

The WAMO Post-Conference

Desert Tour



Bedouin Breeding Syria



The Desert Tour of the Waho Delegates with Breeders, Bedouins and their Horses in Syria

by Monika Savier ■ photos by Monika Savier, Mahmoud Nemer Abbass

In April 2007, Syria had invited the WAHO World Conference to be hosted in Damascus. Delegates from almost all of the 84 member countries travelled to the country of origin of Arabian horses, unimpressed by Western propaganda against Syria and by the current situation of crises in the Middle East.

The WAHO Conference with its mixture of intensive meetings and information exchange between the delegates on the one hand and a brilliantly organized introduction into Syrian culture, the city of Damascus and the surrounding countryside, with the emphasis on horse breeding, on the other hand – it was an unforgettable event. It's rarely demonstrated as clearly as it was here: Arabian horses do manage to be bridges for peace, they do create common ground and tolerance, and almost as if by magic they even succeed in neutralizing differences based on religion, language, geography and even social class.

Tutto Arabi has extensively reported on the conference, see issue n. 4 from July 2007. Continuing the one-week conference, delegates and interested people had the opportunity to take part in a one-week guided tour visiting Syria's horse-breeding Bedouins, getting more thoroughly acquainted with this fascinating country and following the tracks of Arabian breeding in history, and they took to it like to a magnet. With most of the delegates and visitors, what they knew of the vast Syrian steppes, wild mountainous regions and half deserts (Badia) as well as of the "fertile crescent", the Mesopotamian flatlands between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers (today's Al Jazeera) was from the tales and reports of Carl Raswan (1931) and of Pückler (1844), from the diaries of the Lady Ann Blunt (1879) and Karl Ammon (1834) and many other pioneers and horse experts in history. All of these had started out to Syria within the last two hundred years from all over the world, being adventurers and desert explorers, or members of expensive purchasing expeditions. All of them were driven by a common passion: to find "raw diamonds", noble desert Arabians of pure blood and best breeding, of a high performance potential, and to import them into Europe in order to carry out their assignments, which was to improve horse breeding in the royal studs for the cavalry. In some cases, they intended to do their own breeding with the noble animals, such as the nobles



The WAHO delegates in Palmyra Temple

Bedouin Breeding



The race of the Anaceh Bedouins, high speed, no bit, no saddle...

of the Blunt and Wentworth family who founded the famous Crabbet Stud in England almost 150 years ago, with the exports from Syria their foundation stock. Are there still horses like that with the Bedouins, horses like famous Murana I who was imported to the royal Weil-Marbach stud from Syria in 1816 to found a dam line still in existence today, or like Bairaktar who was imported to Weil-Marbach by King Wilhelm of Baden-Wurtemberg at the begin-



the mating of this mare and Bairaktar came famous Amurath 1829 who left an uncountable number of good horses in Marbach and Babolna. Or to name another, there was the desert stallion Siglavy, who was to found the Siglavy line of the Lipizzaner breed later on. Or else, there was Tereffi, born in 1800 from Bedouin breeding. He served in Hungary as he was a present of the Austrian consul in Syria to Emperor Franz I.

So we all knew these horses from contemporary paintings only. But would these paintings still match today's



ning of the 18th century to be used as chief sire there? Later on, the desert mare Hamdani I and her daughter Saady III came to Marbach. From

reality? Many of us, the participants of the desert trip, hoped to get answers to questions they would now have a chance to ask: after the origin of Egyptian Arabians and their basic genetic potential from Syria, after the pureness of desert breeding and the criteria used for breeding. Tracks were being followed of the history and present of the migrations of peoples, which of course are migrations of horses as well.

All of these conquering were results of a well-schooled cavalry force. The essential factor for that were the best horses. Easily understandable, then, that breeding the noble Arabian performance horses was made a religious duty during the Holy War (Jihad), as thanks to their fast horses who were so fond of humans, the warlike tribes were able to survive.

