

WAHO: WHERE EVERYTHING

The “Pride of Qatar” Conference Tours November 2011

With the WAHO Conference held from Oct. 31 to Nov 8, 2011, Qatar has created for themselves an important date in the history of WAHO. This was in parts due to the pre-organised tours available before, during, and after the conference for the participants from the 50 member states of WAHO. The tours offered a unique opportunity to get to know Qatar as a country, their history and their presence, as well as to get an idea of their future. The Arabian horses were the peaceful mediators, the cement between citizens and Royals, between breeders and collectors of noble horses, between Muslims, Christians, and believers of other faiths, between professionals and amateurs, between old and young. It's traditional by now for WAHO to hold this multicultural event biennially in a different country, organized and supported by the respective national breeding association, and that WAHO takes this opportunity to do two things at the same time: conduct an international conference with high-ranking experts discussing the current issues in the field of Arabian horses, and offer the participants, observers and delegates alike, an opportunity to deal intensively and exclusively with the matters at hand, trying to find a common denominator among WAHO members for the current issues in horse breeding in order to harmonize and make possible their procedures in breeding, registering, imports, exports, and passports.

After the spectacular WAHO conferences of 2007 in Syria and 2009 in Oman, beaming us into the Arabia of the “Arabian Nights” tales, Qatar put their 2001 chips on the spectacular high-tech world of the future, be it for the architecture for their horses, for their city, or for their modern open-minded management that easily includes the traditional hospitality of the Qatari people. They must have inherited the latter even from their ancestors of old, the desert Bedouins of the Arabian Peninsula, the pearl fishers of the gulf, and the traders travelling the silk road with their caravans. The cordiality and generosity of organizers, breeders, and protagonists alike were hard to beat. Everybody felt welcome, and everybody was offered a variety of items on an agenda that provided not only enjoyment, but educational horse issues just as well.

Qatar is a country in which the future has started even now, in the presence, but not entirely without contradictions. For visitors mainly looking for the original Arabian flair and history, it may be necessary to observe that civilian society left their first tracks in this location on the Arabian Peninsula as long as 4000 years ago, but the culture of the nomadic Bedouins did not allow for buildings to be left from the past – when they had packed their tents and left, the wind covered their tracks.

Still, there are witnesses to history, even if they appear somewhat minor if compared to today's Qatar with its future-oriented



politics and architecture. For those who still look for Arabian flair in a typical Souq, the small Souq Waqif was re-built and expanded. Today, it is more than just a multicultural tourist attraction: the Qataris themselves seem to search and find their roots there, following old traditions: going shopping, smoking a water pipe, enjoying some excellent lamb meat offered by one of the more than 100 traditional restaurants.

Nature is another attraction of Qatar. The vast desert landscapes, the ocean – after the economic boom initiated by oil and gas, good sense bade the Qataris to save some pristine land, to establish nature protection areas, to introduce low-impact tourism and other strategies aiming at green education, nature protection, environment protection, and sustainability.

The participants of the WAHO conference had ample opportunity to see all of that for themselves, and they were impressed and delighted throughout.

COMES TOGETHER PART II

By *Monika Savier, Bettina Borst, Karsten Scherling*
Photos: *Simona Orvieto, Monika Savier, Karsten Scherling*



World Arabian Horse Organization



to create his or her own schedule, depending on their function such as official delegate, journalist, or private breeder who took part as an observer.

In addition to the short tours accompanying the official meetings and plenum sessions of the conference, a pre and post conference tour program offered even more opportunities to get to know the country of Qatar. Perfectly organized by a team headed by the Co-ordinator Hannie Maasdijk, from the Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club, a wide range of tours presented the historic heritage, the development of the future, the extraordinary local wildlife, and of course the desert to the WAHO visitors.

KHOR AL ADAID

The Off-Road Tour to the Inland Sea

Nothing but sand, heat, and water, and an endless silence in the breathtaking desert landscape, after the motors of the 4x4 Land-cruisers had been turned off.

From the hotels, 6 off-road cars had gone on tour from Doha. Going southwest along a regular service road for the petrol production along the coast, the road ended on a plateau in front of the first dunes. While some camel riding entertainment was provided for the guests, the drivers reduced the air pressure in the tires for the drift through the sands.

THE PRIDE OF QATAR DAYS

Conference, horses and more – an education and entertainment programme

Doha, desert, horses and more – an education and entertainment programme for delegates and observers of the WAHO Conference

