

“Where a wise woman is not valued,
wisdom is lost.”

Beauty, Breeding and Brainstorming

The Female Perspective

By **Monika Savier**

Photos: Monika Savier, Private Archive

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Six women sharing their thoughts. Their experience, wisdom, and passion for the Arabian horse has led to these interesting discussions.

Breeding Arabian horses is an endless fusion of love, education, hard work, hope, vision of the future, business, marketing, and the needs of modern digitalisation, to achieve the right blend for success. Elder breeders began with an apprenticeship of learning animal management, riding, natural breeding, and agriculture in a rural environment.

Whereas today's breeders require quicker results, meaning that knowledge tends to come from reproduction technology and digital social media communications.

Today the modern 'need for speed' of results has led more to a situation akin to gambling, with few winners and many losers. The following three interviews may give present day breeders 'Food for thought,' and ideas for ways to succeed.

Susan Carden



“Today’s show ring is not where to learn about Arabian horses”.

Monika Savier talks with Cynthia Culbertson, Jennifer Ogden and Eileen Verdieck **in Doha.**

Monika: We are all veterans in the show scene and breeder’s world. Let’s reflect about what has changed in this century and why?

Eileen: I think the first major change leading us to today was about 25 - 30 years ago when breeders from around the world started to purchase and import some of the best SE horses from the United States and Europe to the Gulf and Middle East Region. This caused each country to lose diversity in an already closed gene pool. Many of the great SE breeders around the world, were aging out, which caused many valuable bloodlines to be lost to many countries.

Cynthia: I think Eileen has a point regarding diversity. I would say that in a broader sense, globalization has changed the show scene considerably. This has often meant that the same horses win in many countries, and while more people see them, the downside has been a loss of diversity. When the same sire and dam lines are suddenly popular around the world, everyone becomes attuned to that look because it is winning, and then begins breeding towards it. There has always been diverse type within the breed, and to me this is an essential element that needs to be sustained.

Jennifer: I don’t think it’s the only thing that’s caused the loss of diversity. I think that we have superstar horses that everybody wants to breed to and the use of artificial breeding has had a big effect.

Monika: But can we believe that these ‘superstars’ became superstars in a selective way?

Eileen: Some of them, but most become superstars due to their show ring success or favoured bloodlines

and new breeders breed to them sometimes not really studying if that stallion is the correct choice for their mare(s).

Jennifer: Some are, for sure. For me, the biggest worry is the lack of diversity, and the fact that our colts are worthless, because everybody wants to breed to a ‘superstar’ – the Show ring or marketing perception has made them a Superstar - and I feel that is the biggest change to our industry in the last 10 years, and the biggest challenge.

Cynthia: I think that people who have observed great breeders and great horses over time, certainly understand many of our greatest breeding horses would never have necessarily been a champion show horse. So, to not give a chance to some of these horses simply because they didn’t win big in the show ring,



Jennifer Ogden, Cynthia Culbertson, Eileen Verdieck, Monika Savier

or don't fit a narrow definition of type, is really losing some wonderful horses that might be great sires of champions and superior contributors to the breed.

Jennifer: Sometimes the best and the most beautiful mares will not produce as well as the plainer sister. Many of the great breeders of the past understood this and gave value to these mares, as a result some of the greatest horses have been then result of these breeding choices. Unfortunately, these days it seems for many people that it is more about the show win and these horses that do not make the show ring become obsolete or of no or little value.

Eileen: You know, when I started a long time ago, before Imperial, I got involved with Straight Egyptians, they were very rare, for any quality, you had to pay a pretty good amount of money for just a breeding horse much less a show horse. We had to really travel and study to learn as much as we could to be successful breeders and we learned to value a breeding horse actually more than a show horse as most breeders could only afford breeding quality.



Eileen, Jennifer, Cornelia

I worry now that not enough breeders believe in the value of a breeding horse, that isn't a show horse. So, it creates less diversity as there is less appreciation of non-show horses. Many of the horses that I've been lucky to breed were definitely not stellar horses, but it made us very responsible about how we bred.



