During our visit in Qatar in February we had the chance to visit one of the oldest and most famous farms in the world: Al Rayyan Farm, run by Sheikh Hamad Ali Al Thani.

Sheikh Hamad Ali Al Thani is well known by the Arabian Horse community, however we would like to spend a few words about him.

Sheikh Hamad Bin Ali Al Thani spent his entire life among horses: he began with his own small stud in Egypt and in 1992 he was elected by HH The Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalif Al Thani, as the director of Al Shaqab Stud. Sheikh Hamad was one of the main contributors of the greatness of Al Shaqab. For 17 years he was the main breeder and manager of the stud which brought to the world three of the most famous Arabian sires – Gazal Al Shaqab, his son Marwan Al Shaqab and Al Adeed Al Shaqab. Today it is difficult to imagine the modern breeding without these three champions which have become living legends.

Al Rayyan was founded by Sheikh Abdulaziz Bin Khaled Bin Hamad Al Thani in 1980. After two decades of successes, thanks to a careful selection of the foundation and smart breeding, the farm produced some of the best straight Egyptians in the world. As the time passed Al Rayyan’s activities gradually decreased and the stud lost its leadership.

In 2014 Al Rayyan was subjected to some changes as HH Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Emir Father, took over the ownership of the stud. In order to put Al Rayyan back in his place, HH The Emir asked Sheikh Hamad Ali Al Thani to be the new Director of Al Rayyan as he had the right skills to take Al Rayyan to the level that the farm deserved.

In the last years, Sheikh Hamad had a break from arabian horses due to health reasons. So when the call from the Emir came, he accepted with enthusiasm to go back to his passion, and in February of 2015 the new adventure of Sh Hamad begun with this new chapter of Al Rayyan and a new team to back him up. In just one year the farm gave impressive results at the shows, in breeding and in renewing its facilities.

Sheikh Hamad’s passion for Arabian horses makes everything possible.

For the management, Sheikh Hamad chose Mr. Santiago Fornieles. Santiago comes from both the endurance and halter world back in his home country Argentina, and before accepting the manager position at Al Rayyan he worked on his own small arabian breeding farm in Argentina. He arrived to Qatar with plenty of energy and good ideas. He was the perfect person at the
right moment. He was exactly the person that Sheikh Hamad was looking for to give a rebirth to Al Rayyan. Together with him Sheikh Hamad also took on board Santiago’s wife Dr. Milagros Badaraco as a vet with a valuable experience in breeding. After entering Al Rayyan Milagros immediately proved her vet breeding skills and managed to get an impressive number of mares pregnant after the period of stuck. Some months later Dr. Matias Freije also came along to reinforce the veterinary team with the vision of Sh. Hamad to help small farms in Qatar with their breeding programs.

Finally, the last key element of the puzzle came into place when Sheikh Hamad hired Alessio Scaramella as leading trainer at the farm and with the help of Sh Hamad’s long time friend Michael Byatt and Luca Oberti as handlers the results started to come:

in 2015 Al Rayyan achieved successes at the Egyptian Event in Lexington where in the fillies classes Nawwa Al Rayyan (Ansata Sokar x Nadrah Al Rayyan) was nominated Gold Champion and Sabla Al Rayyan (Ansata Sokar x Sundos Al Rayyan) was Bronze Champion. Plus, Nawwa Al Rayyan was also chosen Most Classic Head Fillies. In the mares class Rayyana Al Alya (Ashbal Al Rayyan x Asrar Al Rayyan By Al Aadeed Al Shaqab) was named Gold Champion Mare and Most Classic Head Mare.

At the Egyptian Event Europe Raya Al Rayyan (Ansata Sokar x Nadrah Al Rayyan) was chosen 2015 Bronze Champion Yearling Filly, while Darine Al Rayyan (Ashbal Al Rayyan by Safir to Ansata Halim Shah x Aisha by Ansata Halim Shah and Ghazala from Hanan by Alaa El Din) was chosen 2015 Silver Champion Mare with the same score of the Gold Champion.

