

THE WORLD ARABIAN HORSE ORGANIZATION

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(WAHO) CONFERENCE IN JORDAN 2022



World Arabian Horse Organisation

*"If you don't know where you have been
its exponentially harder to know
where it is that you are going".
(Prince Rashid Bin Hassan)*

- Opening Addresses by HRH Princess Alia Al Hussein, HRH Prince Rashid Bin El Hassan and Peter Pond, WAHO President
- Reports from the Voting Delegates of the Member Countries
- Guest Speakers on the Royal Jordanian State Stud and the Importance and Relevance of the Arabian Horse State Studs
- Post Conference Tours to the World-Famous Historical Sites of Jordan and the Desert Highlights



The world conference of the WAHO, is a time-honoured tradition that takes place every 2 years in a different member country. In 2022, HRH Princess Alia Al Hussein and the Royal Jordanian Equestrian Federation invited the WAHO members, delegates and observers to Jordan. The team around Secretary General Ms Nour Al-Refai organised a successful conference and many exciting explorations during the pre- and post-conference tours in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, once founded by King Abdullah I and now ruled by King Abdullah II, son of the late King Hussein.

Katrina Murray and staff of the WAHO office in Great Britain took care of the content of the programme and the good implementation.

Jordan is a peaceful country deeply steeped in history, but today a modern and open state, a crossroads of different ethnicities and cultures but also a bridge between Europe and Asia. The Royal Family has played a significant role in the success story of this small country, which is geo-politically a rock in the troubled water, surrounded by countries whose armed conflicts cast a dark shadow over the co-existence of the different religions and

cultures in the Middle East. Jordan's openness and hospitality is famous, not only towards tourists, but it has also led to the fact that fifty percent of Jordan's population is made up of refugees from nearby crisis and war zones. The social integration of millions of refugees is an enormous challenge for this small country. Its capital of 4 million inhabitants, Amman, was populated by the Ammonites long before Christ, until it fell into the hands of Alexander the Great and was later occupied by the Romans. In 635 Amman became Islamic and 900 years later it was part of the Ottoman Empire.

In 1948, the small town of Amman became a large city due to the influx of Palestinian refugees following the creation of Israel. Many refugees also came after the Lebanese civil war, after the attack on Iraq and later the Syrian civil war, to independent and tolerant Jordan. Today, the multicultural metropolis of Amman stretches across a group of hills between the fertile Jordan Valley on the west side and the desert to the east.

The northwest of the country is a region with many religious places of worship whose histo-



JERASH, Roman city in ancient Jordan



AMMAN, the capital of Jordan

ry can be read in the Old Testament of the Bible. In the south, the country consists largely of deserts and is hardly populated. The desert highlights such as the Nabatean rock city of Petra and the Wadi Rum, both on the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites, make tourists from all over the world dream of 1001 Nights. The original population of this area, the Bedouins, have long since exchanged their flocks of sheep for streams of tourists, whom they manage perfectly at the mystical places of great beauty and fascination. Jordan has long since arrived in the 21st century.

The major problems of the Orient, such as water scarcity and climate change, are being tackled in Jordan

together, by the Royal House, the government and the people. The WAHO conference was held under the patronage of the Royal Family, and demonstrated the closeness and good cooperation between the Ruling House and the interests of the horse-loving people.

HRH Princess Alia has obviously taken the WAHO conference to heart as she has been a WAHO Board Member for many years, an A-Judge of ECAHO, an Arabian breeder since her youth and author of several books on Arabian horses. She opened the conference, which ended a week later with a visit to the Royal Stables and a demonstration of her own Arabian breeding.



HRH Princess Alia Al Hussein.

"It is a great pleasure and honour to open this Conference on behalf of His Majesty King Abdullah, who is very enthusiastic about it though not necessarily so much involved with horses himself, as I am, he has been on the Council of the stud for the past 30 or 40 years.

We are very happy to have you here and it's a great pleasure that it's finally in Jordan, we have been Members of WAHO since the 70's actually but our stud Book was accepted in the early 80's. We had obviously hoped that you would be here sooner but then COVID intervened, and we are just very happy to see you all, people from so many parts of the world and being able to get together and visit our country which I am sure you have heard a lot about in previous.

The current theme that we've had in all the meetings, is how horses and the Arab horses in particular, unite people. I think your presence here is proof of this and we hear about many cases where in spite of great adversity; political, physical and otherwise, people have got together and surmounted all the obstacles to get together for this one love that they all have.

I was thinking this morning, what is it about the horse? Yes, we are united because we love them, and their beauty certainly attracts us, but it is more than that. It's something very deep and innate in them, courage certainly, the fact that they tolerate human beings with good and bad habits, they are always willing, they empathise, and have kindness. Perhaps when we are around them, they trigger that and we see it in each other in a better way and I think that's possibly why we are so very harmonious at these meetings and why we are able to surmount other differences or disparities between us, which in the run of the mill world come between us".



Prince Rashid Bin Hassan

"Your Royal Highness Princess Alia, your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen. Good morning, and a very warm welcome to you all, experts on Arabian horses and Members of WAHO and I am a humble polo player who cannot refuse an invitation as all of you have not refused an invitation from Her Royal Highness, so please bear with me.

