

# WAHO

## Report from the 2014 WAHO Conference and post Conference Tour

Words by Katrina Murray and Anne Boen • Photographs by Anne Brown



HH Sheikh Faisal bin Qassimi al Thani Museum, Qatar

### News from the 2014 WAHO Conference in Qatar

The 2014 WAHO Conference in Qatar was well attended and much enjoyed by all the participants, including several from the UK. The Arab Horse Society was formally represented by the voting delegates, Caroline Sussex and Anne Brown.

Our grateful thanks go to the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC) for hosting this important event for the second time in succession, under the patronage of HH Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalifa Al Thani, Special Adviser to HH The Emir. A more detailed report will be published on the WAHO website ([www.waho.org](http://www.waho.org)), with extracts from the many fascinating talks given by the very interesting panel of guest speakers and details of

the social events and Pride of Qatar Days which followed the Conference itself.

We summarise below the main items of WAHO business during the WAHO Executive Committee meetings, WAHO World Registrars Meeting and the WAHO General Assembly:

#### WAHO Executive Committee Changes:

During the WAHO Executive Committee meetings, following the retirement of Dr. Hans-J. Nagel, Mr Peter Pond was elected as President. Dr. Hans Nagel was granted the honorary title of President Emeritus. Mr Sami Suleiman Al Nohait was elected to the position of Vice-President. Lady Georgina Pelham was elected to full Executive Committee membership. Mr Xavier Guibert was also named as WAHO's Stud Book and Registration Consultant. In addition, two new Consultants were

Right: WAHO 2014 - British contingent: from left, front row: Deirdre Hyde, based in Abu Dhabi, Natalie Meredith (AHS Council member), Anne Brown (2104 AHS President), Caroline Sussex (UK Delegate), Val Bunting (WAHO Council member, based in France), Angela Angold, David Angold (WAHO Treasurer)  
Back row: Tina & Trevor Mattocks of Ivy Arabians, Judy Phillips (AHS President Elect)



Above: a warm welcome from HE Sheikh Mohammed Bin Faleh Al Thani, Chairman of the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club  
Left: the new WAHO President Peter Pond presents Peter Upton 'Hanan' painting to retiring President Dr Hans Nagel

added: HRH Princess Alia Al Hussein Al Saleh and Mr Sami Jassim Al Boenain.

#### WAHO World Registrars Meeting:

This significant meeting, chaired by Mr Xavier Guibert over one and a half days preceding the General Assembly, was very busy and productive. Mrs Caroline Sussex and Mrs Natalie Meredith represented the AHS. The first afternoon was devoted to matters relating to the new European Union directives, which directly affect studbooks and registries. The second day was mainly taken up with complex discussions on a number of proposed WAHO registration rule changes and updates.

The contribution of those present was extremely important in ensuring that any such changes to WAHO's internationally-accepted rules are appropriate and suitable for all WAHO Member registries to follow. The recommendations made by the Registrars Meeting were passed directly to the Executive Committee for their further discussion and decisions, and then presented to the floor of the General Assembly a vote of the members.

#### WAHO Conference:

The 2014 WAHO Qatar Conference started with the Welcome

Reception and Dinner, hosted by the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club in the beautiful grounds of the Museum of Islamic Art. A wonderful display by grey and bay Arabians richly caprisoned in traditional saddlery charmed the guests.

The following morning, the General Assembly heard reports from the Members' Delegates. But first, in front of an audience of invited VIP guests and many press representatives, and all the delegates and observers, the WAHO Conference was opened by HE Sheikh Mohammed Bin Faleh Al Thani, Chairman of the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club. A beautiful short film called "Heartbeat of Qatar", about the host country's Arabian horses, was shown to much acclaim.

This was followed by a ceremony to mark the retirement of Dr. Hans-J. Nagel, during which a specially commissioned watercolour painting of his famous mare Hanan, by the well-known British artist Peter Upton, was presented to Hans on behalf of the WAHO Executive Committee and WAHO Membership. A film and photo compilation prepared by Dr. Monika Savier was shown, as part of the tribute to Dr. Nagel's great contribution not only to WAHO, but to the Arabian horse worldwide.

Peter Pond's opening speech highlighted several of WAHO's main achievements over the past 40 years, and emphasised the

Clockwise from right: WAHO conference banquet at the Four Seasons hotel in Doha; Cynthia Culbertson from the USA; the WAHO welcome at the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha



strong bond and high level of co-operation between all WAHO's member countries. A minute's silence was held in memory of those WAHO members who have passed away since the last Conference.

Two new countries, Ecuador and Serbia, were warmly welcomed to full Registering Authority Membership, with their horses accepted into the WAHO Definition, having completed all necessary requirements and published their first WAHO approved studbook.

