That

much was clear: this show was going to be a demanding marathon for all parties involved.

With the high number of participants, many of the classes had been subdivided into two or three groups. The whole range of breeding in Kuwait was there for the spectators to see. Some horses were professionally show-trained and handled, others seemed to come directly from the herd and reacted with some astonishment when they encountered music and plastic bag rustling in the show ring. In between, genuine pearls of Arabian breeding showed up, horses with the potential for top rank at any international show. Others were respectable breeding animals bespeaking their owners' desire to take part in such a fine great horse festival, bringing along about everything they had to show. This more informal and domestic aspect among horse fans is quite exciting and justified. In Europe, there are many who would like to re-turn some of the shows to exactly this state, questioning on behalf of their horses the professional show practice coupled with the criteria for beauty of ECAHO. To put it briefly, Bait Al Arab managed to satisfy all groups of horse-fan Kuwaitis with the stud's concept of diversity management.

Things happened as they had been bound to happen and are only possible in Kuwait. All parties involved finally felt like winners and all celebrated together. Even if the big bay Senior Stallion Champion Alfonso (AB Magnum x San Jose Alfonsina) did not exactly correspond to the ideal of the desert Arabian, he had been the desired candidate of the oases in northern Kuwait. When the speaker announced his title win, at least a thousand people swarmed into the ring in order to cheer and celebrate Alfonso and his owner Mr Ali Matar Al Wawan, with a stud to the same name. Last year, Alfonso had already drawn attention when, freshly imported, he won 2nd place in his class. He is a representative of a completely different type of Arabian horse than the "Egyptians" from Al Wafra and has his fan community not only among Kuwaitis, but also among international judges. It was a close shave: while two of the judges, Mr Peter Upton and Mr Jerzy Biabolok, were clearly in favour of Alfonso, the other two, Mrs Silvie Ebenhardt and Dr Nasr Marei, were just as clearly convinced of Ajmal Shawan (Shahin x Ansata Shalimar) as a champion who corresponds one hundred percent to the perceptions of an ideal desert Arabian. Ajmal Shawan, bred by Mr Mohammed Al Marzouk and owned by Mr Abdullah Salem Al Sedrawi, became Silver Champion and was later awarded an additional trophy, the award of "best male horse bred in Kuwait". The Bronze Champion was Gazal Al Rayyan (Ansata Hejazi x Ghazalla), bred and owned by Mr Ala'A Hamad Al Roumi. He did not stand a chance for one of the two top placings despite his noble type.

In the junior stallion class, the winner was an imported beau from the Justice dynasty: Aja Hassan (WH Justice x Aja Bint Sanadina) is a three-year-old chestnut originally bred in Britain. His owner, Mr Khaled Al Nughemshe, was

extraordinarily successful on the occasion of this show, and Aja Hassan was not his only victory: Silver Champion was Ma Azure, bred in the US and owned by Mr Abdulaal Sulaiman Al Qenaei, while the Bronze title was awarded to a bay QR Marc son, Grandeur J, again owned by Mr Al Nughemshe.

In the mare classes, the Arabian breeders of Al Wafra scored their points. Gold as well as Silver with the Young Mares went to Mr Mohammed Mubarak Al Mubarak, who also received a title and a special prize as the best breeder of Kuwait. His breathtakingly beautiful M. Najla, an extremely typey daughter of champion maker Ezz Ezzain out Neama Saqr, won her title of Champion filly. Silver was awarded to her one-year-old stablemate and half sibling M. Sarah (Ezz Ezzain x Ansata Suleyma), also bred by Mr Mubarak, a beautiful eyecatcher and the darling of all spectators. Bronze went to Salwa, a daughter of Sinan Al Rayyan out of AL Galya. She enchanted people with her type, but in trot, she appeared somewhat insecure, and that probably cost her a higher placing. Still, her class win and the ensuing Bronze title were a success worth celebrating to her breeder Mr Essam Salem Al Roumi and her owner Al Danat Farm of Mr Mohammad Suleiman Al Omar.

The Mare Championships were finally won by noble Fatemat Al Naif (Ashhal Al Rayyan x Ansata Nile Gypsy). This achingly beautiful Dahman Shahwan mare, bred by Al Naif Stud, Qatar, and owned by Al Sharg Farm of Mr Talal Khaled Al Nisf, is the embodiment of the horse so many Arabian horse breeders dream of, and even Mrs Judith Forbis of Ansata Stud, usually observing the horses in a very composed manner, let herself get carried away and was heard applauding loudly. Silver Champion Mare was Al Mazouna, a daughter of Sinan Al Rayyan out of Vischnja. With her total score of 91 points, she was also awarded the title of the best mare bred in Kuwait. Her happy owner Mr Khaled Nughemshe also owns the third mare of the group, the one who won Bronze: Faraula J (Ekstern x Fifa). This big-framed and typey grey mare had been bred by Mrs Christine Jamar in Belgium and is an import into Kuwait.

Later in the evening, just before a full-blown sandstorm had developed its full potential, Bait Al Arab closed the gates and people as well as horses went home, exhausted from a full and satisfying day.

Junior Female



M. NAJLA
Gold Champion

MOHAMMED MUBARAK AL MUBARAKI

Junior Female



M. SARAH
Silver Champion

MOHAMMED MUBARAK AL MUBARAKI



SHALWA
Bronze Champion
AL DANAT FARM

Junior Male



AJA HASSAN
Gold Champion
KHALED AL NUGHEMSHE

Junior Male



MA AZURE
Silver Champion

ABDULAAL SULAIMAN AL QENAEI



GRANDEUR J
Bronze Champion

KHALED AL NUGHEMSHE

Senior Female



FATEMAT AL NAIF
Gold Champion
AL SHARG FARM

Senior Female



AL MAZYOUNA

Silver Champion & Best Kuwait Bred Female Horse

KHALED AL NUGHEMSHE



FARAULA J

Bronze Champion

KHALED AL NUGHEMSHE

Senior Male



ALFONZO
Gold Champion
AL WAWAN ARABIANS

Senior Male



AJMAL SHAHWAN

Silver Champion & Best Kuwait Bred Male Horse

ABDULLAH SALEM AL SEDRAWI



GAZAL AL RAYAH

Bronze Champion

ALA'A HAMAD AL ROUMI