When we talk about conferences and events such as this in Jordan we are very, very proud to host them. I am Jordanian, and it is the Jordanian tradition to welcome guests and visitors. Jordan's population is a clear reflection of how our location has given us constant, interaction with the rest of the world, as a major trade route, as a major strategic hub in the region, so welcoming visitors is very much part of our tradition, part of our culture, part of our DNA.

I am going to tell you an anecdote, it involves horses. A tribal Sheikh, a prominent outspoken loyalist to His Majesty King Abdullah the First, our founding King, had a famous Arab stallion which was the envy of many, including one of his competitors.

Competing Sheikhs in two branches of the same tribe.

After trying repeatedly to buy this horse and being rebuffed, the competing Sheikh concealed himself, or disguised himself, on the road where he knew the tribal head was going to be moving and he



Prince Rashid Bin Hassan

pretended that he needed assistance. The Sheikh of course rendered the assistance, not recognising his competitor and when he got off his horse found that his horse was stolen. There was the horse, 50 yards away with his new and very short-lived owner, short lived time of ownership not short lived in





The Royal Jordanian Mounted Police.

life - there is a happy end to this story - who turned around and revealed himself and said 'I've taken your horse'.

The first Sheikh replied, 'OK I accept and you are welcome to it on one condition. I will not take reprisal or come after you, on the one condition that you don't tell anyone that I was fooled and tricked by you in this way.' The rider dismounted and returned the horse because he felt that something as beautiful could not be taken or transferred in ownership because of a trick.

It gives you an idea not only about how the Arabian horse was valued but more importantly about the mind-set of the people who own these horses, they viewed them as trust not as property.

Trust which all of you here continue to represent and to maintain

As you go about the country in the next few days you are going to meet people from different walks of life, different ethnic backgrounds and with

different experiences and they all contribute to the rich tapestry, the rich bloodlines that we as Jordanians feel with our population, and it's that sense of unity of which we are so proud. Jordan is a small country in a challenging neighbourhood with economic challenges, with water challenges, we are all subject to the difficulties of climate change and post Covid economic fallout. However, we are also exceptionally diverse in climate, in terrain and in people so I do encourage you to take the opportunity to interact with the widest spectrum of people. You will occasionally feel that we are a little bit like the Spartans of the Middle East, because when you talk to people you will find that almost everyone's brother or cousin or father served in the armed forces, in the Jordan Arab Army. Not the Jordanian Army, the Jordan Arab Army, so named because it was an indicator of Jordan's willingness to recruit Arabs from all over the region, not exclusively as a Jordanian National Army. And the simple fact is that one of the backbones, one of the pillars of our society and one of the things that



Delegation from the United Arab Emirates

we take great pride in, are our armed forces who have consistently been in part and in support of Princess Alia and the Royal Stables.

So we thank them for all of the contributions and for all of the support that they provide not just to the Jordanian chapter of WAHO but to all aspects of sporting and cultural heritage here. Our Army is a defensive army for certain, a proper army and a capable army for certain, but it is much more to every Jordanian. It's also a deep sense of pride, it's a deep sense of belonging, it is the unifying factor and the levelling playing field for all Jordanians and the aspiration of the many young Jordanian men and women to serve in the institution because of the sense of unity and cohesion that it provides, so we thank them for their support. (...)

I thank you all for being here, there are some who may say preserving heritage, preserving Arab horses is something of a luxury, why do we need it today. And I would simply answer that with-

out a keen sense of awareness of where you have come from and what the factors that have led, in all aspects, to the development of a society is tremendously important. If you don't know where you have been it's exponentially harder to know where it is that you are going. So welcome to all of our guests, I would be remiss if I didn't also thank many of the unknown soldiers, who have helped to contribute to this event, volunteers, members of the Ministries represented here and from the Amman Mayor's office.

But it is part of the magic that I, with great pride, say that Princess Alia brings to all of us. She has always been an older sister, a wise head and a wise voice to all of us and she has an incredible knack of bringing people together in the kindest possible way. The fact that so many people were willing to support this event, or any event for Princess Alia, is a testimony to the leadership that she shows here, leadership which is very much in the style of her late father, his late Majesty King Hussein and continued by His

Majesty King Abdullah to this day. I can tell you as a member of their family, they set very high standards for us to live up to and so one must constantly be aware of the hard work that their elders and betters contribute in all of their endeavours.

I thank you for putting up with an amateur, and as I said a polo player and not someone with a long and illustrious history like all of you here, and I encourage you to please feel at home. Because genuinely we view our guests in very short periods of time to be friends and we hope you make the most of it, and we hope to see you back here again”.

WAHO President Mr. Peter Pond thanked King Abdullah II, Princess Alia, Prince Rashid and the Royal Equestrian Federation for their tremendous support and organization of the conference. He summarized the history of WAHO, starting with the founding in 1970 and the election of Jay Stream, the first President, in 1972. He concluded his speech with the words: “WAHO is still valid today and I would like to emphasize that you are WAHO, our members are WAHO. We are all WAHO”.