The women interviewed expressed concern about the harsh presentation of some horses in the stand-up pose at shows. In their view, while some trainers use gentler methods, others employ considerably harder techniques. Overall, there's a consensus among the women for a shift towards a more relaxed approach, benefiting the horse's well-being and the accuracy of assessment.



Eileen, speaker during the presentation at Doha Stud

We had to think and study and not just blindly follow. And that's what I probably miss the most, from when I got involved in the early 70's. You had all these independent breeders that were very independent thinkers, they didn't just follow the other breeders without learning as much as they could. At that time those breeders gave us diversity which allowed more choices or colours on their pallets to paint a masterpiece.

Jennifer: But we're losing many breeders.

Monika: We also lose breeders because many are not able to participate on the economic level, which is needed to win a show.

There is a parallel market of, let me say, romantic losers. For instance, like me, because I say, "Oh, in addition to all my horse show costs, I cannot buy a VIP table and two pages of advertisement in the programme."

I think that the one thing that strongly influences opinion about show horses, is the media world with which people who have the money can produce a vision of a horse. Now with artificial intelligence, it's even worse.

Eileen: Oh, I agree. I agree with that to a degree.

Monika: What can breeders do to get visibility in a low key way?

Eileen: Go see the horse and as many of its ancestors on descendants or ask someone who is more experienced and knowledgeable for advice.



Empowering woman uniting through the Arabian Horse. Jennifer Ogden, Eileen Verdick, Michelle Lando, Shari Williams, Judith Forbis, Cynthia Culbertson, Karen Kasper

Jennifer: Exactly. I remember when I was breeding, I would never breed to a stallion without going and seeing it and seeing the progeny, and I studied the pedigrees to ensure they would be a complimentary breeding choice for my mares, not just on phenotype, but also pedigree. Of course, I took risks on young stallions, but I always assessed both the parents and grandparents to try and understand the family traits. This often involved even more travel, I learnt so much by doing this, visiting other breeding programs is the best learning curve, plus it had an added advantage of being a social thing too - that was a big part...

Monika: Everyone is talking about the stallions and never the mares they ask "from which sire is that mare or foal?" that's always the first question. Experienced breeders know the mare is more important.

Eileen: I believe and respect the mare more than the stallion. The broodmare is the foundation where the stallion should be used to compliment the mare.

Jennifer: Yes, it's a mare's world.

Cynthia: And the other thing I would add is that horse breeding is a long-term generational endeavour. Today, we are in a world where so many are used to an instant result. None of us are immune to wanting instant gratification, but breeding horses is the polar opposite of that.

I would love to see people think in terms of generations in breeding - to be willing to say "Yes, in the first

generation I may lose that particular head that people like, and the result won't win in the show ring today, but in future generations I will move forward with horses that can be successful and still be contributors to the breed in a positive way."

Jennifer: In my own breeding program, I had developed free-moving shoulders and large elastic nostrils, low-set eyes, and curly ears. When looking for an outcross, I was always scared to detract from these traits that I had worked years for, but I soon learned that breeding was often about pieces of perfection. Sometimes I had to make sacrifices and understand that you must step backwards to take that step forward. For instance, I needed to clean up the throats a little more, I had to lose on some of the traits I desired to get what I needed or to bring in that family trait within the pedigree. As Cynthia says, many people want that immediate result, and will only breed the best of the best to the best of the best without understanding what lies beneath within the pedigree and it doesn't always work, in my opinion to be a true breeder you must be patient.

Eileen: Also genetically, that doesn't always work.

Monika: Why are there not more women handlers? I mean, wouldn't they do a good job?

Eileen: Well, I was a handler in my earlier days but there are not many women trainers in the world today.

Monika: I know, you were one of the very rare ones.

Eileen: Thank you, Monika. Well, not in our country. You had more women handlers in Europe. When I was training in the United States, there were only two professional female halter handlers. I was surprised how many female handlers there were in Europe in the 80's & 90's. There were many. But now they're gone too.

Monika: No, they're not gone, but being a woman they don't have clients from the Middle East, I suppose.

Jennifer: Some female handlers can be tough, too. It's not all the men.



MoSa



Eileen: Well, I think we all grow and change. The fun thing was going to Europe and the Middle East. The Middle East didn't exist at that point. It was only Europe, in terms of breeding Arabian horses and showing them.