The Syrian tableland of Al Jazeera, called Mesopotamia



Al Furat Stable at the Euphrat river

in the Old Testament, traditionally developed into an area of breeding for Arabian horses, as for the Bedouin tribes, surviving was easier here than in the barren stone desert of the Nejd, the hostile tableland in Central Arabia where surviving in nature was almost impossible. This may make it clear why the Egyptian pashas would do almost anything to have Arabian horses from Syria and the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula in Egypt. If the Bedouins did not want to sell their horses, they were stolen or taken. They were the mainstay of a successful conquest of land and even then served as status symbols in the Royal stables of Egypt. Taking a look at the ancient pedigrees of Syrian horses, it is apparent that nearly all the strains and lines have the same origin. The Shammar Bedouins, the Anaceh and many others, as well as their sub-tribes, they all had horse strains, the families, that could be tailed back to foundation mares. Until today, these lines are evident in the pedigrees of asile horses in Europe, the US or anywhere else. We have computer programmes for that and can make a printout of any pedigree by pressing a button. The Bedouins instead have the pedigrees stored in their heads, being able to recite at least 7 generations upon request. If you don't believe them, you will be laughed at, for they do not only have the pedigrees in their heads, but they know them by heart, and the heart is not a place for fraud or deceit.

Looking for Hoof Tracks in the Badia

In the West, everybody is talking about Straight Egyptian Arabians - they don't do that in Syria. The honour of being the ancient country of origin of Arabian horses falls to the Arabian Peninsula with Syria in the north, Iraq and Iran in the east, and the tableland of the Nejd, today's Saudi Arabia, in the centre of the peninsula. Egypt, on the other hand, is a land of extremes, with vast barren sand deserts that cannot sustain the life of people and animals in the long run, and a few oases and the fertile Nile delta where agriculture, tightly packed into this small area, needs to supply millions of people. Even if there were Arabian horses to be found in Egypt as long as 2,000 years ago, used for war (Forbis, 1975), it's to be assumed that they were imported into the splendid stables of the Egyptian kings from Arabia, even then. The horses were impressingly beautiful then and still are



TAI TRIBE. Mares and stallions presented by their proud breeders

so. However, they have little in common today with the hardy desert Arabian, the race horse from authentic Bedouin breeding. Still, they have the same origin. Making a comparison today, we would say that Egyptian Arabians are, for the main part, reared in stables and bred with beauty in mind, while Syrian Arabians continue to be a product of the nomadic Bedouin tribes and are meant as performance horses with Arabian noblesse and flair. Having attended the WAHO conference in Damascus, we were given the opportunity to visit the horse-breeding



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tribes of the Syrian Badia (steppe, half desert) and of Mesopotamia.

Our interpreter corrected us at once when somebody seemed to think we were in a desert. "Syria does not have deserts, this here is the Badia, a half steppe country. Look here, there are plants growing, there are vast herds of sheep, goats, and Arabian horses living off the products of the soil."

After three hours of driving through fascinating country with Bedouin tents and animals just in the middle of nowhere, we reached the oases of Tadmor with the ancient city of Palmyra, a trading city built 2,000 years ago. The archaeological evidence is spread across a vast area and partly well preserved.

The next day, while driving in the direction of the Euphrates River, the bus stops in an enormous Bedouin camp. Hundreds of camels are lined up along the rugged sand track.

From the black tents in front of us, young Bedouins come running to greet us. They are Anazeh Bedouins, together with Siba'a and Fadaan clans. To honour us, they held a desert race. It's unbelievable how nimbly and securely the young Bedouins ride their Arabian horses through the Badia, without a saddle and at enormous speed. All of the horses were ridden without a bit, using just the halter, with some wearing a thin chain across the nose. The winner was celebrated with a passion, his horse was almost dry after this ride of 6km at a gallop!