WAHO President Mr. Peter Pond





WAHO'S CONTEMPORARY ROLE IN TODAY'S WORLDWIDE PUREBRED ARABIAN BREED.

WAHO is the overarching umbrella organization for all purebred Arabians. Up to now a total of 82 countries have joined, with their national Arabian horse associations in order to be able to recognize passports, pedigrees and regulations of this internationally networked of horse breed. In each member country the studbook is kept according to the same WAHO rules (e.g., DNA analyses, microchip, foal registration, export certificate etc.), and Arabian purebreds are part of the globalized markets in the world.

Thanks to the WAHO criteria and guidance for Member States, Arabian horses can travel and participate in sport and show events for which only Purebred Arabians are eligible, without having to prove complicated individual recognition procedures regarding their breed purity.

Of course, the concept of purity is an ethnic one and not one that can be proven genetically over a long period of time, as pedigrees have only been credibly recorded for a few hundred years, and mostly at royal studs that were committed to systematic Arabian horse breeding. (See also this year's lectures on Arabian breeding in the state studs).

WAHO, on the other hand, refers to its own

pragmatic definition of purity: A purebred Arabian horse is one which appears in any purebred Arabian horse studbook or register, listed by WAHO as acceptable.

In 1982, Arabian horses from the countries of origin in the Arabian Peninsula were integrated into the studbook. In 2004 the WAHO studbook was "closed" and only those horses could be registered whose parents were already both registered in a national association accepted by WAHO.

Furthermore, WAHO must deal with ever new challenges in our global world of the "Horse Industry". Today the problem areas are the difficult harmonization of the administrative procedure of registration, which is subject to different national regulations in many countries of the world. In addition to individual ambitious breeders and breeding stables, there is also the reproduction industry with its lobbying, which has increasingly exerted influence on the reproduction of Arabian horses in many countries and has, under certain circumstances, allowed unlimited embryo transfer (ET) also in vitro fertilization (IVF), and post-mortem collection of oocytes both of which are



Awarding the successful Endurance mare Sahwat Al Wahhab with the 2022 WAHO Trophy.





Tent Pegging, demonstrated by the mounted police



against WAHO rules. In this respect, the biennial WAHO conference with the meeting of the national studbook leaders (voting delegates) is absolutely necessary in order to discuss the new facts and to vote on the problems.

Some Results from the Delegates Meeting

The registrars, custodians of the studbooks of the Arabian horse in all member countries discussed in

their meeting the urgent issues of the international administration of the studbook, technical and organizational issues concerning the harmonization of the legal basis of studbook keeping and the recognition of reproduction technologies in different countries and cultures.

Each representative of a member country presented in a short report the situation in the domestic Arabian horse association. The main focus was on statistical results, such as the number of annual foal births, imported and exported horses, use of embryo transfers, national events of horse races, shows or endurance races.

It is interesting to see the different markets that have developed for the horses and their use in the various countries and the extent to which breeders have also adapted to these challenges. The globalization of markets has meant that it is less about origin and regional provenance and more about using useful genes for the purpose and benefit of the horses and their owners. Show horses are similar all over the world, as are racehorses or endurance horses. Today, there is a world of difference between these three types of Arabian horses. There is no doubt that breeders select and “improve” their horses according to different commercial and cultural demands. One can see that countries with a busy racing business have relatively stable birth rates (Turkey, France, Tunisia, Morocco, UAE etc.). On the other hand, countries with a lot of show business or original breeding like Asils, suffer more from recession and economic crises, apart from the Gulf States, of course.

In 2013, the USA was in first place with 3282 foal registrations; in 2021, there were only 2189 foals registered. In Germany, too, there were 700 registered foals in 2013, in 2021 there were only 376 foals. In Italy, too, the number of foals born to local breeders has fallen sharply, but this is less evident in terms of numbers because in this country, as in the Netherlands

and Belgium, various large stud farms from the Gulf have set up their breeding facilities with enormous numbers of ETs. It can be stated that Arabian breeding has shifted strongly from the USA and Europe to the Orient. Why not? After all, this horse breed originated in the Arabian Peninsula, and they also play a strong emotional role there for many breeders.

Qatar, KSA, UAE and Kuwait, but also Egypt, are showing high growth rates. The small country of Qatar, an influencer and successful player in Arabian horse breeding, both in terms of showing and racing, quintupled its birth rate within 8 years from 289 (2013) to 1030 (2021). Kuwait increased its foal registration rate from 858 (2020) to 2050 in 2021. Egypt also registered almost 2000 foals in 2021. Saudi Arabia had the highest foaling rate in the world in 2021 with 5216 registrations, 2200 more than the year before.

This surplus of foals will not be able to be corrected by the market, as is generally assumed. Globalisation has got out of hand and new ways of sustainable quality breeding should be taken.

