

## PORTRAIT OF A GERMAN BREEDER

# Nils Ismer

## GESTÜT ISMER

### STRÖHEN

Interviewed by Sonja Smaldone

Located in Ströhen, Germany, Gestüt Ismer is one of the most famous and successful private breeding programs in Europe dedicated to international quality production. In the stable of Ismer Stud you can find World, European, and National Show Champions and first class riding horses. Countless victories throughout Europe on international shows, tournaments and races have proved that the breeding goal is maintained to the maximum extent. I had the honour to interview Dr. Nils right after the 2020 edition of PSAIAHF in Saudi Arabia last January, he was very pleased to walk me through the main stages of his lifetime activity as a breeder and spokesman of the Arabian horse.

*Hello Dr. Ismer. Thank you very much for accepting our interview. Let's start from the very beginning. Please, introduce yourself to our readers. Give us some background to you, your family and education.*

My name is Dr. Nils Ismer and I was born at Ismer Stud and Tierpark Ströhen. My family has been breeding Arabian horses since 1959, and, today, we have about 200 Arabians at the stud. After finishing my veterinary studies, I was working four years at the Veterinary Clinic in Lüsche to improve my veterinary skills, especially in reproduction. In 2007, I took over the farm of my father and since then I have been running

it with my wife and my two children.

*What made you prefer the Arabian breed to all the other breeds? And how long have you been breeding it?*

I had no chance to escape! Born in one of the biggest Arabian stud farms in Europe leaves certainly a life-long impression. The captivating beauty, the versatility and the very unique character of the Arabian horse caught me already at a very young age. I first showed one of my father's mares in Aachen when I was only 10 years old. That left a deep mark on me. The overwhelming feeling, when you walk through the meadows with new born foals is irreplaceable.

*What does the word 'breeding' mean to you? What specific qualities or skills do you need to become a good breeder?*

Breeding means creation. You need to have a vision of "your" horse and should not just follow icons. Combined with a strong passion and rare talent of being critical to your own program, you can achieve a lot. No horse is perfect; no combination is predictable! That keeps the game fascinating. On the other hand, it helps a lot if you do have a clear picture of the ancestors of your breeding horses.

*When was Gestüt Ismer created? What's your philosophy Dr. Ismer?*

Ismer Stud was founded in 1959 by our late grandfa-











ther Rolf Ismer, who was born in Silesia, Poland. He married our Grandmother Annemarie, who was in charge of the beautiful farm, which was run by her family since more than 700 years. The idea of my grandfather and my father was to breed a functional Arabian horse with high type and correct structure. The unique beauty should never conceal the importance of performance, health and strengths. By combining bloodlines from the Polish programs with bloodlines from Weil and Egyptian pedigrees, we have tried to improve our own stock year by year, following a consequent selection. Rideability and performance are the basics for a balanced and well- structured horse, which must be the basement for perfect beauty.

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*Which bloodlines are mostly bred at your Stud-farm?*

Our first mares came from Griesbach stud and belong to some of the most famous bloodlines of the Weil Marbach breeding. Later, my father imported many horses from Janow Podlaski and Michalow and added Egyptian stallions to the program. Based on these, we try to add useful genetic material to our breeding every year. Lately, we have used Pallaton K, Ascot DD and Poseidon OS, which all three left a remarkable progeny. Besides that, we keep running a small straight Egyptian program based on the major impression of the Hadban Enzahi son Madkour I and a strong influence of Hanan and Sabah, both mares from Dr. Hans Nagel.







Arabian Horse Show at Ismer Stud

*Who is/are the most important breeding stallion(s) at Gestüt Ismer at the moment? Why?*

Ascot DD, because he is combining a unique pedigree with fantastic offspring, especially concerning beauty and movements. But also Pallaton K gives us great opportunities, as he is a fantastic horse and producer and has nei-

ther WH Justice nor Gazal Al Shaqab blood, which I am afraid you cannot find very often anymore these days!

*Which of your mares are you mainly using to improve or evolve your breeding program?*

Currently we are using mares by WH Justice son Altis, by Gazal Al Shaqab son Gazwan Al Nasser, by Excalibur son El Mariachi and by QR Marc son IS Exxpu. The most outstanding mares at the moment are IS Et Tu by IS Exxpu, IS Wimea and IS Ella Nora by El Mariachi.

*How do you tackle the concepts of 'beauty' and 'functional correctness' in our modern day Arabians?*

It is actually a very important question, as our breed is losing the functionality part of it by misusing our show system. Many winning horses at big shows are not very functional anymore and have lost the ability to move in a powerful and balanced way. By using stallions and also selecting mares with strong movement skills, we are trying to keep these major important aspects in our breeding program.

Good examples are some of the stallions we are currently using such as: Altis, El Mariachi, Pallaton K and Ascot DD!

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Ascot DD  
Stallion at Ismer Stud

lesen sollen geliebt und geachtet werden

1983







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***Where did your passion for morphology competitions arise from? Please, outline some of the most important victories in the show environment so far.***

Well, showing a class-winning mare with ten years of age at the European Championships set a dangerous seed! This was the beautiful Mashoura by Madkour I - Shiwa in 1986. In 1989 her full-sister Madoura won Reserve European Champion in Fontainebleau! Lately, it was the Reserve European Champion Title of IS Exxpu, which was bred in the seventh generation in Ströhen!

***What is it you'd like to still experiment at this stage of your breeding career in the Arabian horse industry?***

I am still waiting - and hoping - for my first own bred World Champion! But the big challenge for the future will be to find an exceptional stallion with outcrossed bloodlines like HL El Ganador for example. I hope that our breeding society will be brave enough to walk on alternative ways. Otherwise, we are locking ourselves in the trap of inbreeding.

***What are the objectives you would like your breeding program to reach in the future?***

Right now we already breed the horses I wish for. IS Et Tu is such an example. She is feminine and elegant, correct but breathtaking! I only hope that we can do this more often and still keep a good variety of dam-lines.

***When and why was Tierpark Ströhen created? What's the main thought behind it?***

It was founded also in 1959 just like the Stud-farm. In the beginning it was a combination of business concept and "living your dream". My grandfather was an animal crazy person and just got tired of so many people visiting him and watching all his lovely animals, but not paying for it. Over the years, Tierpark has become more and more professional and it is following the main responsibilities of every professional Zoo, which is: education, species protection and recreation for the people. We always try to bring our visitors very close to the animals, especially the children, and try to teach them also the importance of species protection and biological facts. Right this year, we are starting a program to support the endangered species in our Zoo, but also in the region. Besides that, we are running programs where you can have unique experiences with wild animals like the elephants for instance, and at the same time you are part of their entertainment!

***Dr. Ismer, will you please leave a final message to the readers of AHM?***

Let us start a discussion about our breeding! Is it wise to produce 10 Embryos of the same mare in one year? Is it clever to provide semen of stallions worldwide and keep many potential stallions out of the business? Are we helping the breed by using only two sire-lines in the show-breeding?

We should be open for new thoughts, even though they may reduce our options in one way, they may open new doors in the other way.

Thank you!

***Thanks a lot for your contribution Dr. Ismer. It was an honor to talk to you. For sure, the issues you have raised deserve more tables for discussion to inspire and envisage alternative viable solutions inside of the Arabian horse industry.***

***Meanwhile, we on the AHM Team wish you all the very best in your future endeavors!***

**Ismer**

[www.gestuetismer.de](http://www.gestuetismer.de)