At the Qatar National Al Rayyan continued his success once again with Darine Al Rayyan (Ashbal Al Rayyan by Safir to Ansata Halim Shah x Aisha by Ansata Halim Shah and Ghazala from Hanan by Alaa El Din) who was chosen 2015 Gold Qatar Champion Mare and highest points of the show. Menouah Al Rayyan (Fares Al Rayyan x Bint Messoudah M HP) was chosen 2015 Gold Qatar Champion Filly and Majdah Al Rayyan (Ashbal Al Rayyan x Maida Bint Bint Mohsen) was chosen Silver Champion Mare.

During our visit we witnessed how well are all the horses being looked after at Al Rayyan. We walked through the stables of Al Rayyan and felt the love and the heritage at every step we took. It is hard to describe in words the feeling prompted by Al Rayyan mares. In every box there is an icon of the straight Egyptian breeding program that is cherished and taken care as their royal pedigrees demand.

The breeding program that Sheikh Hamad is carrying on is just...
SHEIKH HAMAD BIN ALI AL THANI WITH MUNIRA AL RAYYAN (ANSATA SOKAR X BINT MESOUDAH M HP), AL RAYYAN FARM 2015
Together with Sheikh Hamad, one of the creators of the power of Al Shaqab, was for 17 years the main breeder and manager of a stud which brought the world, among others, two of the most famous Arabian sires – Gazal Al Shaqab and his son Marwan Al Shaqab. Today it is difficult to imagine modern breeding without these two champions, which have become living legends. Sheikh Hamad Bin Ali Al Thani spent his entire life among horses: he began with his own small stud in Egypt, until in 1992 he was elected by the then Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalif Al Thani, as the director of Al Shaqab Stud. After a break resulting from an illness he returned to work which is his passion – the breeding of Arabian horses.

Al Rayyan, a city that is closely adjacent to the country’s capital Doha and which lent its name to Al Rayyan Stud, is a special place for the Qatari people. It is here that the historic, victorious battle against the Turks took place, after which they had to abandon the lands of Qatar. Its name means “the source of irrigation” and as per Islam it also means “a door in heaven” or “one of the Gates of Paradise.” It is here that we find the Aspire Dome sport complex with the 300 m Aspire Tower (The Torch Doha), designed by Hadi Simaan, dominating over the vicinity. It is here that we find the seat of the Qatar Foundation, as well as the Racing and Equestrian Club. And it is here that the horses of Al Rayyan Farm have their home, together with the stud’s 19 year old senior multi-champion, Ashhal Al Rayyan (Sa’ar – Ansata Majesta/Ansata Halim Shah). Sheikh Hamad Bin Ali Al Thani personally gives us a tour of the stud.

Incredible. He decided to mostly use Al Afeed Al Shaqab (Ansata Halim Shah x Sundar Alysayya) for the exceptional features he can pass on, and Hilal Al Nakeeb (Nh Hafid Jamil x Bint Bint Hammanaa) that he imported in leasing from Mr. Hassanain Al Nakeeb.

The dream of Sheikh Hamad is to breed the perfect straight Egyptian stallion since he already has an incredible collection of mares. The list of great mares at Al Rayyan is seemingly endless. He knows their pedigrees very well, he knows all their faults and good points and how they produce.

For sure, thanks to the love Sheikh Hamad gives to his mares, they give him back their best.

In one year Al Rayyan has completely changed its face and everything is working smoothly from all points of view: at the shows, with the breeding program and in being able to refreshing the farm without changing its traditions and its heritage. Sheikh Hamad’s objectives have always been to promote arabian horses and give support to the people involved in the field. This is why now Al Rayyan is open to small Qatari farms that need help with their own breeding programs through breeding by frozen semen, fresh semen and embryos.

