

EGYPTIAN ARABIANS

Ancient Presence

Evidence of the domestication of horses emerged in Syria, dating 2000 BC. In an excavation, halters adorned the bones of horses and horses in artistic drawings. In 1330 AD, the first pedigrees recorded referred to the Arabian by name, although there was no mention of strains or types. As time went on, early travelers questioned the crossing of apparently different "breeds" by the people of the Desert. These were not, in fact, different breeds but strains, or families, of the same breed.

Basic among many variations are the Muniqi, Saglawi, Abayyan and Kuhailan, all descending from the Kuhailan, which means "purebred." Each strain showed distinctive characteristics, no doubt as the result of the individual needs or type preference of the tribe members. Today's Arabian is a product of constant crossing of these strains, as no individual carries the blood of a single, undiluted strain. This is not to say that an Arabian of pure, undiluted, desert blood does not exist. Therein lies one of the major differences in the Straight Egyptian Arabian and those of other bloodlines.

The Straight Egyptian is the blending of strains of pure, undisputed, desert heritage. Though of great significance, the purity of the Egyptian Arabian is not the only reason for their preservation. To delve deeper, we must understand the history of the Egyptian Arabian.

Most Cherished Possession

From the first documentation of the horse in Egypt, they had already established themselves animals of the greatest importance. They were loved, admired, and cherished by the noblest of men and the desert nomad. As history progresses the Prophet Mohamed taught that "every man shall love his horse." Bedouin warriors mounted on their finest Arabian steeds proved to be invincible as Islam's power spread throughout the civilized world. Ahmad Ibn Tuleu, (1193-1250), the extraordinary Mameluke horseman built palatial gardens and a magnificent hippodrome to house his collection of the choicest Arabian horses. Saladin's horses prevented Richard the Lion Heart from conquering Egypt and were hailed by Sir Walter Scott in *The Talisman*. "They spurned the sand from behind them -- they seemed to devour the desert before them."-Solomon, King of Israel built 40,000 stalls for his Arabian horses.

More recent history of the Egyptian Arabian begins with the Turkish ruler Mohamed Ali the Great, during the time Egypt was a province of the Turkish Empire. Mohamed Ali bore a passion for collecting the most superior horses in all of Arabia. He built palatial stables and used every means to collect the best. Mohamed Ali demanded Arabia's most priceless Desert horses as terms of a peace treaty with Arabia. His collection brought to Egypt, 1,100 of the most beautiful and valuable Arabian horses in all the world.

Inheriting his herd, was his grandson, Abbas Pasha, an extremely methodical man who kept very detailed records of each horse, their pedigrees and heritage. He went to great length to prove the purity of each animal. He had also built an impressive herd of his own, primarily from the horses of the Bedouins. Like his father before him, he used political maneuvers and favors to add to his outstanding herd. The freeing of Feysul Ibn Saud from the Citadel was repaid with 290 mares and a fine collection of stallions. Sadly, upon his death the palace and stables were abandoned and left to ruin. Ali Pasha Cherif bought the cream of the herd, which remained with him in Cairo. Although this love was instilled in his sons who carried on after him, eventually Ali Pasha's herd was dispersed.

Egyptian Arabians Abroad

A major purchaser at this sale was Lady Anne Blunt, who divided them between her Sheykh Obeyd Stud in Egypt and her Crabbet Stud in England. Most of the balance of the herd remained in Egypt with wealthy, royal and titled Egyptian families. It was at this point that the government of Egypt realized the significance of their equine treasures and the degree of devotion among their breeders. In 1908, they formed the Royal Agricultural Society whose leaders gathered the best descendants of the Abbas Pasha and Ali Pasha Cherif herds for the overall good of the country. Today, the R.A.S. is known as the Egyptian Agricultural Organization.

The reputation of the beautiful horses of Egypt found its way to America. The Blunts had sold a handful of Egyptian horses to an occasional American and a few others. Having heard of their superior qualities, Mr. Henry Babson traveled to Egypt and purchased seven horses in 1932. To this day, the term, "Babson Arabian," designates horses with blood stemming from his imports.