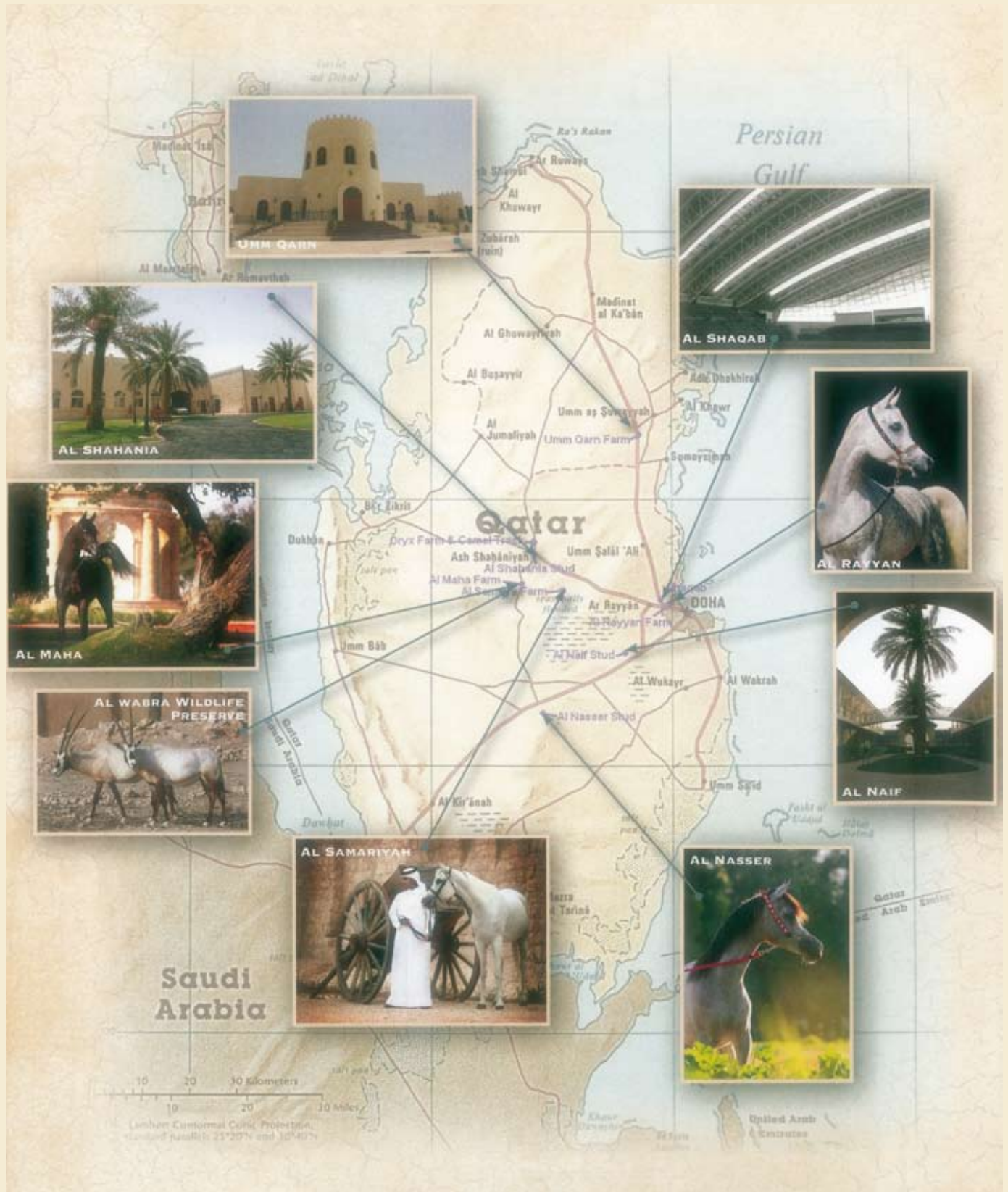
The organization group had planned 4 unique days of activities included in the conference fee, offering everybody the chance to experience the true essence and heart of Qatar and its Arabian horses in particular. The owners of Qatar's premier Arabian stud farms were most pleased to present their horses in their private stud farms after the official WAHO program had ended. The WAHO visitors shared their hosts' passion for Arabian horses and met the hospitality for which the people of Qatar are so renowned.

Every participant of the WAHO conference had the opportunity



It was roller coasting at its best following the coastline, heading in the direction of Saudi Arabia, pushing up and sliding down the dunes, with some breaks included for looking and feeling. The cars reached the Saudi border, just a guard house at the waterline,

one hour later. From here the “inner lake”, a UNESCO World Heritage that is connected to the open water, spreads before the visitor. The lake with its mangrove swamps is a wildlife resort and a perfect place to watch a huge number of different birds.



On the way back to the cars stopped in the middle of the desert to watch a group of female camels with their offspring, all of them running free without being scared of or interested in the people or the cars. The WAHO visitors had the opportunity to enjoy the romantic nature-made show of sunset in the desert, and after an air pressure refill returned to Doha to meet other conference participants during a dinner in a downtown restaurant.



SOUQ WAQIF IN DOHA

Other groups from the conference hotel outside Doha booked the Doha downtown tour to do some shopping at the gold souq inside the great Souq Waqif area in the centre of Doha, as well as a sightseeing tour of the corniche and Dhow harbour.

WAHO conference participants who were located in the downtown hotel could have the Souq Waqif experience every night, as it required no more than a relaxing walk of five minutes, along the corniche next corner to the harbour.

In the Souq Waqif, visitors can immerse in the oriental souq feeling, with its trading going on all around them, haggling about objects for daily life, about food, spices, animals, and tourist items, all interspersed with restaurants and music performances.

The Doha city tours covered the past, the present and the future of the city, as well as highlighting the extraordinary architectural effort of Qatar to develop the country for the future.