As Americans, who were judged on the stand-up, as a performance class, we found that we could be softer in the stand-up especially if you were going to get a good trot too.

Monika: In Europe, the USA and Australia, it is a matter of course that women ride and many also breed horses. Will breeding change as the focus is now on the Middle East? Do women there financially and culturally have little opportunity to have their own stud?

Do you see a difference in the method and the result when women are responsible for their own stud?

Jennifer: There absolutely are woman breeders and Arab women endurance riders in the Middle East, you do not always get to meet them due to cultural differences, but they exist. Many wives also have an invested interest and are very involved. Women are probably more passionate and to be honest it is the passion that will always make the difference.

Cynthia: I can't speak to all of the countries in the Middle East, but in Egypt and the Arabian Gulf, there have always been women breeders and riders. Perhaps not as visible, but they are dedicated and passionate. In Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, in particular,

I have met several astute women breeders, and I know of breeders in the other Gulf countries as well. Sometimes I believe the women are perhaps more likely to get joy from riding and breeding than competition, so you don't necessarily meet these women when you are an international guest at a show. There can be no doubt that women around the world have contributed tremendously when it comes to breeding. In the U.S., for example, you could make a case that the Arabian horse community has so many women we could use a few more men for balance! In the Middle East and Arabian Gulf there are perhaps some cultural considerations as to visibility, but certainly there is financial opportunity in the Gulf!

To me, the Arabian is now a global horse. There are always cycles. But I think extreme imbalances, whether gender or regional, or bloodlines, or whatever, can pose a danger to the breed. Once the Arabian war horse left the desert, an unbroken chain of breeders, both women and men, royalty and commoners, governments, business people and farmers, teachers and artists have all had a role in sustaining the breed.

Monika: What about the need of the American stand-up, which slowly came to Europe at the turn of the century and was finally business as usual by the ECAHO shows as a criterion for scoring.

In the meantime, most breeders and also judges want to get away from it because in most cases stand-up training has nothing to do with horsemanship.

Cynthia: I truly believe that the "frozen" stand-up

pose, in general, cannot be achieved without abusive techniques and generating fear in the horse. When a horse is afraid it loses much of the charisma and character for which the breed is renowned. There has to be a better way! Arabian horses were shown all over the world before this particular “stand-up” was developed, and many of us experience unforgettable moments with superstar horses shown without this narrowly defined tense position.

Jennifer: I have had the good fortune of working with trainers that use positive reinforcement to train, rather than negative... you can train a horse for a pose without cruelty, but it takes much longer, and we must remember that often the trainer is under enormous pressure to get results and in a short period of time, it

usually is a combination of the trainer and the owner impatience and their need for that win.

Eileen: It would be lovely if all the judges, breeders, owners and handlers could all be on the same page as to what is the best way to show horses worldwide and do what is best that can be done for the benefit of the horse.

Monika: What can we propose for the future of a fair show business for horses, breeders, and owners? How can we change selection criteria to return to healthy horses with beauty and functionality?

Jennifer: There’s been a lot of discussion about this, and I’ve never come to an answer.



MoSa



Cynthia: I would love to find a competition that rewards all the traits that made the Arabian horse successful as a breed for thousands of years. And it's not just the head. Maybe points, not only for conformation and type, but for the first horse to notice something in the distance, points for endurance, loyalty to rider, being ridden in various disciplines, moving freely, etc. There are some of interesting examples with other breeds such as warmbloods, where the horse is loose for an evaluation of motion. The show ring today is narrowly focused and this problem is difficult to solve instantly. But we used to have classes in versatility, which were terrific, and they disappeared. They were very interesting, because the horse had to stand up and be beautiful and typey, but also had to show capability under saddle. While you could not do this for every horse at every show, if you brought a class back with high prizes and recognition, at least some horses could be recognized as representing the breed in all of its essential characteristics.

Eileen: I think breeding complete horses that are also good riding horses are unappreciated in most countries.

Jennifer: Riding, yeah. We need to encourage. I tried very hard here.

Monika: Riding helps to evaluate functionality and character of the horse.

