

# 40 years of NK breeding as a unique experiment at Katharinenhof, and the results in 2025.

Looking back at the history of  
pure Straight Egyptian breeding  
and explaining the future of the breed.



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It has taken a long time to arrive at this point, where the expected fruits of a delicate horse breeding concept will show up. It is believed that, in animal breeding, it takes up to 5 generations, until a certain type or even a new breed is relatively firmly fixed and good enough to be generally or even officially accepted. Also, in Arabian horse breeding a 5-generation pedigree is required for a horse to be eligible for registration in an official stud book. However, certain questions are remaining as follows: are these 5 generations enough, or are more – 6 or 7 – required, to develop and to compose a population, which gives the expected results; which measures and decisions were taken during this 5 generations period, and finally very important, what was the quality of the animals which were chosen at the very beginning to enter into such a programme.

It looks as if four main decisions are very fundamental for a later success.

1. It must be very clear, what is the aim of all the breeding effort; therefore, a good definition is required for the purpose, the type and features of such a final result.
2. It is vital to choose the proper root stock for such a concept. Only the best available stock for the future sires and dam is a promising base for a good outcome.
3. In each generation a suitable selection programme had to be applied, considering physical criteria and mentality.
4. How many families are required to build up the future population.

In the early 1920s, Poland established the first Arabian Stud Book and breeding of Arabians became official. 16 families were kept for selection. Also, in Egyptian breeding at about the same time, 16 root mares were chosen. It was the Egyptian Royal Agricultural Society (RAS), which was in charge of creating such an Arabian breeding population. However, in each of these programmes it soon became evident, that only some of these families made a valuable contribution to the development of this total population. In the Polish breeding, these 16 families still exist, but half of them are kept as a heritage only without any impact on the Polish daily breeding work.



**NK ALMA**  
grey filly 28.01.2025





A similar development was seen in Egypt. In the course of time only 8 solid families remained. They were collected and further bred in the “El Zahraa Arabian Horse Stud”, near Cairo. All Egyptian Arabians worldwide are based on these root mares, including the later added “Inshass Stud”, the Royal Stud of the Egyptian Kings Fouad and Farouk.

On the stallion side the RAS decided to acquire a great number of stallions. Some of them were bred in Egypt, many purchased from the Crabbet Park in England, mainly those whose ancestors were once imported from Egypt to

**NK ANOUSA**  
grey filly 29.06.2025



Great Britain. Only very few of them were chosen for the RAS breeding concept, the majority were placed in stallion-depots around the country, to improve the local horse breeds.

From the 1920s until around 1950s, the Egyptian Arabian breeding enjoyed a very positive period. Experienced horsemen like Dr. Brunch, Dr. Rasheed and later on Dr. Ameen Zaher directed the breeding programme. An amazing group of brood mares and stallions became the source of a very successful breeding population. Anyone who visited the El Zahraa Stud in the 1950s and 1960s was impressed



**NK LEA**  
chestnut filly 01.01.2025





by the quality of this special breeding herd of about 50 mares and up to 10 stallions. They all represented an Arabian horse, which was blessed with elegance and lightness, exposing the type of their historical desert ancestors.

Then, in the 1950s a second period began and the look of the El Zahraa Arabians started to change slowly. Additional stallions from other sources were introduced into the herd and the number of stallions used in each breeding season and in each generation, were doubled or even tripled. In the first 25 years the population was nearly closed, after that the concept was widely opened.

## NK NADRA

chestnut filly 29.06.2025



Such opening for new genetic material should have fostered positive effects, but also under such new circumstances an adequate selection programme should have been applied as well. But no significant steps were taken in that direction.

A clear conception was not followed up, instead many facts were influencing or interfering with the breeding work: the racing community in Egypt asked El Zahraa to be involved in their activities; customers from Europe and USA pushed them to breed bigger and more solid horses. Another group wanted “Nazeer-Free” breeding stock. And finally, some foreign



**NK NAIF**  
grey colt 21.02.2025





pedigree fanatics irritated many new breeders with their strange “purity breeding” philosophy. It became difficult for the stud management to deal with all these requirements.

Nobody was there, to control or to give valuable advice and stand up with self-confidence and forcefully refused all these partly unreasonable or even destructive requests.

In the 1950s and 1960s, some fortunate breeders from abroad, could still acquire Arabians bred in the first period, like the Marbach Stud in Germany, the Ansata Arabians and Gleannloch

**NK NILEEN**  
bay filly 13.06.2025



Farms in the USA, Katharinenhof in Germany or the Babolna Stud in Hungary. Each of them progressed, based on the breeding stock they could acquire at that time in Egypt, and their own concept in Europe or in the USA. At the Katharinenhof, the NK Arabians concept however, was different from all the others. It looks as if none of the other customers of El Zahraa spent so much time, studying the Egyptian horse population beforehand as deeply as I did at the Katharinenhof.

In understanding their breeding procedure of the first period more properly, it led me to



**NK NOUR AL AMAR**  
bay colt 13.06.2025





believe that in a closed breeding programme, with only 3 or 4 families, the homozygosity of a limited breeding population could be increased more efficiently to a higher level. The effect would be that after a few generations; a certain Arabian type would emerge in mostly equal quality. In fact, after 5 and 6 generations of testing and selecting work, foals with such equal characteristics and features were showing up and represented a type of their own, similar to those as shown in historical documents of the Arabian horse in the past.

In the NK Arabian concept 3 root mares and their families and stallions representing only one single sire line are forming the total breeding concept. They are

bred to each other by considering the proper parental relationships, evidenced and monitored by a DNA programme and proper knowledge of each horse in its capacity as a breeding partner. Offspring testing is one of the major tools in the ongoing selection process.

The following photos are of all Arabian foals born at Katharinenhof in 2025 as a sample of a quite homogeneous breeding population. Such fillies could act as perfect root stock mares for a future family due to their solid and strong genetic composition.

More information about the NK Arabian breeding concept is available on [www.nk-arabians.de](http://www.nk-arabians.de) □



**nk NOURA**  
bay filly 15.05.2025

