

The Inaugural Performance Shagya Registry Inspection

Held at Run Along Farms in Geneseo, IL, USA April 5-7, 2013

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In July, 2012, the Performance Shagya-Arabian Registry (PShR) was accepted as a member of the International Shagya Araber Gesellschaft (ISG). As our celebration wound down, we looked back on the efforts that had brought us so far - - and realized that the real work had just begun! We were committed to holding an inspection and performance testing that would not only determine Shagya-Arabian breeding stock it would also showcase the Shagya-Arabian geldings and Shagya sport horses in North America and Canada. In addition, this venue would be open to all Shagya-Arabians and Shagya sport horses, even those not registered with the PShR.

A small committee kicked off the project in the fall, 2012. Most of us had never seen an inspection, let alone put one on. As they say, ignorance is bliss! But Linda Rudolphi had a vision, and under her leadership, we found our host - Julie Jackson-Biegert and her husband Doug Biegert own a beautiful, private farm that specializes in the raising, training and competing of purebred Arabian horses. Following the ISG-approved PShR ZBO (or breeding guidelines), the committee started planning the phases of the inspection: Veterinary examination, Inspection/Evaluation, Interior Test, Rideability evaluation, and Free Jumping test.



At this point in our story, I want to pause a moment to stress an important point. An inspection of this format had never been held in North America for Shagya-Arabians. The PShR uses a *performance based inspection* to determine breeding stock and recognize (and appreciate) the progeny resulting from performance breeding. Previously, breeding criteria in the US and Canada was based on conformation only. Judges would arrive at the inspection site, view and score the horses for conformation and gaits, and approve (or disapprove) the horses for breeding. The Performance Shagya-Arabian Registry has aligned with the ISG and uses a "European style" inspection and licensing system comprised of multiple test and standards. The mandatory requirements for breeding animals includes the presentation of the horse in-hand, mandatory SCID test for all purebred Arabians

seeking Shagya-Arabian breeding approval, free jumping, DNA must be on file, Interior test, rideability with test riders and an onsite veterinary exam. In addition to the mandatory requirements, all breeding animals must compete in their choice of competition. For example, mares seeking Book I placement they may either 1) complete 500 miles of distance riding, 2) place in the USDF All-Breed division at training level, compete at "E" level in eventing or jumping or obtain points as a meritorious mare.

The in-hand presentation includes the triangle as per the USDF specifications. In addition, horses are allowed to show at liberty. USDF criteria for in-hand presentation includes appropriate dress of the handler, horses well groomed, and a bridle on horses 2 years of age or older. The Interior Test is designed to determine the character and temperament of the horse in an unusual situation. The horse is scored on his willingness to walk beside the handler in an easily managed fashion. To complete the Rideability test, horses four years of age or older are ridden at a walk, trot and canter in the discipline style of the riders' choice. Each horse is ridden by the owner and two test riders. The judges and test riders score the horse based on their overall impression, willingness to work and temperament. The Free Jump, which is a jump chute consisting of three obstacles, in this order: a simple cross-rail, a vertical, and an oxer. The horse would be released into the chute, and the height and spread of the oxer would be increased at the discretion of the judge during the multiple runs through the course. The horse is evaluated on his bascule (well-arched back).



The significance of holding an inspection of this type is two-fold: First, it provides an opportunity to showcase the many talents of the Shagya-Arabian and Shagya Sporthorses and to promote the rare breed to the public. Second, it gives the PShR members and guests a chance to learn from expert European judges while enjoying time spent together with friends, old and new.

Back to our story. In December, a formal announcement of the event was sent via email to the PShR membership and posted on the website and Facebook page. A special invitation was extended to the President and Members of the ASAV (American Shagya-Arabian Verband) as well as all Shagya-Arabian owners to join us – to bring their horses and participate in the inspection or to just come, meet new friends and celebrate the Shagya-Arabian horse.