Riding is a matter for the males with the Bedouins, but after that, the women of the tribe appeared to greet us, proudly and with tribal tattoos marked on their faces. Later on, they showed us how to make Mozarella from camels' milk in a well-worn camel hide bag, while the men were outside showing the horses or inside the tents pounding black coffee beans according to tradition. From these beans, a strong welcoming coffee for the guests is



The Shammar Bedouin tribe with their horses at the border to Iraq

brewed. Whatever they did, there was heartfelt hospitality, calmness and some pride permeating it all.

So these were the legendary horses of the Anazeh Bedouins! It was impressing to observe their power and stamina. Their hard hooves were unshod, and they were similarly relaxed and friendly as their breeders. As to Arabian type, they were quite inhomogenous. There were heads, croups, and necks of all kinds, but the bone was equally good in all of them. Here was the gene pool that has made Arabian horses so famous.

While outside, a sand storm had come out of the blue, we sat in a tent and served ourselves from common bowls containing generous amounts of lamb, flatbread, and rice. Somebody from the Syrian delegation told us that Bedouin hospitality forbids them to ask a guest who has been with them for less than three days why he came... and a person who spent more than a month in the tent with them would be accepted into the tribe... how good there is still so much tolerance and trust in the world.

Deir-Ezzor, a small town located on the banks of the



that when choosing a breeding goal, we set aside reason, as far as the original traits of the breed are concerned. Right now we are busy selecting for a new breed of horses. And on principle, we are those who should make the robustness of the Syrian asile Arabians a trait of the breed again, and not the other way round. Of course, beauty is a matter of defining criteria typical for a breed. Taken in this sense, I have seen a lot of beautiful Arabian horses with the Bedouins.

On our way to the Shammar Bedouins, the bus stops at a village of tents. A small group of Sherrabeen Bedouins had assembled there with

Euphrates river, was our next station. In the Al-Furat Stables and on Ganama Farm, both located in enchanting surroundings along the river banks, we were shown Syrian Arabians. On the occasion of our visit, the studs had even had leaflets printed. They put particular emphasis on presenting their horses' pedigrees. Showing the stallions and mares was done differently than with the Bedouins, as they used the European model. Even if the horses had not been trained for that, they were shown in hand. Luckily, they did not know how to do a stand-up, so being shown these wonderful horses became quite funny and lively an event, after all.

The next day, we arrived at Al Quamishli on the Iraqi border. The Tai Bedouins and the tribes allied with them were there waiting for us, thousands (!) of them. Many of them had ridden their horses many kilometres in order to show us their mares or stallions. After we had taken our places in their tents, a group of girls and boys demonstrated their skill at martial arts. After that, there was a group of musicians also comprised of men, women, and children playing various instruments, thus disproving the rumour spread by Western media of women and girls hardly being allowed to make a public appearance in Islamic surroundings. Displaying the horses, however, was a task for the men. There is not a homogenous type to be found in Tai horse breeding. Again and again, there were very good, noble heads to be seen, or well-balanced croups or chiselled necks, but they were not all to be found in the same horse. Still, I am convinced that in this gene pool, all the aspects of the so-called typey show Arabian are latently there and could be combined in the course of 2 to 3 generations of selective breeding.

There is just the question of why they should do that? What is better in a European or American show Arabian than in an asile desert Arabian of the Tai Bedouins? Our Western show champion will certainly not be able to keep up with the performance of the horses here. The result of our breeding, his beauty, is unfortunately proof of the fact



In the Soukh of Aleppo

their horses. They had ridden a long way to present their horses to us. Most of their horses tailed from the Kehaileh Dajanieh strain out of which Lady Blunt had bought her first horses more than a hundred years ago.

When we arrived at the Shammar Bedouins, the sun was just about to go down. Hundreds of riders lined the track. They were beside themselves with the joy of being able to present their horses, riding into the pastures in front of us and demonstrating their skill. Later on, a great presentation of horses - after all the usual ceremonies were over, such as drinking black coffee as a welcome, with everybody drinking from the same cup (a token of guests and

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The Al Hisinah tribe in the area of Hama

hosts being equals). The night drew towards an end with Arabian live music and a wonderful dinner a lot of lambs had fallen victim to.