At the 2014 conference in Qatar, WAHO already would have liked to limit the embryo transfer to a minimum number that is necessary in some cases, and to orientate itself more towards the horse-friendly and market-friendly methods of breeding English Thoroughbreds. But this could not be done with some Member States with advanced reproduction technologies, because the industry has a great interest in this market. Whether breeders earn from it is questionable, because the method is very costly and risky, for the mare owners. The market has long been saturated and the prices breeders get for their horses today under normal circumstances are more than inflationary. Moreover, the epigenetic influence of the recipient mare is generally underestimated. In addition, there is the permanent stress caused by hormone doses and medication to which a broodmare is exposed from which several embryos are to be flushed per year. This has nothing to do with animal welfare anymore and WAHO could take up the topic under different aspects at the next conference.

WAHO RULE 20: CLONING

- 1. It is a mandatory WAHO rule that any Arabian of any age produced by cloning must not be registered under any circumstances.*
- 2. It is a mandatory WAHO rule that the foals of any Arabian which was produced by cloning cannot be registered.*

WAHO RULE 21: EXTERNAL FERTILISATION OF OOCYTES FOR EMBRYO TRANSFER

Effective from 1st January 2013.

- 1. It is a mandatory WAHO rule that any Arabian of any age produced by the post-mortem collection of oocytes must not be registered under any circumstances.*
- 2. It is a mandatory WAHO rule that any Arabian of any age produced by any method of In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) must not be registered under any circumstances.*

WAHO RULE 22: GENETIC MODIFICATION INCLUDING GENE EDITING AND GENE DOPING

Effective from 8 February 2019.

- 1. It is a mandatory WAHO rule that any Arabian horse of any age which has been subject to any form of genetic modification at the embryo stage or later must not be registered under any circumstances.*
- 2. It is a mandatory WAHO rule that the progeny of any Arabian horse which was subject to any form of genetic modification at the embryo stage or later must not be registered under any circumstances.*
- 3. It is a mandatory WAHO rule that any Arabian horse of any age which has been conceived using genetically modified gametes must not be registered under any circumstances.*
- 4. It is a mandatory WAHO rule that the progeny of any Arabian horse which was conceived using genetically modified gametes must not be registered under any circumstances.*

Based on the registrars' reports, one could see that in 2021 only 11 countries did not register ET foals. (Norway, Pakistan, Syria, Iran, Algeria, Japan...)

Instead, many countries accept ET unlimited. (USA, South Africa, Qatar, Hungary, Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile...). Some limit the number of ET's, like Egypt (2) or Poland and Sweden (1+1) That means one own and one ET per year, and per Arabian mare.

Poland has the additional rule that the recipient mare must be an Arabian mare, a rule worthy of imitation if one thinks of the influence of the recipient mare on the embryo during the 11-month pregnancy plus 6 months of upbringing.

WAHO Executive Committee Member

Mr. Xavier Guibert chaired the WAHO Registrar meeting where the various issues and problems were discussed and voted on in plenary. He presented the results and put them to a vote. One of the questions discussed was what the association is doing in his country to promote the purebred Arabian and how to disseminate information on mandatory rules and on the availability of genetic disorder testing to the owners and breeders. Unfortunately, there was little feedback from the national associations.

One of the mandatory WAHO rules came into focus due to a request from Australia. It concerns the External Fertilization of Oocytes and In Vitro Fertilization IVF for Embryo Transfer. It is generally not allowed to register foals from these external fertilization methods in a WAHO studbook (just as cloned foals are not allowed to be registered). In the vote, the vast majority of the Plenary voted to keep this WAHO rule. But who can control this when these embryos are implanted in a recipient mare in the ET procedure? The suggestion was made that all Registries should include a declaration on their foal registration application forms, to be signed by the breeders, that the foals were not produced by any of the prohibited assisted reproduction techniques, and



Mr. Xavier Guibert

to take responsibility to inform their breeders, as well as commercial centres offering these services in their country, of these mandatory domestic and WAHO rules.

In addition, there was a discussion about the on-line databases of stud books, which are already active in some countries. In the next few years, the digitalization of the procedures and the pedigrees will certainly simplify the work of the national associations and communication. However, some countries are still far away from these possibilities.

Mr. Russell Ferris, CEO of Weatherbys which founded the Thoroughbred Stud Book in 1791, gave a talk to both the registrars meeting and the general assembly. He explained their cutting-edge developments in the transformation of printed studbooks and paper registration procedures to digital versions created from secure, centralised and accessible databases.

GUEST SPEAKERS: ABOUT THE ROYAL JORDANIAN STATE STUD AND THE IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE OF THE ARABIAN HORSE STATE STUDS

Four invited guest speakers gave their presentations on the 2nd day of the conference. The main topic were the royal studs and state studs since their foundation and their role today.

In some countries, since the end of the cavalries, the state studs have been regarded as historical sites, as living museums only. In a few countries, on the other hand, these studs had a supporting role in educating the regional breeders. Some of them breed with great success until today and are also active as equestrian event managers. But that is no longer enough today.

The state studs could play an important role in saving the Arab breed in the future. For ever new world crises and an imminent climate collapse, concrete reform ideas are emerging: less growth, more state targets up to state promotion through selective supportive measures. This is already working in some countries.

For reasons of space, here is a brief summary of the four interesting reports, the original versions of which will be printed in full in the verbatim booklet of the conference proceedings.