While we held our breath, hoping enough horses would register to make the event pay for itself, the committee designed and test ran the free jump course, created a marketing campaign, and met in Illinois to work on layout, logistics and the inspection schedule. Two amazing ISG judges agreed to be officials – Dr. Walter Huber, ISG Board member from Germany and Svetlozar Kastchiev, Stud Manager at the National Stud Kabiuk, in Shuman, Bulgaria. The event took shape - each horse would have a page with a brief story by their owner, a photo and their pedigree. A welcome letter by Anke Brander, a biography of each judge, and short story about the test riders and official veterinarian would be included. The program was more than paid for by over 20 sponsors, who placed ads, hung banners in the arena and managed vendor booths. We hired an artistic videographer to film a promotional video of the inspection and one of our members volunteered his time as official photographer. Of course, there was a blizzard of paperwork - - score sheets, certificates of completion, program pages, advertisements, arena layouts, veterinary protocol, etc. etc. etc.

As the event drew close, the committee finalized plans for stabling the 16 horses to be presented and food for the participants. We sent a last-minute packing list to the participants – warning them to bring clothing for rain/snow/sleet - - meanwhile, we prayed for sun and warm temps. We secured volunteers to scribe for the vet and judges, be in charge of paperwork, sell logo merchandise and maintain the cash box. Of course, as any event planner will tell you, the best laid plans often experience bumps in the road – and we had a big one. Just 10 days before the horses would arrive, our hostess, Julie had a bad accident. While out conditioning, Julie’s horse slipped and fell, landing on her and breaking her leg. Julie’s spirit never wavered - - Bring it on, she said.

And so we did – the committee arrived at Run Along Farms earlier than planned, gathered Linda’s family and friends to build temp stalls, set up the arena, and even found a motorized wheel chair so Julie could supervise. By the time the horses started arriving on Thursday, the free jump was up and Svetlo was fine-tuning the process while training our horses (and us!). The 3 day week-end flew by, with never a minute to spare. It was exhilarating to finally meet the people many of us had only known from emails and phone conversations. We worked, laughed, ate and enjoyed each other’s company. Dr. Huber said “. . . as I look out of the window I see people running everywhere, working hard and laughing . . . all are happy.” The horses proved over and over again in their cooperation and performance that our time was well spent to ensure the future of the breed for others to enjoy. The Shagya-Arabian mares were lovely examples of what is yet to come. The ladies also proved they are more than pretty faces with their jumping, riding and interior test. Each stood for an onsite vet exam ensuring the quality of future generations. Having the Shagya Sporthorses (outcrosses with at least 25% Shagya in their pedigree) was an excellent opportunity to visualize the positive influence the Shagya-Arabian has on other breeds. And our beloved Shagya-Arabian geldings, the true ambassadors of our breed, stole the show. They put their hearts into the jumping (at 39" some were not challenged), showed their willingness to work for various riders, and exhibited confidence going through the Interior test.



As the event drew to a close, we gathered the horses and their owners for the awards ceremony. Walter Huber and Svetlo Kastchiev complimented everyone on their first inspection, and shared thoughtful comments about how to improve the next time. We will be forever thankful to our judges. Many know Dr Huber, the worldwide Shagya-Arabian ambassador, who not only photographs and documents horses around the world, he enthusiastically rides the horses everywhere he goes. As the director of the Kabiuk State Stud, Mr. Kastchiev proved his expertise at breeding successful horses. In addition, as a FEI eventing and dressage judge, as well as FEI dressage rider, his knowledge of correct presentation of the horses, schooling over the jumps and attention to detail was invaluable, he is a natural teacher.

This was an historical step for the Shagya-Arabians in the United States and Canada. The PShR aligned our approval of breeding with the ISG performance standards used throughout history to develop this outstanding breed and also to make it a valuable outcross for other sport horse breeds. Along with historical standards, the PShR is looking to the future and incorporating modern concepts of breeding selection with includes the Interior test and the performance testing of mares. When people talk of the Shagya-Arabian in North America, we are sure they will give special recognition to the Performance Tested Shagya-Arabians. When sport horse breeds look to incorporate the traditional use of the Shagya-Arabian as an "improver" outcross, we are sure they will give special recognition to the Performance Tested Shagya-Arabians of the PShR.