Along the border of Southern Anatolia, today in Turkey, we drove on in the direction of Aleppo. Green Mesopotamia with her red clay houses, built by the government in an attempt to settle down many of the Bedouin tribes, flew by. Tent camps of Iraqi refugees were replaced by Bedouin tents and herds of sheep. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi citizens live in tent villages in Syria, hoping for the peace to come so they can go back to their homeland.

Aleppo, a city just out of the "Arabian Nights" tales. The fascinating Soukh, reputed to consist of 50km of winding, paved and roofed market lanes, the impressive citadel, the old town with the Arabian guest houses. Aleppo is a town worth experiencing. As is Al Andalous stud. A wonderful vast yard, surrounded by fenceless pastures and located on the outskirts of Aleppo, had invited for a presentation of horses from Anaceh Bedouin breeding. We were shown very harmonious straight Syrian Arabians, in excellent condition and of good type. There was an interesting item the owners explained to us: they proceed according to ancient Bedouin tradition by allowing the mares to choose for themselves which sire they want to be mated to (see interview with Omar Anbarji). Are there some matriarchal niches left with the nomadic population? After all, it can be said that the mares had been very successful in getting their say in the breeding.

The next day, we visited the Al Hisinah Bedouin tribe, a horse-breeding group that has settled in the vast country in between the towns of Hama and Homs, both of them highly interesting archaeologically and culturally. A

group of young Bedouins danced for us, accompanied by Arabian live music wonderfully performed by an elderly on-man orchestra, after that there was the coffee ceremony "everybody from the same cup" and finally, the Al Hisinah Bedouins would show us their Arabian horses.

This presentation was quite different from what we are used to in the West. It was, however, brilliantly effective, giving a very personal impression of the horses and their owners. The rider would canter his horse

across a wide plaza, 300 to 400 meters, would slow down when approaching the open tents in front of which the guests had taken their seats on the



carpets spread there, and would jump off his horse. After that, he would lead the horse to and fro for inspection while a speaker would read out the pedigree of the horse for at least 2-3 generations. This finished, the rider would jump-mount - which would not always work out at the first attempt - and gallop off, raising a dust cloud. There was a Polish mare present as well, as the speaker informed us. She looked like our European show Arabians and was presented in hand as befitted her. After all of those lively, well-muscled ridden Arabians, often with a foal accompanying them, this show mare looked somewhat helpless and underdeveloped despite her typey appearance. I had a growing suspicion, but during the ensuing opulent meal with lamb, yoghurt, and flatbread, I swept it away like an annoying fly.

However, many of my fellow delegates had also started to wonder whenever the talk turned to the beauty of the Syrian horses. After two weeks, we felt we had had a reset of our seeing habits and our standards of measurement. The only question left was whether we would be able, after arriving back home, to convey this to other breeders and fans of Arabians? This report is my first attempt - and anybody who is open for new perceptions absolutely should travel to this wonderful country in order to find an answer for himself. □

A Short Excursion into History to Improve Understanding

Syría has known 10,000 years of human civilization, getting to experience more than 200 different cultural epochs. As a result of that, there developed an outstandingly multicultural society, still impressing today with its openness and hospitality. Let's look at some numbers to improve our understanding. For several thousand years, people were engaged in survival - as nomads with their herds, or living in small farmsteads



breeding animals and cultivating gardens. However, during this time the first writings in history were invented! And not only letters, but also melodies, with the first instruments being created then.

5000 before Christ, the Arameans migrated in, introducing irrigation systems and making agriculture possible. Damascus developed into their capital city.

In 732 B.C., the city was destroyed by the Babylonians, with the country being governed by the Kingdom of Babylon. A hundred years later, Syria was taken by the Persians.

In 330 B.C., Alexander the Great conquered Syria. It was only after his death that the country was subdivided and after a short interval of regency by the Seleucids, went on to be governed by the Roman Empire. During this time, extensive trading developed and with the ensuing business the country flourished. After the fall of the Roman Empire, Syria with her capital of Damascus was controlled from Byzantine.