To illustrate this, the WAHO visitors were shown the Pearl as a new man-made island for high class residence, and the business city that can give the impression of having been created out of an architects' contest about designing the most exotic skyscraper. The overall impression is of Qatar as a country under general construction – the rapid change must be breathtaking for many of the inhabitants of the country.



Souq Waqif in Doha

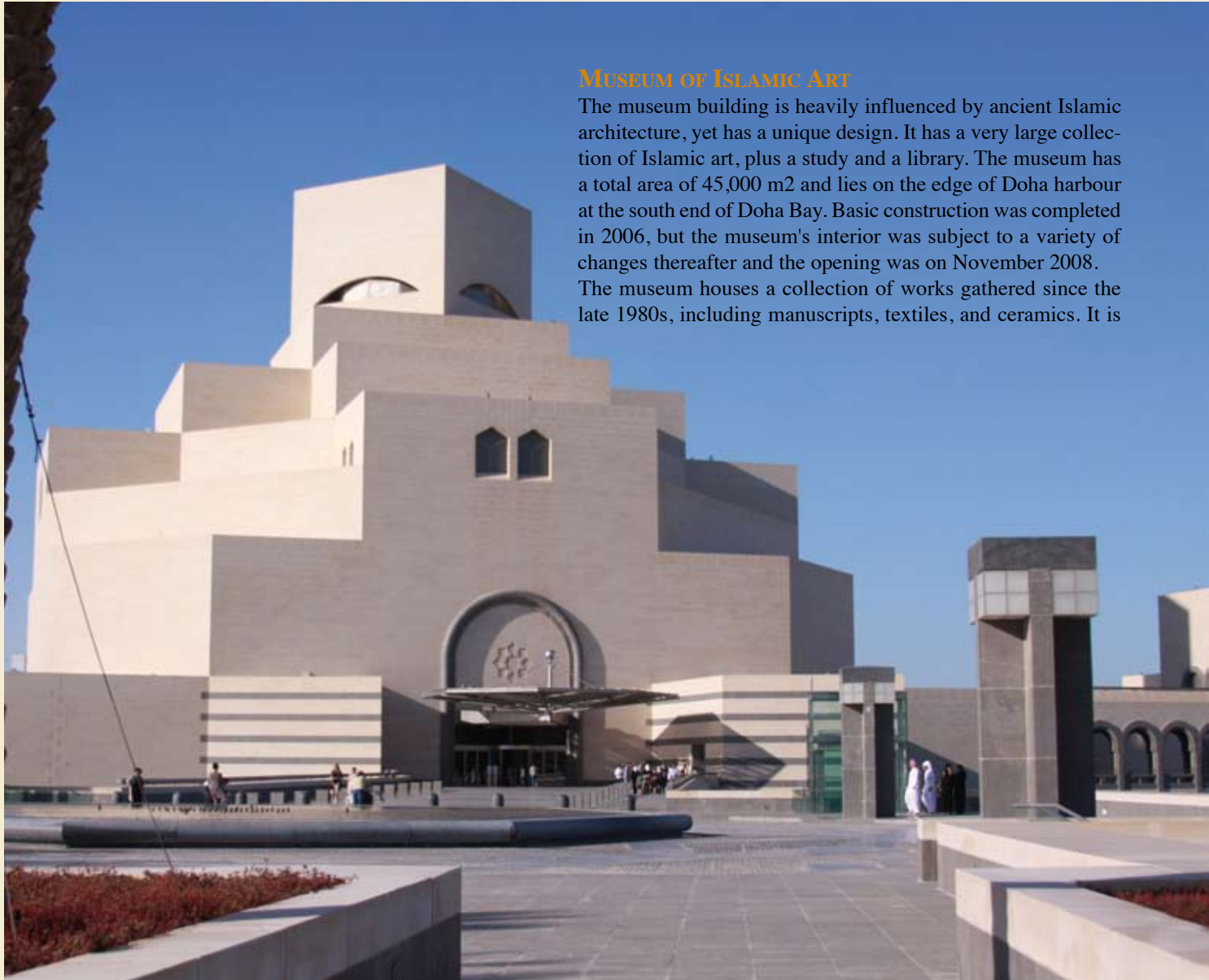


QATAR FOUNDATION HERITAGE LIBRARY IN THE EDUCATION CITY

The WAHO group was invited to see the outstanding Arab and Islamic Heritage Library. The rare collections of the Library exhibit the depth and wealth of the Arab and Islamic civilizations, and demonstrate the extensive contribution of Arab and Muslim scientists, thinkers, and pioneers to our global intellectual heritage.

Sheikh Hassan Bin Mohammed Bin Ali Al-Thani, a prominent researcher who is devoted to the study of the history and culture of Arabia – in top of his wide interest in culture in general - began collecting these materials in the early 1980s. In 2006, the library was annexed to the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development.

Get more information at <http://www.qf.org.qa/community-development/protecting-qatar-heritage/the-heritage-library>.



MUSEUM OF ISLAMIC ART

The museum building is heavily influenced by ancient Islamic architecture, yet has a unique design. It has a very large collection of Islamic art, plus a study and a library. The museum has a total area of 45,000 m2 and lies on the edge of Doha harbour at the south end of Doha Bay. Basic construction was completed in 2006, but the museum's interior was subject to a variety of changes thereafter and the opening was on November 2008.