We were then treated to a most illuminating and thought-provoking talk by the first Guest Speaker, Cynthia Culbertson from the USA, who took as her subject "Bedouin Traditions and their Relevance Today".

Speaking of the love of the Bedouin for his horse in Arabic poetry, she asked Conference delegates: "But what about an ode to the modern halter horse in the In hand show ring? Likely the poem would be written by the trainer, so would the poem sound something like this?"

*O noble stallion.*

*How beautiful you are, with your eyes and muzzle darkened by makeup,  
Your hair shorn by clippers.*

*How brave you are, what courage!*

*To stand before me, frozen in place, with the fear in your heart of my chain  
and my whip. You tremble in obedience to my commands.*

*Yet still, you reach for me, stretching your neck, your ears alert to the  
possibility of punishment.*

*And when we are done, you accept my token pat upon your neck.*

*I rejoice! Yes, you have suffered, but your owner has another prize"*

This left the Conference participants shocked into silence. Will Cynthia's words change the hidden cruelty of some professional handlers?

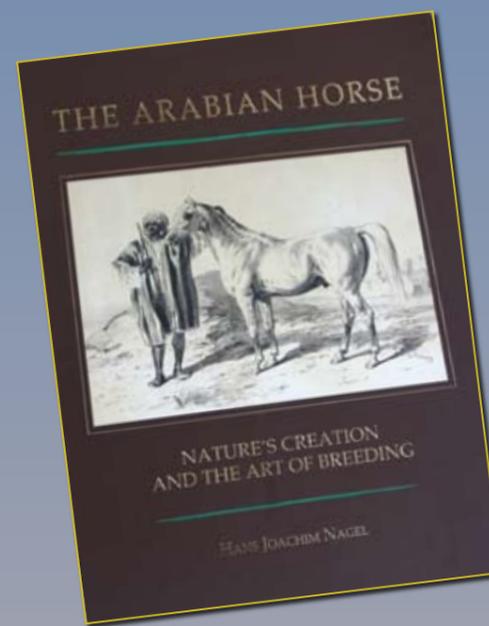
The first day concluded with a visit to the magnificent Al Rayyan

Racecourse, where the QREC hosted a most entertaining evening of racing, with dinner. It was particularly appreciated that two special races, the WAHO Cup and the Jay Stream Cup (in memory of WAHO's first President), were run in honour of the Conference.

On the second morning, and after giving his report on the Organisation's annual accounts, the WAHO Treasurer, David Angold, announced that all WAHO membership fees had been increased slightly, the first such increase for many years.

Mr Xavier Guibert also made his report on the WAHO World Registrars' Meetings. Professor Tadeusz Majda from Poland then gave a richly illustrated talk on the Count Rzewuski Manuscript and its translation into English and Arabic, sponsored by the Qatar Foundation. He also later presented a short but equally well illustrated talk on the Arabian Horse in Polish Painting. We were also very fortunate to have Professor Douglas F. Antczak, from Cornell University in USA, who provided an overview of the new research project on the genetics of the Arabian horse, sponsored by the Qatar National Research Fund. The rest of the day was given over to one of the highlights of the week, when Al Shaqab Stud, Member of the Qatar Foundation, generously hosted a dinner, preceded by a parade of some of their most promising young horses, many of them the product of several generations of Al Shaqab breeding.

On Friday, after going through and voting on the updates and changes to the WAHO registration rules, this last day of the



Retiring WAHO President Dr Hans Nagel has recently published another book on Arabian horse studs around the world and includes details of his own 'closed' breeding programme at Katharinenhof

WAHO Conference was mainly given over to the Guest Speakers, with the main general overall theme being equine welfare.

During the morning session, Dr. Jean-Louis Leclerc from France spoke with feeling on the topic of "Improving the welfare of endurance horses in training and competition" (see page 51). In the afternoon, two complementary talks were given by colleagues from the University of Rennes in France, Dr. Martine Hausberger spoke on "How our perception of horse behaviour affects their welfare", and Dr. Clémence Lesimple followed with "Improving horses' health and welfare through adapted management practices".. Then, from the United Kingdom, Mrs Elizabeth Launder spoke about "The rider or trainer's influence, negative and positive, on horse performance." Mr Roland Owers, C.E.O. of World Horse Welfare, gave a very well balanced and inspiring talk on "Horse Welfare: A Global View".

Finally, it was announced that the next WAHO Conference will be hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain in February 2017.