Twenty years later, Donald and Judith Forbis imported a trio of superior horses from the Egyptian Agricultural Organization, as did Douglas and Margaret Marshall and Jim and Eloise Kline. The imports of the Babson era are sometimes referred to as, "old" Egyptian and the latter, as "new."

Dedicated breeders of the Egyptian Arabian are committed to the preservation of this purest of all equine blood. To lose the purity of a single mare through careless breeding is a sin among them. Aggressive research clarifies any question concerning the purity of a Straight Egyptian pedigree. Within this group are several passionate researchers who have devoted their lives to the continued documentation of these horses.

Preservation of Bloodlines

In 1952, Miss Jane Ott began a list of the horses proven in every line to trace directly to the Desert. This is the "Blue Catalog." She continued this catalog until the early 70's, when she closed her research. The organization known as Al Khamsa has continued her work. There are variations as Al Khamsa accepts some horses not listed in the Blue Catalog. All these horses trace directly, in every line, to horses from Bedouin Tribes, or to exceptional individuals, such as Abbas Pasha and Lady Ann Blunt, who only purchased horses from these sources. The terms "Blue List" and "Al Khamsa" indicate that this horse is believed pure by these meticulous organizations. The term, Asil, meaning purebred, is a German based organization with the same goals. The term, Egyptian Related, is a term for a purebred Arabian horse whose sire, or both grandsires, are Straight Egyptian Arabians.

In the late 1980's another group formed, Sheykh Obeyd. This name is in honor of the Egyptian stables of Lady Anne Blunt. Horses they list as "Sheykh Obeyd," must trace directly to Egypt/Blunt horses as defined by Al Khamsa, and are referred to as old Egyptians. It should be noted that not every horse listed as Al Khamsa or Sheykh Obeyd is considered to be straight Egyptian.

Lady Anne Blunt's stables of Royal Egyptian horses were a continuation of the ongoing blood of Abbas Pasha stables and other important Egyptian sources. Her daughter, Lady Wentworth, did not possess her strict devotion to purity. When she inherited Crabbet Stud she changed the complexion of these horses completely. However, horses known as Crabbet Arabians carry an extremely high percentage of Egyptian blood in their pedigrees.

Reference to "Polish," "Russian" and "Spanish" Arabians refer to horses from breeding programs of those countries. Interestingly, the horses of Egypt have played an important part in their foundation. The most influential modern day horse of Russia was Aswan. The Tersk Stud of Russia used him extensively throughout his life. Aswan was a straight Egyptian stallion, a son

of the legendary Nazeer out of the fine mare, Yosreia. In Spain, Egyptian blood is thick through the blood of Crabbet horses purchased by that country.

Modern breeders have recently, rediscovered the value of crossing the blood from these other bloodlines with pure Egyptian blood. Many of the most successful and sought after horses in the American show ring are the results of the infusion of pure Egyptian blood. Likewise, other breeds often choose to infuse Arabian blood to strengthen or add prepotent characteristics like beauty, refinement or endurance. Since ancient times, throughout the world, man has looked to Egypt as the source for the best blood. The Straight Egyptian Arabian represents less than 2% of the Arabian breed registered in America, yet holds 30% of the National titles.

The Pyramid Society is a well-organized nucleus for the preservation of the purebred Egyptian Arabian horse. It works to perpetuate the straight Egyptian and offers its advantage to breeders of other bloodlines through the Egyptian Related program. The Mecca for Egyptian breeders is the annual Egyptian Event. It occurs each June at the Lexington Kentucky Horse Park, which also houses its offices. Here one can see the cream of the current breeding programs, attend seminars and enjoy the ongoing hospitality of the various breeding farms.

The purity of the Egyptian Arabian horse has endured from the beginning of history due to the passionate devotion of its caretakers. The fittest have survived centuries of battle, and harsh use across torrid desert sand. It has earned respect with its great beauty, intelligence, strength, courage, and stamina. Gold has adorned its head and the horse has walked on carpets of silk. It has slept in the tents of its owners and taken food before kings and pharaohs. Is there any wonder why its blood, fine qualities, and purity are so precious?