The museum houses a collection of works gathered since the late 1980s, including manuscripts, textiles, and ceramics. It is



one of the world's most complete collections of Islamic artifacts, with items originating in Spain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, India, and Central Asia. At the age of 91, the architect I.M. Pei had to be coaxed out of retirement to undertake this enterprise. He traveled throughout the Muslim world on a six month quest to learn about Muslim architecture and history and read Muslim texts to draw inspirations for his design. Declining all proposed sites for the museum, Pei suggested a stand-alone island for the structure in order to avoid the encroachment on other buildings. Thus it was built on an island at Doha's Corniche. For anybody interested in further details, see <http://www.mia.org.qa/library>.



AL WABRA WILDLIFE RESERVATION

During the pre and post conference days the conference attendees received a very special offer from Sheikh Saoud Bin Mohammed Bin Ali Al Thani for visiting the Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation Center, close to the town of Al Shahaniyah in central Qatar. This is not a place that is usually open to the public, as for breeding success and the plan to bring them back into their natural environment, it is very important not to disturb the sensitive animals. Learn more about the centre on the Al Wabra website <http://awwp.alwabra.com>.

Sheikh Saoud is developing this farm, which was founded by his father, into a state of the art research and breeding programme for rare wildlife, mainly mammals such as Antelopes and Gazelles together with Sand Cats, Parrots, Ibises, and Birds of Paradise are housed in vast indoor areas where they can breed in an almost natural environment. In addition to housing, preserving and breeding rare animals, the centre is engaged in researching these animals within the frame of several international research programs. So it was a very special gift to small groups of 25 WAHO members per day to be guided in a closed bus through the groups of impressive rare animals such as Oryx Antelopes being kept in an almost natural desert environment.



AL MAHA FARM

What was even more, after the wildlife visit the WAHO groups enjoyed a presentation of the black Arabian horse breeding programme of Egyptian bloodlines that Sheikh Saoud runs at Al Maha farm.

The sun was setting in a display of gold and red when the groups of mares were presented, together with their offspring, on the lawn and in an outdoor presentation area. And when the energetic, breathtakingly beautiful stallions were presented, the full moon was rising on the horizon just as if this background display had been staged on purpose.

Afterwards, the group was invited to see the well-designed stables - and the visitors could not help having long talks on their way back to the hotel, about wildlife and horses and the honour to be invited.



Soker, the Al Maha-bred black stallion with manager Abdelhak

Photo: Glenn Jacobs



THE QATAR RACING AND EQUESTRIAN CLUB (QREC)

The Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club was established in 1975. HE Sheikh Mohamed Bin Faleh Al Thani is Chairman of the REC Board of Directors, and Mr. Sami Jassim Al Boenain is the General Manager of REC and the Secretary General of the REC Board of Directors. (The Club's website: www.qrec.gov.qa.)

On the invitation of this renowned club, the participants of the WAHO conference had the opportunity to witness a great racing event on the racetrack of Al Rayyan Park in Doha, held on an evening during the conference. The race served well to demonstrate how strongly the Arabian horse is rooted in the sport of racing in the Arabian countries. Starting from breeding and going on with highly specialised training up to race management, all the elements are there. And Qatar horses cannot only keep up on the racetracks of the US or Europe – they can easily win there, as demonstrated by the stallion General (Amer x Al hanoof) bred in Umm Qarn stud and owned by HH Sheikh Adullah bin Khalifa Al Thani. The stallion gave proof, winning the Qatar Arabian World Cup in Longchamps in France in 2009 and 2010 and by the racemare Areej (Amer x Akie Croix Noire) bred in Al Shahanian Stud and owned by HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Khalifa Al Thani who won the Qatar Arabian World Cup in 2011

In Europe and the US, the situation is getting increasingly more difficult due to the financial crisis, with prize moneys often not even high enough to cover training costs. No wonder that racing aficionados should get enthusiastic when seeing the facilities of Al Rayyan Race Track. The track, the stables and all buildings were designed to allow for optimum racing no matter what. No wonder the best of European human resources are emigrating to Qatar and the Emirates, in order to work under conditions they could only dream of at home...



Thank's to
Mrs. Hannie Maasdijk,
Conference Coordinator
Qatar Racing
and Equestrian Club,
for her excellent work
(www.qrec.gov.qa)

AL SHAQAB STUD

Al Shaqab Stud was well prepared to receive the several hundred WAHO delegates they had invited to see their horses and premises. Expectations ran high among the delegates: after all, the stud takes a prominent place among the studs of Qatar. It has succeeded in producing no less than four World Champion stallions, and in addition to the world-class horses, it houses a riding academy and a veterinary center and is home to the National Endurance Team of Qatar. It was launched by the Emir of Qatar, His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, and has been a member of the Qatar foundation since 2005. (www.alshaqab.com)

Al Shaqab set a high standard. Mohammed Al Sulaiti, the breeding and show manager of the stud, was proud to present his very best horses to his horse-versed visitors. The four hundred horses living at the equine centre of Al Shaqab didn't even catch the guests' eyes at first, so overwhelming was the sight of the dazzlingly whitewashed buildings spreading over an area of almost a hundred hectares set in immaculate lawns, flower beds, palm trees and white fencing – more acreage than most European studs have with all their pastures included.