Jennifer: Functionality and character. Functionality must be a part.

Monika: Many trainers say, "Don't ride the horse", otherwise it loses the charismatic movement for the show ring.

The modern owner often has no idea about horses, agriculture, feeding, behaviour, and welfare, for examples. They just give it to a trainer, and it becomes a projection of their vanity. They don't want to know what happens; they just want to win.

When I talk with trainers, they say, the client wants it like that. I must make a fast-track to success.

Jennifer: But we have handed our reins over to the trainer, the trainer along with the judges control the whole show scene. I'm not picking on trainers as it is us the breeders that have put them there, I guess with a huge desire to win, but at the end of the day it comes back to money, and I guess glory and vanity to agree. Of course, who doesn't love to win.... But I think for the sake of the breed, the breeder does need to take back hold of the reins.

Eileen: Unfortunately, since halter classes are the only classes for Arabian horses in most horse show in the world, there is no classes to showcase the ridden horse. Having classes that celebrate the ridden Arabian would give jobs to the horses that are not superstar halter show horses I believe every breeder should remember that that, before any shows existed the Arabian horse was first and foremost a ridden horse.

Jennifer: There is no trainer without an owner. It's not that.



Doha City: Sky Line of the West Bay and the Museum of Islamic Art



The responsibility must come back to the breeder and the owner. They must learn, and educate themselves on form to function, this is paramount, particularly for our judges as well. The lack of functionality, and where serious legs faults are ignored and an extreme feature takes precedence, it sends the wrong message to the people, and this really does frighten me for the future of Arabian horse as a breed.

Eileen: It's pretty bad.

Jennifer: Because I see functionality is going 100% going backwards. A lot of the current problems are a result of what is happening in the centre ring, all judges must start scoring what is in front of them, and use the entire scorecard range, if a horse has bad legs judge it as so, if it has great legs judge it as so... not all horses have legs scores between 14 and 16.5....I am a firm believer type is of the utmost importance, but type is not limited to head and neck, it is hair and skin quality, the overall the picture the horse makes and what separates it from other breeds, it is not limited to an extreme head or show attitude, although that is part of it.... But no legs no horse.

Eileen: Or whoever is bringing the horse in, or whoever is sponsoring the show. There are just too many other things that are stepping into the overall part of the horse. But it's true. There are sponsorships all over the world. And it's being done.

Jennifer: I don't know what the answer is.

Cynthia: I really don't. I hate to hear someone say, don't ride the horse. Two-thirds of the known world at one time was conquered on the backs of Arabian horses. If you're a rider, you know how special they are under saddle. A good Arabian horse is just a delight to ride over other breeds. And to lose that is to lose something that's so precious. I don't think we're at that point, but we are close. Obviously, there are breeders still out there in the riding disciplines. But the capability to be ridden should be a characteristic of all good Arabian horses. And the thing is, the Arabian horses of the past were highly functional riding horses and were still the most beautiful horses in the world.

Jennifer: And it's possible for them to do both.

Monika: Should we question if a show is an environment to help the breeders to select a breeding horse? A stallion, for instance.

I mean, is the show able, with this two-minute stand-up and a trot which goes or does not go at that moment, because the disco music is so loud, to select a winner or a loser or inform about reproduction? Isn't that so vulnerable?

Cynthia: That's a personal decision. But in my own experience, I would never select a breeding horse based on its show ring success. I would select based on individual attributes I desired in my breeding program, the horse's bloodlines, both sire and dam, and the contributions of its family to the breed.

Jennifer: And not just that. You must study the pedigrees. Look, pedigrees are a huge part of breeding selection. I'm not saying it's everything, of course. But it is what lies within the pedigree, what family traits are within that pedigree.

In my opinion good breeding choices are often from ying and yang selections. You must understand what strengths and weaknesses are within your mare's pedigree, this is important, it is not just about the horse itself, then choose a stud that's strength within his pedigree are your mares weaknesses and vice versa.

Eileen: And too much like-to-like breeding

Jennifer: Like-to-like happens, and this is where the functionality is going out the window, I really feel.