636 after Christ, during the first holy Islamic war, the country was conquered by the Arabs. From now on, it was part of the empire of the Umayyads who did not only control the Orient but reigned over the whole of the area from Spain to India. For a short time, Damascus was their capital. After that, the country came under the con-

trol of Baghdad, and in 970 after Christ, was swallowed by the Caliphate of the Fatimides.

In the 11th century, Turkish Seljuks invaded the area. In 1148 AC the Muslim warriors opposed the Christian crusaders. Once more, the country flourished with business and trade, there was the silk road passing through from China- from Aleppo via Palmyra to Damascus - and the country was on the brink of excellent development, but was then taken over by the Mongolians. From the 16th century on until 1832, Syria was governed by the Osman Empire and the Mamelukes, a horse people having come from Turkey. Later on, Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt took the city of Damascus, but it was only in 1840 that the Turks regained control of the country and kept it up until the first world war. Finally, the country became a French colony, but with pressure from Great Britain, Syria declared herself an independent country in 1946. □



WAHO Tour in Syria



Basil Jadaan, the President of the Syrian Association of Arabian Horses and himself a successful breeder of Syrian Arabians as well as a member of the WAHO Executive Committee, was so kind to provide the readers of Tutto Arabi with some survey of

Bedouin tribes still living in Syria today. In the breeding of Arabian horses, historically and until today the tail line is defined as a dam line which in turn is named after the Bedouin tribe who bred the line. So the "strain" indicating the tribe and family of origin belongs to a horse just as his name does. What is more, the strain indicates where the horse is from, and experienced breeders can read the history of horse breeding for the last hundred years from it.

The Horse Breeding Bedouin Tribes in the Syrian Badia The Anazeh Bedouins

The name of the tribe derives from their great-great-grandfather (Anz bin Wael) who is descended from Adnan who by his turn is descended from Ishmael son of Ibrahim (Abraham). So they are Adnani Arabs (Adnan being the most famous of the grandsons of Ishmael) and to him all the Arabs who are descended from Ishmael are related and are named after him as Adnani Arabs or the Northern Arabs, with the other big half of the Arabs being the Qahtani Arabs or the Southern Arabs who are the descendants of Qahtan who lived in Yemen.

Anazeh, Eneza, or Ineza - no matter how it's spelled, it's all the same as many Arabic words can be written in more than one way in Latin or Latin-related Alphabets. The Anazeh are the biggest Arabian tribe nowadays. Their original homeland is around Khaibar and Al Ola, north of Medina in Al Hijaz in what is today known as Saudi Arabia.

Today, Anazeh live in Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, and Bahrain. It's also useful to know that of the nomadic families of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain, the Anazeh branches (Ashaer) always had their pasture areas to the north, where the conditions are more suitable for their herds so they always headed north as far as the Turkish borders

(Taurus Mountains).

Only the strongest of them were able to get to the Syrian Desert, and it was only after a whole number of conflicts with other tribes that the Anazeh could manage to have a permanent existence in the area. And wave after wave, the strongest strains of Anazeh such as the Fida'an, the Shbiaa, the Rouala, the Weld Ali, the Hissina made their way through and could settle in the fertile Syrian desert: the Rouala (Ibn Sha'alan) settled in the Damascus area to the east in Alhamad, the Shbia'a in the Hama area, the Fida'an in the Aleppo area, and the Hisinah in the Homs area.

In the winter and spring they could go as far as the Euphrates, crossing Palmyra into the Syrian Desert and sometimes clashing with other tribes in conflict for grazing areas. The Anazeh had the best Arabian horses throughout history, and most of the strains of the Asil Arabian Horses are named after individuals and clans of the Anazeh, such as Jedran, Ibn Shbayel, Sharrak, Nawag, Sabbah, Oubairan, Khidily, and others.

Today a lot of the horses that are bred by other tribes in Syria trace back to horses that came from one of the clans of the Anazeh.