The Director of Al Shaqab, Fahad Saad Al Qahtani, took his



fact setting for the admirable Arabian horses of pure Egyptian or international background that Al Shaqab has in plenty. Floating or exploding by, according to their individual tempers and ages, there they were! The presentation program started with a stallion: Mundher Al Shaqab, a son of Al Adeed and Kajora,



Al Shaqab Stud

guests for a tour of the Stud so they would have a chance to find their way. The sheer size of the complex is overwhelming and the horseshoe shape in which the buildings are arranged is probably only really perceivable from the air. The dressage stables have their own stable and arena complex, as have the riding academy, the show jumping stables, and some others. A large horse swimming pool is used for training as well as rehab for the veterinary center, and there is an air-conditioned walking area and even a spa for the horses.

The horses were presented in the vast outdoor arena, partly covered by a stunning, slatted modern-architecture roof construction that reminded some of the sweep of a distant dune just as it is probably meant to do.

Bridging ancient and recent architecture, the roof provided a per-



Mr. Mohammed Al Sulaiti, breeding and show manager of the stud



Innovative horse SPA at Al Shaqab Stud

who is one of the stud's foundation mares. Four generations of her offspring were presented, with the next horse a full sister of Mundher, Hathfa Al Shaqab, then granddaughter Shama Al Shaqab by Ashal Al Rayyan and great-granddaughter Hayam Al Shaqab by Marwan Al Shaqab. There was another great-granddaughter, Randa Al Shaqab by Al Adeed, as well as Helwa and Shaker al Shaqab, all of them enchanting the spectators.

Next to be presented to the visitors were members of the Little Liza Fame family, with the mares Noor, Marwa, Cleopatra, and Rahaf Al Shaqab included.

The Malvena family was represented by her daughter Shahirat by Al Adeed as well as her granddaughter Thoraya by Ashal Al Rayyan and some more, impressively beautiful offspring.

Next was the Straight Egyptian Imperial Impharidah family, with grandget and great-grandget from world-class stallions Ansata Halim Shah, Al Adeed, Ashal Al Rayyan, Ansata Hejazi, Ansata Selman, and Alidar. This display served to present the close cooperation with breeders from Al Rayyan farm as well as from other important studs in Qatar and Kuwait. There was great applause for them as well as for the next Straight Egyptian tail line of the stud which is based on a mare imported from the US, Imperial Phanylah. As a final highlight, there was another Straight Egyptian family out of Johara Al Shaqab.

By the time the enchanting parade of beautiful Arabian horses had ended, the afternoon heat had decreased some, and the delegates were able to take their time to meander across the premises, passing again a special feature of Al Shaqab that had only been publicly presented a few days before: bronze sculpture portraits of the three World Champion Stallions bred and owned by the stud – they will probably add Khalil, their fourth World



Al Shaqab Stud horse presentation

Champion, in years to come. The amount of funds that Qatar must have invested in this equine center for their country is astounding. The WAHO delegates got the message that when Al Shaqab says they mean to protect and preserve their heritage, aiming at improving the Arabian breed, they mean what they are saying.

After devoting so much of their time to the visitors, Al Shaqab even invited them to stay for an exquisite dinner in the exotic setting of palms, and horse sounds in the background.

(www.alshaqab.com)

THE ARABIAN ORYX BREEDING CENTER

The Oryx Farm of Qatar is located in Shahaniya, about 15 kilometers from Doha. The white Arabian Oryx, an antelope and the smallest of her kind, is highly regarded as the national animal of Qatar. It was almost extinct when the Oryx Farm came up with a strategy to save these endangered animals. More than a thousand of them are now gathered in the center which is directed by Dr. Abdul Moti.

The center offers visitors the chance to see quite large herds of this protected species. The WAHO delegates were invited for a gripping presentation on the work and the breeding successes of the farm. Friendly farm wardens offered informative opinions about the breeding project and the protection of Qatar's national animal.



The center offers visitors the chance to see quite large herds of this protected Oryx.

AL SAMARIYA STUD FARM HORSE AND RIDING PRESENTATION

West of Doha, on the Desert Road and near the town of Al Shania, Al Samariya farm owned by HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim Al Thani is located.

The impressive building, a replica of a Qatari fortress, does not only contain an artificial lake with Dhow boats, and an impressive museum, but also the stud with its ambitious breeding programme. It was founded by Sheikh Faisal and his brother, HE Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Al Thani, in 2005.

The breeding goal is a dazzlingly beautiful show horse that is also a competent athlete, can be ridden and has a correct conformation. The stud's first mare was outstanding Naama Al Shaqab who was not only a multiple show winner and produced noble foals but was eventually even presented under saddle.

Al Samariyah farm tried quite a few World Champion stallions such as Al Adeed Al Shaqab and Marwan Al Shaqab, but also Ashal Al Rayyan, Star of Antigua, and some others. This may serve to tell that rather than pursuing a Straight Egyptian breeding programme, the stud's management go for optimizing beauty and performance. At the time of the WAHO visit, the Riding Centre of the stud had 130 students listed, with Peggy Jones and her daughter Sian Jones maintaining a high level of quality with the children and teens, as the presentations given by them proved.

