

Inspection at the Performance Shagya-Arabian Registry

The Performance Shagya-Arabian Registry held this year's inspection at the Stafford Farm in Pleasant Plains, Illinois on the 30th Sept. -1st of October 2017.

Altogether 7 horses, mares and geldings, were registered. The inspection included a veterinary examination, an exterior judgement, then free jumping, rideability test and interior test.

The organization was excellent and the Stafford family were excellent hosts. The farm is located near to Springfield, the state capital of Illinois. Springfield is a famous historical place in the United States, as the city is known as the home of Abraham Lincoln. Since the hosts had scheduled enough time on the first day of the inspection, and the veterinary test wasn't until the afternoon, we had the opportunity to visit the very informative Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in the morning.

In the afternoon, all the horses lined up for veterinary examination and all went through the proper tests by Dr. Scott Austin of the University of Illinois.

Most of the exams were on Saturday with the exterior judgement in the morning and the rideability test and the free jumping in the afternoon. The test rider was Martha Rattner, the 2015 Horseperson of the Year in the U.S. Inspection judges were Marie Johnson, "R" Judge for USDF and Judit Erzsébet Kovács, the registrar of the MALE (Society of the Hungarian Arabian Horse Breeders).

The horses were well prepared for the tests. They were very attentive to their handlers and did a good job during the in-hand showing. It was obvious to see that they were mostly ridden in endurance riding, but they also showed diligent cooperation in free jumping and in the rideability exercises. The tests were judged mostly within the category 'good' and all horses passed the inspection (refer to the table of inspection high point summary).

<http://performanceshagyaregistry.org/inspections/2017HighPointSummary.pdf>

The program included presentations for both evenings: the first evening Judit Kovács gave a short summary on the history of the Shagya-Arabians and on the following day Dr. Olivia Rudolphi and Martha Rattner presented on the events and their experiences at the Young Riders Endurance World Championships in Verona, Italy. Thereafter, as a surprise, the guests were offered Hungarian dishes at the Breeders' Evening.

As a part of education on the breed, PShR also organized a learner-judge course parallel the inspection, in which three enthusiastic learner-judges took part: Lucy Stafford, Sherry Aune and Alex Uspenski. Before the Inspection, a large booklet was prepared so that the Learner Judges would be familiar with Inspection procedures and scoring.

On Sunday Oct. 1, the Interior Test was held. The PShR had already included this test into the program of the previous inspections according to the recommendations of the ISG. Accordingly, a beautiful obstacle course was built with a pallet, cordon line, some umbrellas, a drum, with some contact obstacles and even a pool with water (which was optional). The horses performed the course mostly calm, with trust towards their handlers.

This was followed by the presentation of the PShR Specialty Plus awards. Information may be found on the PShR website.

Shagya-Arabians are known as elegant riding horses with endurance and good rideability. In the US they prove that with their results: the Shagya Sporthorse mare Lily Creek Rhythm received the special award for a lifetime performance of 1600 distance miles (2575 km!). Owner and rider of this high-performing mare is Sherry Aune. The PShR recognizes Shagya Sporthorses (must be 25% Shagya-Arabian) in order to help promote and educate people on the benefits of the Shagya-Arabian.



Sherry Aune with Lily Creek Rhythm - Photo: Tim Kemmis

Another outstanding sport achievement was recognized for the Shagya-Arabian gelding SA Te Jat. This horse, owned by Chris and Marty Power, has already made more than 3000 miles (4830 km!) in endurance riding competition.



Marty Power with SA Te Jat - Photo: Tim Kemmis

The most beautiful of these performances was to see that both horses were in a good physical condition as well as were in good temperament. For me, this was a sign of species-appropriate horse treatment and usage, on which the Members of the PShR attach great importance. Performance testing is emphasized in the goals of the PShR – thus, the horses have a chance to show their genetic potential, including the geldings and sporthorse outcrosses.

Throughout the weekend, time was allowed for educational discussion and questions from the participants. The Learner Judges were very enthusiastic about the opportunity to learn from the experienced staff of judges available.

After lunch, the participants left for home with their horses – since they all arrived to the inspection from a greater distance, as far away as six hours of driving. It was a thoroughly prepared and excellently organized inspection where all the Team Members of the PShR did their best. I had the impression that the Shagya-Arabians and the Shagya sporthorses in the U.S. have a good and well deserved reputation.

It was nice to see that the quality of the Shagya-Arabians in the U.S. is very much at the same level as it is in Europe. It particularly praises the work of the breeders, if we just think on the fact that the breeding stock and the number of the stallions are much smaller overseas.



Photo: Tim Kemmis

I took the opportunity to inquire about what could be the biggest support for U.S. breeders from Europe and I've learned the following:

First, communication was mentioned: they would like to read more specialized breeding literature in English. They would be interested in bloodlines, the genetic results of melanoma research, the latest news on inspections and shows in Europe, and notice of upcoming events to allow for trip planning from the U.S.

They also mentioned updating communication, such as organizing video conferences, posting up-to-date information on Facebook, and mobile-friendly websites where breeders could be educated, inspection results presented along with photos, and other news. The PShR would like to promote the ISG and the international efforts of all the ISG members to produce the lovely Shagya-Arabian. At present, the ISG is largely unknown in the U.S. and Canada.

From the breeding perspective it is a challenge to expand the selection of stallions in the U.S. due to the limited gene pool. So as to make this possible, the PShR has set up a kind of databank for frozen semen on the PShR website. There are two categories: one for the stallions that already have frozen semen approved for U.S. import and the second is for stallions whose owners would be willing to process frozen semen for U.S. importation if there was interest. It could be a modern and quick solution if more stallion owners in Europe were interested.

I hope that it can be done and also the American breeders could have a wider base for stallions - because they deserve it!

Judit Erzsébet Kovács