## WAHO Post Conference Tour - Pride of Qatar Days

The formal WAHO Conference days were followed by a busy programme of stud visits and activities to explore some of Qatar's history. The packed four-day schedule started with a visit to Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim al Thani's ever-expanding private museum, an Aladdin's cave of the most diverse collection imaginable. The Sheikh also maintains a breeding group of Oryx. The airy stables at his nearby Al Samariyah Stud are laid out around a large traditional courtyard, in keeping with the other buildings on the site. We were presented with an excellent group of Arabians, exhibited under saddle and In hand from both Al Samariyah and Al Gharafa Studs, the latter is owned by Sheikh Faisal's brother HE Sheikh Hamad Bin Qassim Bin Faisal Al Thani. Their horses have competed successfully in endurance, racing and at shows In hand and under saddle.



Right: Clare Fitch at Sheikh Faisal's stables



Right: the mare Ftoon Al Shaqab by Al Adeed Al Shaqab out of Malvina by Balaton, at Al Nasser Stud  
Below: lunch laid out desert style!



Clockwise from above: Qatari horsemen parade in costume, before race meeting. At the Al Nasser Stud, HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Nawaf al Thani proudly watches his father's young stallion Gazwan Al Nasser (2007) by Gazal Al Shaqab x Ftoon Al Shaqab; top level medical care provided to a sick camel in Qatar; Turkish breeder Remazan Kaya with falcon at Al Shahania Stud; a traditional craftsman at Al Shahania - on his mobile phone!



cameras were certainly kept busy as everyone tried their best to photograph their favourites.

We also attended a Performance Show at the Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club where we saw two ridden classes, one each for mares and geldings and stallions. The horses were well presented and ridden and several of them were past race winners or In hand show winners. Other activities included a tour of Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation and Al Maha Studs, owned by the late HE Sheikh Saoud Bin Mohammed Bin Ali Al Thani. I particularly enjoyed the trip to the Al Zubara Fort and archaeological site overlooking the ocean in the north of the country.

Then we were off to the sand track to swap horses for camels in a country where racing camels can be worth more than racehorses. Their 'jockeys' are tiny robots, remotely controlled by trainers in gleaming 4x4s, jostling to keep pace along the edge of the track. We also visited the modern Leawaina Camel Hospital where sick or injured camels are nursed back to health with devoted care. Another specially-arranged visit took us to the camel breeding farm of HH The Emir, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, where we learnt there are many breeds of camel, each with distinct characteristics depending on whether they are used for milking, working or racing. This was followed by a lunch set out in the desert, generously provided by our host under a searing sun. Many delegates accepted the offer of a camel ride afterwards.

As a fitting end to the Pride of Qatar Days, our last stud visit was to Umm Qarn Farm, founded in the 1990s by the patron of the 2014 WAHO Conference, HH Sheikh Abdullah Bin Khalifa Al Thani. This beautifully designed stud farm has every possible facility for the horses' well-being. Some of the world's best Arabian racehorses are bred, raised and trained here. We were warmly welcomed to the trophy-filled Majlis. From the upper floor we looked down on an enormous stable complex. We all took the opportunity to walk through and meet the horses. During the guided tour, we watched a horse being exercised in the equine swimming pool, another being scoped in the veterinary area, and then, some of the youngsters out playing in the extensive grass paddocks. Again, we were treated to a parade of some of their best horses.

The warm welcome from our Qatari hosts and the passion they have for their Arabian horses made a lasting impression on delegates; we were all most grateful for their generous hospitality. ☺



Our visit the following day to the picturesque Al Shahania Stud, behind crenelated walls in the lush pastures of a 600-acre oasis, was generously hosted by its owner and founder HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Khalifa al Thani. On arrival we were welcomed by the management team who had arranged a wonderful afternoon for us. Traditional Gulf craftsmen and women greeted us with their displays and there were also falcons and salukis on show. The overwhelming trophy room bore witness to the many successes achieved by Al Shahania's horses in racing and showing around the world. We enjoyed a guided tour of the farm's extensive facilities, with cool air-conditioned stable blocks, wide tree-shaded avenues and acres of irrigated grass paddocks. As evening fell, a select group of Al Shahania's elite current and future show and racing stars were presented, before we all enjoyed a superb buffet supper.

For many of us, one of the real highlights was the visit to Al Nasser Stud, owned by HE Sheikh Nawaf Bin Nasser Al Thani and managed by Hendrik Mens, where we were treated not only to a lovely show of the farm's exquisite horses, but also a delicious lunch. This is one of the oldest established farms in Qatar, with several generations of home-bred horses of exceptional quality, including many national and international show champions. From breeding stallions to broodmares, from colts to fillies, the quality of the Al Nasser horses is undeniable. As beautiful mare followed beautiful mare into the arena, the