After the horses had been presented, both on a lead rein and ridden, the WAHO delegates were invited into the cool halls of the fortress for dinner accompanied by disco music. The cuisine was traditionally Bedouin, supplemented with some elements of modern refined Arabian cooking and featuring, among others, a delicious camel dish that was definitely not wasted on the guests.



HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim Al Thani with members of his family



THE MUSEUM CENTRE OF SHEIKH FAISALL BIN QASSIM AL THANI

This Museum Centre was started by Sheikh Faisal's father Sheikh Qassim Bin Faisal Al Thani. In a huge building designed to look like a historic fortress, an extraordinary selection of items out of Qatar history is presented. Ancient maps and old photographs of sheiks and tribes, historic war horse equipment such

saddles, swords, and all kind of firearms, an area of reconstructed rooms of old houses, and historic transportation such as coaches and palanquins on camels and donkeys.

For those with some knowledge of ancient Arabic carpets this is an outstanding place, and the hour allotted to the delegates was definitely much too short to see all the items collected. www.sheikhfaisalmuseum.com



The Al Shahania camel race track

During the following bus tour, the group had the opportunity to see a modern type camel race. The Al Shahania camel race track is a newly constructed huge area with sand tracks in several circles of up to 10km in length, all flanked by roads on both sides and fully floodlighted. Modern camel races do without the small riders, usually children, of the past. The camels will run straight forward anyway, so the work of the trainers and owners in the cars moving on the side road is to remote-control a rotating whip which can be used to speed the camels up if tactics require this during the race. What a picture!

The last visit of the day was, consequently, a camel farm where the guests were informed about the breeding programme of a camel race enthusiast – fans of Arabian horses tend to forget you can race other animals than just horses.





A DHOW CRUISE

The morning cruise in the harbour of the Doha main bay was a good opportunity to calm down and enjoy the sun for a moment while feeling the movements of the ancient, traditional wooden fishing boat.

From the harbour, there was a perfect view of the new business district coastline of Doha, where steel, glass, and some concrete

combine into sky scraping symbols of business and growth with an Arabic flair.

On the other side of the bay the “old” city with the palace of the Emir, the main mosque near the Souq Waqif, and the museum of Islamic art nicely surround the coastline of the cornice, without dominant high buildings and still presenting the flair of an Oriental city.

AL NAÏF STUD

It was hot afternoon when the buses loaded with WAHO delegates approached Al Naif Stud. Dust and sand veiled the view of the landscape and covered the bus windows, as Al Naif is, although just a 30-minute-drive from Doha, aptly located for raising Arabians: it’s right in the middle of the desert - at least for eyes used to the lush green fields and densely spaced housing areas of more moderate climates. Al Naif is an oasis of green-fronded brown palms and gracious white buildings with green-tiled roofs in an ocean of sand in all shades of white, beige, and dun. (www.alnaifstud.com)

Sheikh Abdulla Bin Nasir Al Ahmed Al Thani, who founded the stud early in the 1990ies, made a point of building horse-friendly, with lots of air and light provided by the gracious pointed-arch doors and windows of the inviting stables that house the precious Arabians of Straight Egyptian and domestic



breeding he is keen on raising here. A particularly positive feature of the stables are the half partitions between the individual horses, allowing them much more contact than usually found in more conservative stabling facilities.

Not many of the 160 horses living in Al Naif were in their stables, however. They were out and about all over the stud: there were some racehorses on the racetrack, there were horses being led to and from a building that turned out to be an indoor swimming pool, and some other horses – the Straight Egyptians – were waiting to be presented to the WAHO visitors. It was a beautiful sight. Almost all of Al Naif's horses are grey and white, which is why they call their broodmares their "silver ladies". The visitors could easily see why well-known horse photographer Glenn Jacobs, a member of the management of Al Naif, claimed to have a hard time when faced with the task of photographing yet another grey mare in a way that highlights her unique features.

At Al Naif, they are proud of their Straight Egyptians and select carefully, stud manager Rashid al Malki explained to his visitors, with an eye out for the old family lines and strains. Dahman Shawahn, for example, is well represented. The Ansata heritage is strong in the horses the visitors saw, founding stallion Ansata Halim Shah prominent in the pedigrees of many of them. Al Naif has by now bred a whole number of excellent horses and Rashid Al Malki was proud to show them to his honored guests – one of the most prominent and impressing horses being Ansata Nile Gipsy, the dam of Al Naif's rising star, multiple champion stallion Jandeh. Fittingly, the presentation of horses began and ended with Qatar International Egyptian Event Silver Champions: respectively the mare Thamrath and the stallion Ebtiyaj, who is scheduled to tour the European shows in 2012. The stud has an even more prestigious horse, World Champion filly Johara Al Naif, but she was away at the time of the visit. The horses the delegates saw, however, were of excellent quality and well chosen to represent a cross section of the stud's horses and breeding work, and the delegates had ample time to admire them, with lovingly prepared snacks being served during the presentation.