Astrid von Velsen-Zerweck: Challenges for State Studs

Conflicts, climate change – essential challenges that we are facing around the world. The global crises do not leave the horse sector in general and the State Studs in particular untouched in times of enormous social, political, economic and ecologic problems.

At the same time many societies are changing their opinion on agriculture, animal keeping and breeding, showing, riding, racing and competition. Not only Animal Rights and Animal Welfare Organisations are examining our activities more

and more suspiciously. Voices are becoming louder that are questioning cultural properties like horse breeding, riding, racing as well as the certified competence of equestrian experts.

Numbers of horses and breeders have been decreasing dramatically in Europe after the world economic crisis in 2009, 20-30% loss per year ever since. Many private studs, and state studs and institutions have been closed. Equestrian sports, racing and shows are facing similar trends.

As some parts of the world seem to be growing out of equestrianism, other parts of the world show encouraging development of the Arabian horse breeding.

Horses have survived – and have contributed to the solution of – many critical periods in history. Crises as we know well have provoked series of far-sighted changes in economics, agriculture, the arts and sciences, education, civil administration, only thinking of leaders like Muhamad Ali the Great (1769-1849) or William I of Württemberg (1816-1864) or phases during the technical revolution after World War II when horses were in danger to extinction.



Dr. Astrid von Velsen-Zerweck, Director State Stud Marbach and Co-Organiser Ms Nour Al-Refei, Royal Equestrian Federation

Many Royal, military and state studs could play an important role in maintaining the continuation of breeding, especially of the Arabian horse, in developing future breeding programs and in passing on knowledge and skills in equine professions, although proven otherwise depending on management and committees.

State Studs are living heritage sites. Most of them derive from the time when horses were essential companions in transport and agriculture, representation and warfare. After the technical revolution, the number of breeding institutions declined.

Most of them are under the authority of the state, some have been already turned into foundations or run as private enterprises.

Those institutions are not only places of animal production. They are also facilities full of atmosphere with magnificent buildings, parks and cultural landscapes formed by horse management over centuries. They are unique heritage sites preserving three forms of heritage: tangible, intangible and living heritage.

The studs are places of horsemanship developed and refined over many generations of dedicated horsemen aiming at harmony between men and horse. Notable personalities have contributed to horse heritage throughout history.

Today's state studs are important education facilities for horse professionals and amateurs alike. Many of them run classical riding and carriage-driving schools providing excellent training for equestrians of all age. Committed to their traditions the studs today are modern equine competence centres working in networks with public institutions and authorities, universities, vocational schools, elementary schools as well as breeding and sports associations and animal welfare organisations.

The horses themselves can be regarded as living heritage. The breeds and their bloodlines of today

have been developed over centuries to match the pattern of human needs. Many breeds owe their survival to the state studs, which continued to breed them even in times when they were less popular, such as the draft and working horses, and helped them to a renaissance as a leisure or therapy horse. Thus, the national studs contribute significantly to the preservation of biodiversity.

Horse heritage needs sound science. We owe it to our history and to our horses to find cooperation and research in the fields of genetics, biodiversity, behaviour, welfare, culture and ecological questions. State Studs are predestined for scientific studies due to their management, horse numbers and facilities.

The equine sector presents various environmental assets, with special topics in each country, allowing the equine to be part of the current agro-ecological transition. Horses cannot exist without grasslands. Permanent pastures are important for biodiversity, carbon storage and for the protection of water quality. Let us use the state studs also for promotion and the welfare of the horse. Collaboration between private and state studs and other institutions all over the world allow exchange in many fields, give tribute to the public and thus, contribute to maintain horse heritage.

Deidre Hyde – State and Royal Studs in the Middle East

From the 14th Century in the Ottoman Empire, Horses were a very important commodity, they represented power and prestige and they were extremely useful for trade: silk, precious stones, carpets and spices, for horses. The Ottoman Empire officially ended in 1922 followed by the creation of the Republic of Turkey under Marshal Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. In 1925 on his instruction the registration and breeding of horses was restarted under State control. Large State studs were established, and many stallion stations created for the improvement of local breeds, with the emphasis on the Arabian for racing.

Through the ages it has been almost the same in many countries, firstly breeding cavalry war horses and then useful horses in agriculture, travelling, racing and now endurance and showing.

The Mughal Empire had Royal Studs breeding many thousands of horses, so that “during the 19th Century, Bombay was considered one of the greatest and best market for Arabian horses.

When the British East India Company took over, there was more need for remounts, and in 1902 a Remount Stud was restarted at Ahmednagar, in Marashtra Province, the only stud devoted to breeding pure Arabians in substantial numbers. Pakistan still breeds Remounts at Mona in the Punjab.

Syria did not have a National Stud, although the tribes in Syria had been the centuries old source of thousands of horses for Empires and Royal Studs around the world. In 1985 The Basel Assad Centre for Arabian Horses was founded, and a breeding programme put in place specifically to preserve and promote the Syrian Arabian as a National Heritage and Syrian treasure.