Eileen: It all boils down to the lack of diversity, lack of use of the horse. Because what happens is, no matter how good a breeder, you're going to be lucky to have 5% of your horses able to be competitive, no matter how big or how small you are.

And then what happens to the rest? That's why breeding for functionality as well as type is so important. It can be difficult, but I believe very rewarding.

Jennifer: Not every horse born is going to be a superstar show horse. It's just what do we do with horses that do not make as a show horse or breeding



stallion. It worries me. I look at us 20 years ago in Australia, I remember when Eagleridge Passionata won, there were something like 60- 70 yearling fillies in her class. Now, you might be lucky if there is 5 –10 fillies in a class, but the performance is still going well. If performance is promoted it gives a purpose for our stallions and mares that do not make the grade as a breeding horse or halter horse.

Cynthia: In this changing world, horse breeding is challenging because we have expanding urbanization across the globe. It's very costly to have horses. Yet at

the same time science is telling us about the benefits of the human connection with horses. We now have data about autism, PTSD, etc. and how horses are helpful to people with those challenges.

And what horse is the best at relating to humans? The one that's been closest to humans for centuries – the Arabian. So, I think people in this world are going to crave that connection with the horse more than ever. If you were marketing the Arabian horse, it is the horse with that perfect connection – a desire to be with and please humans. But remember, we see nothing of that connection in a show ring atmosphere.



Jennifer: Eileen and I were talking about this today. We were just saying how no other horse has a connection with humans like the Arabian horse. And this is an area that we need to promote and push.

Eileen: You don't have to have all those things, but the horse is more relevant than ever for what they can do for us. If you become part of the Arabian horse activities, whatever they may be, they're going to make you a better human being. You can truly learn and become more aware of things that you didn't pay attention to before, such as being more aware of your body language and intent which helps you with how you behave to others not just horses. You respect things differently. It's such a positive, positive thing.

Cynthia: It would be nice to have an Arabian horse experience that didn't involve a whip.

Jennifer: I know the whip is supposed to be just an extension of your arm, unfortunately some do not understand this.

Monika: Isn't that also what horse men often say, "Ah, this is a spoiled woman's horse," when a horse is loved and cared for. They even give disrespect, you know, because they mainly want to have the horse submissive. But during the times of cavalry the horses have been their partners, they loved their horses and treated them very well because their lives were depending on a good steed. Napoleon's cavalry went with 260,000 horses to Moscow. You can imagine when your horse was lame, you had to go home by foot.

Eileen: I think that training a horse should be the balance of boundaries, respect and empathy.

Cynthia: It was the women; essentially the family who took care of the horses for centuries in their homelands.

Monika: But now in the show business, it's all about beauty which becomes a reflection of vanity.

Jennifer: But not for everyone.

Cynthia: I would say that's always been a problem. This is not new. They've always been that instrument.

Jennifer: Yes, that is not a new thing. And it's not just for this region. It's everywhere. I mean, getting a new horse, back, you know, 100 years ago, a beautiful horse was like getting a new Ferrari today, you know. "I think I would look good in a Ferrari". Lol – that's not changed!

Monika: Yes, in ancient times the horse was the fastest way to move forward.

Eileen: We teach so much with the HoofbeatZ program, which I developed over 20 years ago, which is focused on inviting newcomers to become involved with the Arabian horse. HoofbeatZ really focuses on educating the horse and the human to understand our differences and learn to be able to communicate

with the horse using their language instead of making them have to only use ours. As far as, "Oh, this is a woman's horse". The problem is many women have trouble with boundaries in their life and some horses need clear and fair boundaries.

Working with a horse that weighs three times what you weigh can be risky unless there is very clear communication. A horse knows how to be a horse. We need to learn how horses think and behave to truly have a solid partnership.

You must be able to explain to the horse, no, you don't jump on me because you're scared. What matters most is the horse's safety and it will follow where you lead if it trusts you.

Jennifer: You know, there was a famous horseman in Australia called Jim Wilton. You cannot believe what this man did, he taught horses to stand on a small tripod, and he and his dog would stand on their back and crack whips... He did circus acts all without any halters in open areas of the showgrounds, he had a bond with horses like I have never seen before or since. And the most important message to the people was that the horse bases everything on flight and fear. In his training methods the first thing he did, was teach the horse not to be frightened, he desensitized them. He always said there is no such thing as a bad horse only a misunderstood horse, and I know this to be true. He was a teacher of many world renown horsemen including Steve Brady. I was so fortunate to have learnt from him also as a young girl, his lessons have stayed with me for life.