There were some fillies and colts representing the future hopes of Al Naif, such as Sabiha and Mayasah and an Ebtiyaj colt; there were established broodmares such as Ansata Nile Echo daughter Tabraa, Ansata Hejazi daughter Hejazia, and Ansata Halim Shah daughter Ansata Marjaneh; there was prodigious mare Simeon Se'Ate, a Qatar Reserve Champion mare, and several Egyptian Event winners. The delegates were impressed to see the results of careful Straight Egyptian breeding under every aspect.

There was so much to see at the impressive Al Naif facilities that most of the delegates were quite reluctant to leave this hospitable breeding institution of Arabian horses when the enchanting presentations had ended. (www.alnaifstud.com)



AL NASSER STUD

The blessedly cool morning hours were a good time for visiting the stud - and it turned out to be a blessed morning indeed for Al Nasser when the buses transporting more than 200 WAHO delegates and guests arrived at the facilities. After all, it had not rained here for two years, as stud manager Hendrik Mens explained when he greeted his visitors and apologized for the dust clouds that took their time to settle around the vehicles.

But the guests had hardly left the buses when the miracle occurred – it started to rain! Not just a few drops here and there, but a satisfying, abundant, hard rain that soaked the sand for some weeks to come and sent most of the visitors diving for the cover of the grove of palm trees that greet desert-wary guests after stepping through the gates of the stud. Sheikh Nawaf Bin Nasser Al Thani apparently gave a lot of thought to the welfare of his horses when he built the stud: there are not only lots of

palm trees for shade, but the spacious and well-aired stables, with lots of natural light and built in pleasingly oriental style, leave nothing to be desired for housing the mostly Straight Egyptian Arabian horses he started to breed here early in the 1990ies.

After the refreshing rain, the 65 horses of the farm were in high spirits and just in the right mood to add some verve and vivacity to their displays when being presented to the guests! After the beautiful sight of so many white horses at Al Naif, they seemed not to have expected to have the pleasure of this kind of sight again so soon, but here they were: white mares all over the premises, accompanied and complemented by grey foals still showing shades of black and bay and red. A beautiful sight once more! And they were even more beautiful now, with some wet strands in their manes and tails lending them a touch of the wild. At Al Nasser farm, they are very much aware that they owe a



Al Nasser stud manager Mr. Hendrik Mens (right) with his friend Glenn Jacobs, Al Naif Stud



Shagran Al Nasser (Ansata Selman x Dana Al Nasser)





lot to their first chief sire, Imperial Mahzeer, whom Sheikh Nawaf acquired as a two-year-old. The stud was the first horse farm in Qatar to re-introduce Arabian horse breeding into the country. The flea-bitten grey, stated stud manager Hendrik Mens, has admirably complemented the stud's Straight Egyptian foundation mares that were imported from the US, Europe, and Morocco.

Among the horses that were presented to the WAHO visitors, there were two of Mahzeer's immediate offspring, namely the impressive time-proven mare Zenubia, a breathtakingly beautiful representative of the Siqlawi strain, and the exceptional bay mare Aliah. Aliah was presented with a family group, an impressive sight for any breeder: there were Aliah, her daughter Remal who is a Qatar National Champion mare, and two Remal offspring, both of them Qatar national champions as well: the mare Rihab and the filly Amal. The sight of that family together with some other exceptional horses, time-proven Ftoon one of the great names among them, bore witness to the fact that at Al Nasser, they are dedicated to a carefully designed long-term breeding programme, not just to short-term dazzling show success.

Among all of the Arabian beauties displaying their rain-spirited temperaments for the guests, some of the most notable ones were chestnut stallion Shagran Al Nasser, the rising star of the stud with an impressive international show career under his belt, and some of his family: his dam Madenah with her good back, shown with two of her half sisters, and his full sister Selma, all of them highly correctly built feminine beauties emanating that flair of Arabian spirit and beauty any "genuine" Arabian should have.

The magnificent horses created a mystical, oriental atmosphere around, and when the visitors were called to a carefully prepared, opulent buffet of selected oriental delicacies for lunch under the Bedouin tent erected in the grove of palms still dripping somewhat from the rain, everything was just as it should be.

AL SHAHANIA STUD

In the course of the Pride of Qatar tours for the WAHO conference, the superlatives were definitely stacking up. The WAHO delegates had already seen a lot of the best stables and the best horses – and HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Khalifa Al Thani's farm was going to be the next fitting example.

A stable complex of extraordinary Arabic architecture is arranged around an atrium with a presentation walkway going all the way around. The red-carpeted entry was surrounded by green pastures, decorated Bedouin tents, henna paintings, flacons, and saluki hounds.

The horses presented here made a stark contrast to the Straight Egyptians presented at Al Nasser in the morning: superb Arabian race horses with the label straight French, and some ex-

cellent show horses. All the horses were presented in the atrium, with comments by stud manager Alexandra Newman for the race horses and Michael Byatt for the show horses. Race performance inheritor sire Amer definitely put his stamp on many of the successful race horse athletes posing for the guests. With the stud's show horses, Magnums Psyche is a sire of choice – no wonder the stud has quite some show successes under their belt.