In Egypt, in 1898 the Royal Agricultural Society (RAS) was founded under the patronage of HM King Farouk I. In 1953 the RAS became the Egyptian Agricultural Organisation (EAO) which along with a succession of excellent Egyptian directors continues to care for the Stud Farm of Al Zahraa and its heritage. The Safavids which at its height controlled, Iran, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Armenia, parts of Iraq, Kuwait, and Afghanistan and more. The region of Khuzestan is the area of Iran inhabited by tribes of Arab origins who have maintained the same horse families for many generations. Known locally as Asils, these horses can still be found in substantial numbers. The Royal stables of Bahrain are unique because the relative isolation of the island provided a sanctuary for over two centuries ensuring the preservation of this unique collection in the hands of the ruling family.



Mr. Russell Ferris, CEO of Weatherbys and Ms. Deidre Hyde

In 1961 the King Abdulaziz Arabian Horse Centre was founded in Saudi Arabia. The horses are largely based on those owned by the late King, and much effort has gone into preserving their strains.

Oman and the Royal Cavalry have played a role in Arabian horse history over the last three hundred years. Sultan Qaboos paid considerable attention to his horses and an impressive stud of international Arabians horses for shows and racing was built up in his Stable.

In 2012 the Emir of Kuwait established Bait Al Arab Kuwait State Stud. Its mission is to protect their straight Egyptian bloodlines and horse related Kuwaiti cultural heritage.

Qatar's Al Shaqab Royal Stable houses World Champion horses in World Class facilities. Not only racing, but also showing and breeding.

There is no one answer but all Royal Stables and State Studs can equally be subject to the whims of owners or committees which can have dramatic long-term effects for breed. It is something in which we should all take an interest.

Gudrun Waiditschka: The Relevance of State Studs

Warfare was the driving force behind the involvement of governments in horse breeding. When private breeders could not supply the quantity and quality required by the military, the State saw the need to

Ms Gudrun Waiditschka, Journalist



set up Studs to produce the type of mount required. Of the approx. 20 state studs, the earliest was Weil / Marbach, - Germany - originally started in 1514 and the last one was founded in Lithuania in 1969.

As wars changed, so did the type of horse, and eventually the broader scope of an all-purpose animal. Studs across Europe closed for several reasons:

- lack of funding
- lack of interest from society
- lack of support / interest from breeders
- mismanagement

It is important for state stud farms to establish a strong bond with society and to create awareness for what State Studs stand today: **By making horses a public experience, by educating and training people, by providing services to breeders and by preserving a cultural heritage.**

ARABIAN HORSES AND CULINARY HIGHLIGHTS

Around the conference, participants were additionally rewarded with an extensive and exciting cultural programme. The excellent Jordanian gastronomy also presented itself in top form, every evening was fine dining. Whether in Amman's "Heritage Restaurant" with its traditional Jordanian dishes, nobly prepared using indigenous herbs and plants, or in the Nadi Al-Jeel Al-Jadeed Club, which presented an exciting combination of Arabic and Circassian food. In addition to traditional folk dances, the approximately 200 guests were offered a buffet that participants will remember for a long time.

The Amman Equestrian Center also came to the fore with a varied and very good buffet and where we were looking forward to seeing the Arabian horses from private breeders. At the beginning, the mounted Jordanian police showed an acrobatic demonstration in Tent Pegging. The subsequent presentation of the Arabian horses showed impressively that it is still possible to successfully combine beauty and functionality in breeding. Some of the horses had more of a desert pedigree, others were based on imports from Europe in combination with the original Jordanian Arabians. Some horses were presented under saddle. The guests were enthusiastic and felt honoured by the Jordanian hospitality.



During the conference, Peter Upton gave a fascinating talk on the history of the Royal Jordanian State Stud, which we will publish in the next issue of **Desert Heritage Magazine**.



THE ROYAL JORDANIAN STATE STUD

This stud, located not far from Amman, houses the breeding of the Royal Family, which already has a long history. HRH Princess Alia, Peter Upton and Marek Trela led the programme, which started with a nice parade by the Royal Jordanian Mounted Police. Afterwards, the individual mare families and their foals were shown, which continue the long tradition of the original Jordanian Arabians today.

In the afternoon, the guests were able to visit the stud farm, which in its large courtyards, house the various mare families beautifully. This visit brought the guests back to the reason for their exciting trip to Jordan: The Arabian horses and the relaxed encounter with old and new friends in fascinating surroundings.





The Team of organisers that helped to make WAHO CONFERENCE 2022 so successful.

VISITING JORDAN

Stunning Jordanian History and Beautiful Landscapes.



*Text and Photos by
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Graphic design by Mario Brunetti*

Anyone who has ever attended one of the legendary WAHO conferences will usually never forget it. These conferences are traditionally embedded in the history and culture of the host country. The Arabian horse has been bred and domesticated on the Arabian Peninsula and the neighbouring western and eastern regions for several millennia. In this respect, those WAHO conferences in the Arabian world of origin have always been a deeply impressive experience. Unforgettable are the pre- and post-Conference tours, through which the host country



establish a connection between the participants and the Arabian horse History and presence in their country. The conferences in Syria and Oman were unforgettable, and Qatar and Bahrain were very impressive, and the discussions and lectures were followed by an insight into the life of the breeders and their horses in a contemporary world.