Unfortunately the Anazeh themselves are hardly breeding any more (with the exception of some families such as Abo Saifain of the Fida'an).

The Shammar Bedouins

The Shammar are a Qahtani tribe, they and the Tai have the same origin. The Shammar originally came from Yemen. They immigrated to the Central and Northern Nejd (Jabal Shammar) near Hail, which is in





Saudi Arabia today. Later on, a big branch of them under the leadership of the Al Jarba family headed north to the banks of the Euphrates in Iraq and Syria and settled in Mesopotamia.

The Shammar are a very strong tribe who had and still have a lot of Arabian horses and many of the substrains of the Arabian horses are named after individuals and families of the Shammar, such as: Ibn Ghorab, Ibn Amoud, Al Shaefi, Al Sehaili, Ibn Sehayan, and others.

The Tai Bedouins

The Tai are the mother tribe of the Shammar. The Tai have been in the north of Syria for a very long time, some say even before Islam came into existence.

The Tai always also existed in the northern Nejd and in Iraq. The Tai are known for their generosity, with their Sheikh family being descended from the very famous Hatem Al Tai who slaughtered his only mare to feed his hungry guests.

The Tai always had and still have a lot of Arabian horses, with many of the substrains and of the strains named after Tai people, such as Al Rabdah, Armoush, Ibn Abdoun, or Al Dandah.

The Tai have many branches such as Al Rashed, Al Jawalah, Al Assaf, and Al Hraith, and they live with the Shammar in Mesopotamia (Al Jazeera) in both Syria and Iraq. □



WAHO Tour Interview



An Interview with Omar Anbargi, Al-Andalus Stud, among the pick of Syria's studs and located on the outskirts of Aleppo. With a concept planning well for the future, they preserve the ancient tribal strains of the Anazeh Bedouins here, at the same time develop-

ping new standards for Syria's Arabian horses in their sports and show context.

M. Savier: Who founded your stud, and when?

O. Anbargi: My father founded this stud. His first mare was Dheem, a mare from the Hamdanian Al-Semri Al-Ofri strain, a 100% pure Anazeh Bedouin mare whom he was able to purchase from Sheikh Njhem Bin Mouhed, then leader of the Anazeh Bedouins. It was during the early 1960ies when he founded this stud with her. The town of Aleppo is famous for her Arabian horse breeding. To name one: Darley Arabian, who is one of the three foundation sires of the Thoroughbred breed, was from Aleppo and was a 100% breeding product of the Syrian Anazeh Bedouins. It is one of our aims to have the origins of our stud 100% pure, from the pure desert breeding of the Anazeh Bedouins, which is why we invest all of our passion and effort into this stud. Still, the stud is a hobby.

M. Savier: What do you do as a profession?

O. Anbargi: I studied Economics in Jordania and am just having my final examinations in London.

M. Savier: Which means that you do not only work with the horses, but also relax in the stud after studying?

O. Anbargi: Exactly, when I am at home, I take a ride every day. I need that, for my body as well as for my head, for my mind.

M. Savier: What is your breeding goal?

O. Anbargi: For one thing, it's a conscious decision for us to breed pure Syrian Arabians only. Taking that one step further, we breed them for Endurance sports, for the race track, and for shows. We have several show winners standing here. My brother has a particular field of engagement here. And on the other hand, I think that Arabian horses simply are highly beautiful animals whom it is a joy to own.

M. Savier: Historically speaking, the noble ancient blood strains all derive from the Bedouin breeding of the Arabian Peninsula. They were, for a part, carried away to Egypt or just sold there, for a part they migrated into the vast steppe areas of Syria with their respective Bedouin tribes many years ago. So it's justified to say that generally speaking, horses in Egypt and in Syria have the same origin. However, the Egyptian Arabians are definitely more inclined towards Western standards of beauty. What's your view of that in Syria? Is that a direction you are considering, or do you disapprove of adapting in this direction?