We had the pleasure to meet Sheikh Hamad at the beginning of our magazines’ adventure with TuttooArabi and the Desert Heritage, 18 years ago. For him the love for Arabian horses has always came first. (Not many knows that Sheikh Hamad loves to ride and does it anytime he can). Sheikh Hamad has a vision of the world that we have always appreciated: he sees two types of people living on this planet – horse people and not horse people – and of course we are the Arabian horse people!

He loves Arabian horses so much that he would make any kind of effort to ensure them the best possible life. Sometimes when a horse is sick and his life in danger he can even spend the all night reading him the Coran. “When you give, God gives you”, he always says.

Over the years we have seen how his successes could be considered as the outcome of his philosophy applied to the breeding and to the life.

At the end of our visit at the Stud Sheikh Hamad gave us his farewell with these words: “I think horses are a gift from God to the people." He believes that the horses are able to create a special relationship with humans. “They can feel people’s feelings, they know from one’s step who the person is. If you don’t believe in horses and don’t love them this gift goes to waste” he said.

We left Al Rayyan very emotional and wish all our readers to have the chance once in a life to visit this stunning straight Egyptian stud.

Enjoy some pictures of the pearls of Al Rayyan that we had the pleasure to admire, taken from Al Rayyan Archive.

PHOTO: MONIKA LUFT

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SIMONE AND GIORGIA LEO OF TUTTOARABI WITH SANTIAGO FORNIELES, MANAGER OF AL RAYYAN FARM

SIMONE AND GIORGIA LEO OF TUTTOARABI WITH SANTIAGO FORNIELES, MANAGER OF AL RAYYAN FARM
G SHAFARIA
Abdulaziz or Sheikh Nawaf, all the old friends, we talked later in because we already picked the horse we liked. I remember Sheikh until the championships. We did not care about the champions to each other. We went to many shows but we never stayed Do you still travel to shows?

breeding and could be maybe because Aachen is for us a breeders’ show. In the beginning and money and money and money. We always loved Aachen paddock, with grass. But now it is more politics, it is about sponsors the paddock all the time, never in the box. Gazal was living in the Believe me, that is not the way. Horses like Marwan are living in loose, in the paddocks. Let him go around. It means he likes freedom. Don’t keep him in the box. Keep him cannot change the nature. You have to know where the horse human, if the horse has nothing to do, he will eat himself. You sit with people now, because they say: you know my horse? We important for the owner but not for us. Now is different. I can’t

of horses that never produced anything. Al Shaqab is different. Is that why Al Shaqab stud achieved success so quickly?

horses and don’t love them, this gift goes to waste. If you don’t believe in the bone, is still too heavy. And Gazal is a gift for us. I need to cannot add the re Egyptian, you succeed. Because the Polish blood is more light lines but this is wrong. It’s between Polish and Egyptian. It is the best from the Polish blood and the Egyptian blood. People What is so special about him?

was Farid. But I went for the cheaper one... So Michael calls me. He stayed with us for 6 months, he tried to jump a fence and he broke his leg. It happens sometimes at every farm... Judith Forbis. He came to Doha, but we had very bad luck with What is so special about him?

and says: the mare is in heat, we can breed her to Farid. I said: and from this cross Gazal was born. What is so special about him?

one of the biggest mistakes of my life! There were two stallions. To work with horses. For me Poland is a different style. It is like different story about the relationship with the horse and how reading a history book. Everything is in a right place. And we

wanted to buy horses from Poland but who would be producing could be sold and which one should stay. Because everybody was planning, they knew how to sell horses and which horse

Egypt. In Egypt there was a lot of small breeders, everybody very good horses, also bay ones. For me it was more than

Could you imagine? And then you important. It is also a gift, if you are able to evaluate the horse with no advice. I educated my eye this way. The eye is very