It was not just the food that left a lasting impression; it was the atmosphere of friendship that made the event truly exceptional



Jennifer Ogden, Eileen Verdieck, Ina and Leon Botha

Monika: They are flight animals that we have to convince to stay with us.

Jennifer: And when they attack, it always comes from fear.

Monika: you see a lot of fear in the ring. The show stand-up is a problem, especially for proud stallions, they are pulled by the halter and backed on the chest with the whip. This is a double bind that the stallions tolerate the least and some become attack animals.

Jennifer: I can name you trainers that can teach without fear. They base everything on a reward system using positive reinforcement. Sure, there are some tough trainers, but I would never allow it. I never allowed anyone to treat my horses badly. And when people come and visit us at home, they can't believe that our stallions all live together. Calm, peaceful, touching over the doors. It all comes back down to how you manage them.

Monika: That's fantastic Jennifer, I can imagine.

Eileen: The whole world has changed for the today's horse. They used to walk about 16 miles a day, forging for food. They would munch as they went a little bit here and there, a lot of small bites of food, but now even under the best care and intentions it's very hard for them to eat many small meals every day and be able to be turned out enough in many places.

Monika: Should we try to find and develop more alternatives to the showground?

For instance, open houses where people come together.

Eileen: And the community is super important. Right now, when I left Dubai, with HoofbeatZ, a study had just come out from England, about 8-10 years ago, that the number one killer of women over 60yr had moved from all the usual problems of heart disease and smoking etc, to loneliness. With that in mind— we all could use more opportunities to spend more time in a community with like-minded people.

Monika: Yes of course, that's why humans are social animals who always try to eat together, like the horses.

Eileen: Yes, the lack of the community nowadays is what I really miss most from the past.

Jennifer: How much healthier would it be, if we could just go and visit? As Eileen said earlier the horses are all spread out all over the world, a big percentage of the best of the horses have come here.

Monika: Since Covid Lock Down, breeders mainly don't visit stud farms anymore, but send a broker, whilst staying at home, looking on the mobile, and watching video clips of horses at the Shows on live stream.... communication is now digitalized.

Cynthia: Almost everyone has heard me say this – a term I despise when it comes to Arabian horses is “industry.” As I grew up around Arabian horses, none of the great breeders ever, ever called it an “industry”. I think we should find a better word, a softer word.



Cynthia Culbertson during an Interview with "Arabian Insider"



Jennifer and Eileen

The Arabian horse "community". The Arabian horse "business". Something other than "industry" which brings to mind manufacturing, while the horse is a living creature. So, I always try to say "community" or "horse breeding" and avoid that word "industry" and not give power to that concept.

Monika: Modern breeding has become a question of business, markets, piloted start-ups, all digitalized. What can we still suggest to new breeders? We cannot turn the wheel back.

Jennifer: New breeders coming in, if they can't visit, which is obviously the best way, go to as many Shows as possible, mark in the catalogues what your preferences are. Forget what the judges are doing, forget who the winners are. Take notes of what catches your eye, and what meets your interpretation and understanding of what an Arabian horse should like, take note of the pedigrees. Then when you have a clear understanding of your taste and what you prefer, try to visit those farms or breeders of those horses you prefer.

Monika: In the farms?

Jennifer: Yes, in the farms. But I understand that's not always possible.

Cynthia: I agree with what's being said. I think the farm is the best place to learn about horses, not the show ring. And again, we have all experienced the fourth-place filly growing up to be one of the greatest

broodmares of her era. Or one that was not shown. So, I think the farm and talking to the breeder is how to experience the horse and see what you like. And the other thing I would say is we need some people to be really brave to take those steps and be different. Remember when the Egyptian Arabians arrived in the West, and there were very few that became the start for many waves of imports. This could also be said of Polish, Spanish, Russian etc. I'm going to speak about the Egyptians because I remember when they first came to the United States, they were completely different.