Jordan joins the ranks of fascinating countries that had a lot to show the participants in an authentic environment. The pre- and post-conference tours made the participation in the WAHO conference an exciting experience with so much learned about a fabulously beautiful country, its people and history.



Front picture by Karsten Scherling

THE DAY VISITS

Jerash Archaeological Site

Jerash was one of the ten biggest cities of the Roman Empire, and one of the largest and best-preserved archaeological sites of Roman architecture in the world, outside Italy. It is also known as the 'City of 1000 Columns,' or the 'Pompeii of the East', possibly because it lay hidden under sand for centuries. It has an unbroken chain of human occupation dating back more than 6500 years. It may look small on a map, but it's packed with historical wonders and authentic local charm. Jerash and Petra are Jordan's two most visited attractions.





MoSa



MoSa



Ancient Amman and Jordan Museum

Amman is a city of contrasts, a unique blend of old and new. Modern buildings built around and amongst the remains of ancient civilisations. Originally built on seven hills, it now spans over an area of 19 hills, and almost half of Jordan's population is concentrated in the Amman environs.

Jebel Al Qala'a is one of the original seven hills, and the Bronze Age Citadel ruins are here, both Roman and Islamic, and the Roman Temple of Hercules. Byzantine history is represented by the columns and mosaics from an early church.

There is a stunning view of Amman and one can look down on the Roman Amphitheatre with its 3 tiers of seats for up to 6000 people, and the smaller restored theatre, the Odeon. Visitors get a perspective of the city's incredible history.

The Jordan Museum tells the story of Jordan chronologically and thematically, covering the environment, food production, visual art and architecture, cultural exchange and trade. Politics and the military, communication and writing, industry, religion and daily domestic life. One is encouraged to explore the Kingdom's past present and future.



Mosaics of Madaba and Mount Nebo

Madaba is often called “The City of Mosaics” and there is plenty to explore. The vivid 6th century Byzantine mosaic map shows Jerusalem and other Holy Sites. The Madaba Institute for Mosaic Art and restoration, trains students in the art of making, repairing and restoring Mosaics.

Mount Nebo is believed to be the place where Moses was buried and is one of the most revered holy places in Jordan. At a height of 1000 metres, the top of the mountain, offers amazing views over the river Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea, Jericho and Jerusalem. There are more interesting mosaics in the Moses Memorial Church, and the Serpentine Cross standing just outside, is symbolic of the brass serpent Moses took into the desert, and the cross on which Jesus was crucified.



Al Ma'wa for Nature and Wildlife

The Al Ma'wa Wildlife Reserve in Jerash province is 48 kilometres north of Amman, it covers 140 hectares that were donated by the Jordanian Agriculture Ministry. It was established in 2011 by the Princess Alia Foundation in partnership with the international animal welfare organisation Four Paws. It is the largest sanctuary for rescued and mistreated wildlife in the Middle East. The project provides a regional solution for rescued wild animals and offers emergency relief to animals from war zones, irresponsible private owners, zoos that could or would not look after them properly, and illegal wildlife trading.

Animals that cannot be returned to their country of origin or released into the wild find a permanent home at the sanctuary.

Well cared for, and well fed, all the animals, live in species-specific enclosures that ensure the animals have enough space and appropriate conditions that best suit their natural needs, and they all appeared content and very healthy.





A Day at the Dead Sea

The Dead Sea is totally devoid of life, except for some primitive microorganisms and algae. At just over 400 metres below sea level, the water is 10 times saltier than the sea, and very rich in chloride salts. These mineral salts have healing powers to treat and rejuvenate skin complaints. The thick black mud also has health giving properties for skin ailments. For over 2000 years people have taken advantage of the natural, outdoor health spa. The best-known side effect of this very salty water is that it is very buoyant. Floating and relaxing are supposed to be easy, but putting your feet back down on the seabed, less easy. A challenging and amusing way to enjoy an afternoon dip.



Petra - the “Rose Red City”

“Petra is one of the world’s biggest mysteries,” says one of the Jordanian guides, “and 65 per cent of Petra is still underneath our feet, hidden by dust.”

The UNESCO World Heritage site of Petra has been well documented and written about because it is such an amazing experience. Nothing really prepares you for your visit. The 2 km walk along Al Siq between the towering rose red rock carvings and hollowed out tombs, gives you time to imagine the Silk Road traders walking along the same route 2000 years ago, to the capital of the Nabatean Kingdom.

The sophisticated water system evolved over hundreds of years and was amazing in its skill and effectiveness. Water from natural springs and rainwater was stored in cisterns. An intricate and ingenious system of channels carved through the rock, and clay pipelines carried water throughout the city. It is estimated that up to 30,000 people had water all year, and could even cope with the arrival of large trade caravans.

Petra is a huge site and there are temples, tombs, monasteries and a theatre carved into the rock face, and guides, tourist, camels and horses. There is so much to see and learn, but however far you walk down the valley or up into the hills, you will end your visit knowing that you have been somewhere special.





Travelling to “The Golden Triangle of Jordan”, 4- Days Tour

The title and description of this 5-days tour was tantalizing and attracted two coach loads of conference attendees to go on the adventure.