Arabian Horse”. And I put points on every picture of a horse: Breeding is art. I cannot tell you how to do it. You cannot teach

not have my own school. I always say: don’t follow anybody. Li

plague to me. But this is the show world today, you need to do it. Li

have never seen hundreds of mares in one barn. Reading a history book. Everything is in a right place. And we

and Ignacy Jaworowski. I sat with them, we had lunches together, Both. I met Director Andrzej Krzyszta

Did you visit Janów Podlaski or Michałów State Stud?

we had the tool, I had the horses to to continue the breeding. We were young, we had no big knowledge. We had trust in our

knowledge, but you also have to have the eye. And then you can judge all this, you can be a breeder. You have to have the

from how he grew up, in a bad place, wrong box. When you

legs, he can be, because it is coming not from his pedigree but of the father. And the bad legs are from the grandfather. Would

ah, ok, this eye is because of the mother, this back is because good point. And then you can go back to the pedigree and see:

when you see it. You see where is the fault and where is the

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Amira Al Shaqab in Dubai Micha

It is possible. I know many breeders of the world and hundreds of horses and don’t love them, this gift goes to waste. A horse. They can feel about you, they know from your walk who cannot add the re... than the Spanish. Spanish is too heavy and even the Egyptian.

Egyptian, you succeed. Because the Polish blood is more light. According to the lines but this is wrong. It’s between Polish and Egyptian. It is difficult to be the best from the Polish blood and the Egyptian blood. People... say that the golden cross is between Spanish and Egyptian.

First one was 50 thousand and the other was 90 thousand. This opportunity to buy Anaza El Farid. And not buying him was Michael called me: remember Farid? I must say that I had the... he said, I don’t know, it’s an auction. So I said, go ahead. There was... and he broke his leg. It happens sometimes at every farm...

we bought Ansata Halim Shah (by Ansata Ibn Halima) from... and says: the mare is in heat, we can breed her to Farid. I said: first we have to see... But I went for the cheaper one... So Michael calls me and he says: you have one product, your own product. In Al Shaqab we... It is a person who dedicated his life to create one line. And... different blood. We succeeded because we took the chance.

I started here this year. I have to know my tool, my mares. To... stallion. I know their pedigrees, I know their faults and good points, but I have to see how they produce. Next time I will... and more embryos! Use her for riding. But... you what you want, don’t breed her anymore, stop taking more... who loves horses will not do this. He would never throw a horse... tomorrow. So what for? Are you a breeder or what? A breeder... It will not happen again. This is God. People believe in embryos. People... in marketing. He played a huge role in promoting Al Shaqab.

We were young, we had no big knowledge. We had trust in our... influence, they sold all the best they had. But in Poland there... people in Qatar. The stud was open to every Qatari who... Promotion of my country.

I was really lucky. What was the most surprising for you? I started to judge at that time, I was... the foals afterwards? They knew which horses they should keep... and more embryos! Use her for riding. But... you what you want, don’t breed her anymore, stop taking more... This is business and business in breeding doesn’t work. For example I... I would swear it is Gazal blood and it was! I can tell from a hundred meters. Any Gazal get. Even yesterday I knew who their sire is? Marwan. Because my type is more Gazal than Marwan.

I am still pleased with that decision. I expected more from Gazal... course they know what they are doing. I was very pleased and I... Gazal dam was the Polish Kajora, so I knew it would be a good promotion of my country.

Sheikh Hamad Bin Ali Al Thani at Al Rayyan Farm, 2015

She has knowledge, she knows how to promote the horses. She... results. So luck is also important. I was really lucky. For me it was more than... And now people look at us in a different way. We were young, we had no big knowledge. We had trust in our... influence, they sold all the best they had. But in Poland there... people in Qatar. The stud was open to every Qatari who... Promotion of my country.

In that case who, in your opinion, can call himself a breeder? It is a person who dedicated his life to create one line. And... different blood. We succeeded because we took the chance.

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Sheik Hamad Bin Ali Al Thani at Al Rayyan Farm, 2015
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