After the presentation of the horses and stables, the visitors were invited to an outdoor dinner with a lavish choice of Arabian delicacies testing the guest's resolution not to eat so much today – it fell by the wayside once more. Live music on stage with an outstanding percussionist made for some healthy exercise and a good appetite. (www.alshahaniastud.com)



ARABIAN PERFORMANCE SHOW AT THE QATAR RACING AND EQUESTRIAN CLUB

A dressage contest for Arabian horses was one of the highlights complementing the stud tours. It took place in the indoor arena of the Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club (REC).

Nobody would exactly have expected to see a dressage competition in Qatar, but the REC provides professional riding and training services for show jumping as well as dressage.

A particular feature of the dressage project, WAHO general secretary Katarina Murray explains, is that “discarded” race and show Arabians get a second chance in life by being schooled for their new jobs as horses for the students of the Equestrian Centre. This “second chance idea” is not exactly the conventional thing to do in traditional Middle East thinking.

The competition was divided into two classes, with the level being A/L or novice. It was easy to see that the participants enjoyed presenting themselves to international dressage judges and the hundreds of WAHO delegates, with quite a few of them able to judge the performances of the students in the arena with an experienced eye and a stern look.

The winners received prizes handed over by WAHO Conference coordinator Hannie Maasdijk.

Afterwards, there was an opportunity to visit the Sports Centre which comprises not only several indoor and outdoor arenas, but also a horse hospital providing therapeutic and surgical services for horses. (www.qrec.gov.qa)



Gillian Higgins the founder of Horses Inside Out uses her artistic ability to paint the skeleton and other various anatomical designs on the side of the horse to help bring anatomy and biomechanics to life. Gillian performed her inspiring and informative lecture demonstrations during the WAHO Conference tours in the Indoor Arena of the REC In Qatar. The aim of Horses Inside Out is to educate horse owners, riders, trainers, students and handlers about anatomy, biomechanics and conditioning of the horse in order to improve performance and reduce the risk of injury of our horses. (www.horsesinsideout.com)

UMM QARN FARM

Finally His Highness Sheikh Abdulla Bin Kalifa Al Thani, the patron of the WAHO conference and the special advisor of the emir, invited the participants of the conference to his Umm Qarn farm, a 580 hectare oasis where they were greeted by Brigadier Abdulla Mohammed Al Yafaee.

Dominating the premises is a central building, the Marquee, reminiscent of a tower of an Arabic fortress. The stables adjacent to this management tower are built to be open for a look from above – quite an unusual way for the group of visitors to look into a stable! The other stables were presented the normal way, by taking a walk around. Just like the evening before, the guests were introduced to world-class quality Arabian race horses, with the horses of Umm Qarn based on straight French bloodlines and bred and trained by a French management team headed by Alban de Mieulle.

The presentation started in an arena, where a selection of Umm Qarn horses in race training were paraded for the guests. Time-

proven race inheritor Amer was a sire name often heard, as was Djebbel for the younger horses. Next was a demonstration of the swim training in the indoor pool. The delegates had seen similar pools before, at Al Shaqab and Al Naif, but only here at Umm Qarn did they get the opportunity to watch a live demonstration. Prior to the walk through the stables the visitors had been asked to sterilize their hands. All the horses had their groom at their stall doors during the presentation to the big group, making sure that no horse was unduly scared about the visit.

The remarkable feature during the following dinner – which was just as outstanding as the guests had gotten used to – was the fact that after their work with the horses was finished, all the grooms joined the meal and mixed with the WAHO visitors. And just like every evening during the last days, when entering the busses for their different hotels the visitors were faced with saying goodbye to old and new friends, looking forward to maybe meeting again on the occasion of some future visit.

(www.ummqarn.com)





LEAVING QATAR

For many, this 2011 WAHO conference was like a grand piece of art: days of conference and meeting work embedded in some pre-conference activities, all the different places linked by shuttle and bus services and help always at hand at the permanently staffed information desks, the atmosphere of Doha city, and the final highlights of the Pride of Qatar days after the conference proper. Then some post-conference activities and the journey home.

Just like after every conference, every delegate and observer will make up his or her own mind about the issues that were his or her concern for the duration of the activity-packed days of the 2011 WAHO conference. There was event upon event, parallel schedules of official and additional meetings, tours offered during the conference, pre and post conference tours – with this outstanding number of events and tours, making all of them possible at all and then running them all in this outstanding quality is nothing short of a miracle.

A whole number of teams worked at producing this high quality performance. The perfect conference content organization of the WAHO team inspired by Katarina Murray has earned thanks just as sincere as those to the national QREC organization team most efficiently headed by Hannie Maasdijk, and the hospitable horse farms, like Al Shaqab, Al Shahania, Umm Qarn, Al Nasser Stud, Al Naif Stud, Al Samariya, Al Maha and also the Museum Authority, Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club and others for their hospitality showered on the WAHO delegation during their visit in Qatar, who kindly opened the gates of their farms for the WAHO visitors and gave them the opportunity to take home unforgettable memories.



Our heartfelt gratitude to HH Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalifa Al Thani (Special Adviser to HH The Emir of Qatar), for the patronage of the 2011 WAHO Conference in Qatar