Starting with a visit to Petra – “The Rose Red City, half as old as time”, which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and followed by the less well known, Little Petra.

Wadi Rum and the beautiful desert landscapes promised a memorable experience.

As a complete contrast we would travel to Aqaba, and then end the tour at the edge of the Dead Sea.

We left Amman for the three-hour drive to Petra, and there was plenty to see of the Jordanian landscape and interesting information provided by the excellent guides.



I am sure Petra has been on many people's wish list for years, and images and impressions formed in our minds, but I don't think anything prepares you for the wonder of this historic and archaeological city.

The path or "Al Siq" is almost 2 kilometres long and at times as narrow as 3 metres. The rose-coloured rocks surround you and tower above you making it feel like a fortress in places. It is possible to ride in a converted golf buggy, or on a camel, horse or donkey, but you can sense the history of the old trading routes and burial sites as you walk along the route. Camel trains, incense and spices must have created a heady cacophony of noises and smells.

After about 30 minutes you walk through a particularly narrow passage and catch a glimpse of tall carvings, and suddenly you come out into an area that is dominated by the spectacular Treasury Building, 24 metres wide and 37 metres high.

From there the walk becomes wider and opens into a valley that takes you past the Theatre, Royal Tombs, street of Facades, colonnaded street and many more features.

The historical site covers about 60 square kilometres, so there is more to see than is possible in a short visit, but it is breathtaking and a privilege to have seen and experienced.

Petra is a symbol of Jordan, as well as the country's most-visited tourist attraction, which has up to 1 million visitors a year.

Little Petra is also Nabatean, and lies just to the North of the main Petra site, but receives fewer visitors and appears calmer and more atmospheric. This may be because it is also known as Siq al-Barid, meaning the 'cold canyon', and it certainly felt cooler! It is thought to have housed traders on the Silk Road, and the buildings suggest that it was used by more affluent merchants, especially the Painted Room with its very rare ancient frescoes. Historically less is known, but it is a fascinating visit.

After those two remarkable places, we had a two-hour drive to digest what we had seen, and wonder what the desert trip would reveal.

Gradually the landscape changed and we were in the desert, beautiful red colours and distant hills, another UNESCO World Heritage site, Wadi Rum. It is also known as the Valley of the Moon and is a maze of monolithic sandstone and granite rockscapes. We were divided up into two different hotels/camps, and



prepared for our afternoon activities. Horse or camel ride or a 4x4 jeep tour. Many different cultures have inhabited the area, and we were able to see petroglyphs, inscriptions and temple ruins, as we explored the area in or on our chosen transport.

Just before sunset we were taken by the guides to a suitable position to watch the sun disappear behind the hills. I would like to say that it was romantic and peaceful, but in reality, there were many groups of tourists enjoying the changing colours and waiting for nightfall.

Back at the hotel and we were looking forward to Bedouin Zarb Dinner. When it comes to the culinary delights of the desert, the wadi is well-known for a meal that is cooked underground.

"Zarb is a centuries-old method of cooking, where the bedouins place food on coal and cover it for two to three hours," according to the guide.

Before it was served, we went and watched a pile of sand scraped to one side to reveal a carpet! More scraping and digging, and a lid appeared. When this was raised, two men grasped a metal bar and lifted a tower of shelves covered in vegetables, rice and chicken. Delicious – served with salads and breads and fruit and sweets. Before sleeping, there was an opportunity to sit outside and enjoy the expansive unpolluted skies.

Next morning was unfortunately rather windy so that the Hot Air Balloon trip was cancelled. Such a shame, as flying over desert is particularly enjoyable.

On the way to Aqaba, we had a quick stop at the Al Hijaz Railway. Quite bizarre to see a railway line and reconditioned steam train in the middle of a desert setting.



The journey south was quite short and it was interesting to see Eilat in Israel so close. Aqaba is Jordan's only coastal city, a strategic location at the northeastern tip of the Red Sea between the continents of Asia and Africa, and important port throughout thousands of years. It is considered the third part of the Golden Triangle.

During the afternoon we were taken on board a boat that took us on a short harbour tour.

The water is so deep and clean, that several species of coral can survive, so we boarded a smaller boat with underwater windows and were able to see a few examples. Next morning before our journey to the Dead Sea we stopped for a brief look at Aqaba Fort. It offers a glimpse into Jordan's history. Through the ages it has been used as a Pilgrimage stop for travelers, and as a military base for battles.

Finally, we arrived at the Dead Sea, and having found our hotel rooms, the next experience was to 'swim' in the 'salty lake'. At 430.5 metres below sea level, it attracts many visitors who are amazed and amused by trying to move in such 'dense' water.

Sadly, the Dead Sea is receding at a swift rate, the surface area having almost halved since 1930. Proposals and ideas continue to search for a solution.

We were taken to a special place to watch the golden hour and have dinner. Perched atop the edge of the Zara Mountain range cliffs, the Panorama Dead Sea Centre is famous for the stunning sunsets and excellent food.

A wonderful evening in a unique position with both new and old friends, made during the past 10 days.

Such memorable days. At the beginning of the Conference, we were promised that Jordan would entertain and look after us and they certainly lived up to that statement. ■