O. Anbargi: For us, our horses' pedigrees and origin are very important, but when choosing horses for breeding, that's not the sole criterion. For example, I would not use a stallion for my mares who spends all his time in his stall and was never able to develop his body - there is no criterion for his performance which I can see and measure here. I don't know too much about the Egyptian strains, but to me, they look almost like carbon copies, they are highly similar to each other. If Syrian Arabians were to have spent 200 or 300 years in Egypt, I would not use them for breeding any more because that's many generations, and psychology and environment are very important for Arabian horses and easily altered in the course of generations.

M. Savier: I can understand if you say that about exported horses who have lived in the US, in Germany, or in the United Kingdom for generations. The climate is totally different, feeding and housing change the animals - but in Egypt, the conditions of living for Arabian horses are not so different, at least as far as climate and feeding are concerned... or is your concern mainly about the horses in Egypt getting little exercise as a rule?

O. Anbargi: I am not an expert on the situation in Egypt, it's possible there are a few big studs which give the horses a lot of exercise, but for me, it's much more interesting and to my liking to go and visit the Bedouin tribes and get exact information on individual horses, on their sires and dams, their characters, their performances...

And there is another very important thing: with us, the mares are allowed to choose the stallion. I respect their choice. I really do. I have a very good system for that. I will bring the stallions out and tie them there. Then the mare gets to walk among them, free. It's almost always that I accept her decision.

M. Savier: For how many generations have you been using this system?



Party with horse presentation and Dervish's alt Al Andalus stud.

O. Anbargi: Up to now, we have produced 5 generations using this system. You can see the results here this evening.

M. Savier: In your opinion, is the Syrian gene pool important for the international world of Arabian horse breeding? What could be improved internationally by using the traditional strains?

O. Anbargi: You would need some research on this, but one thing is sure, Syrian horses have very good blood. They are strong, they are smart, they are clever; they like to communicate with people and they are good enough to be a competition for all the others. I don't want to claim that they are the best ones there are, but they are what we need here and what we were looking for.

M. Savier: Did you wish to say that in your opinion, they are excellently suited as representatives of the Arabian breed?

O. Anbargi: At any rate, for if you take a look at the different Arabian countries, you have the best conditions for horse breeding in Iraq and in Syria. We have rain, meaning we have good feed for the horses; they can perfectly feed and develop out of doors, which is not possible in countries with vast sand deserts.

M. Savier: What is your opinion on WAHO? Was it the right thing for Syria to become a member of WAHO?

O. Anbargi: On the whole, I agree to that. We need WAHO and WAHO has done a good job so far. What I don't agree to, however, is the fact that not all of the Syrian Arabian horses were entered into WAHO's Syrian studbook. That's something I get really angry about. Why didn't they do that? I know, some of the Bedouins were somewhat opposed...

M. Savier: WAHO did develop standards for recogni-

zing Arabians to be entered into the studbook. They also defined standards for internationalizing pedigrees, to be accepted worldwide. That's something that makes horse trading easier by an enormous degree. Do you plan to take advantage of that and sell Syrian Arabians internationally?

O. Anbargi: Yes, sometimes we sell some of the offspring, just like most breeders, if there are too many foals for our breeding programme, I try to sell some of them. We are a big family, however. There are my father and my two sisters who will also choose horses to keep for themselves...

M. Savier: When you sell horses, where do they go?

O. Anbargi: Into the Gulf Region and to Syrian breeders. Here in Syria, I don't like to sell the horses too dearly, as I like it when people without riches want to keep horses. I am sure horses are good for them.

M. Savier: What's the message you would like to spread to the international community of breeders with this interview?

Omar Anbargi: My message is a simple one: come to Syria, take a close look at our Arabian horses, spend some time to get acquainted with them and with us, and I am



The WAHO Conference, including the desert trip of the delegates is now available on DVD. The Syrian filmmaker Mohamad Ojje, living in the USA, has produced a beautiful film of the whole experience. The DVD is an amazing reportage about the Syrian horses, people and landscape. If you like to order a copy, please visit: www.dragonflyproduction.net