They didn't look like anything in the show ring. So to show you essentially ran the risk of last or first. It takes some brave people to develop a good eye, take some bold steps, think about challenges and diversity and so on, and be prepared to hang in there well over time. And I know that's hard.

Jennifer: And don't let a show ring win or loss affect you.

Cynthia: No, don't let a show ring loss affect you. Shows are valuable to look at your horse against other horses and honestly evaluate where you are going with your program. I know you're never going to get rid of competition, but I think it's fun to gather people, haul the horses to a convenient location, bring some judges over, and evaluate the horses in a community environment. I certainly understand that competition is an important aspect, but I think there are other ways to sustain the breed. The bottom line to me is that today's show ring is not where to learn about Arabian horses.

Jennifer: I agree with Cynthia, the show ring is not where to learn about Arabian horses, as nothing teaches you more about them than the horse itself, spend time with your horses, put your hands on them, the horse will teach you almost everything you need to know. Sometimes even the most beautiful horse is not always a show horse, if they do not like to show then they will not win. If you know your horses, you will know this. The show ring can be a stressful place not just for horses but also humans.

Eileen: I think what's most important is education, education, education, but then travel and learn. Back before artificial insemination, we had to send all our mares away for breeding. I think that there just needs to be more independent thought. Don't follow

the herd. Really, one different bloodline can totally change a breeding program in such a quick period if it's done and used wisely.

I travel all over the world evaluating horses and learning as much as I can. The most obvious problem I see is the lack of diversity in the bloodlines of the modern SE horse.

That is a massive thing for people to look at – the whole horse, not just breeding the head or the charisma or whatever your fancy is – it's the whole horse. That's what I would love to see again.

Monika: Thank you, dear ladies. I hope this discussion will encourage other breeders to carry on the debate for the benefit of our Arabian horses and to secure their future.



Cynthia Culbertson holds a degree in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures and has written extensively about the Arabian horse as a contributor to international equine media, editor, and as author of her own books. She has been a lecturer in more than ten countries and has scripted and narrated multiple educational videos about the breed. Cynthia served as a co-curator of the first museum exhibition devoted to Arabian horses and has also been a consultant for the equine components of many other art, film and museum projects around the world. She has a particular passion for the Straight Egyptian Arabian and has served on the board of both The Pyramid Society and the Pyramid Foundation.



Jennifer Ogden is an accomplished breeder of the Arabian horse; she loves all Arabian horses but has a special place in her heart for the straight Egyptian. Spending her entire life living with and caring for horses, she is a horse listener with strong advocacy for better horsemanship, believing that they can be the key to understanding ourselves and in turn much more about the world around us. This has given her an added advantage in her photography "Capturing the grace and majesty of equine beauty through the lens, Jennifer is a world-renowned horse photographer transforming moments into timeless art, showcasing the extraordinary connection between horses and humanity."
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Monika Savier, studied at the Free University of Berlin. She has lived in Italy since 1985 and worked in many countries around the world as an EU researcher. In 1988 she founded Tre Balzane stud, breeding straight Egyptian Arabians as a hobby. In 1995, she published the Italian edition of the Asil Arabian book on behalf of the Asil Club and wrote a considerable number of articles for renowned international Arabian Horse media such as Tutto Arabi, Equus Arabians, Bait Al Arab Newsletter and other. In 2013 she published the book The Arabian Horse of Dr. Nagel in three languages. For more than 15 years she has been staff writer of the Desert Heritage Magazine.
www.tre-balzane.it



Eileen Verdieck has been a professional horsewoman for over 50 years. Throughout her career, she has been a pioneer in the Arabian horse Industry. As an international trainer, judge, and consultant, Eileen has numerous prestigious international awards and credits. She has won various championships at world level. She was also named three times Arabian Horse Woman of the Year for Halter as well as being inducted in the Arabian Professional Hall of Fame in 2012. In addition, she was the first woman to win the Arabian US National Champion Reining Class. Over the last 15 years Eileen has founded and is actively promoting HoofbeatZ™, which is an innovative programme designed to bring horses and humans together in new, affordable, entertaining and safe ways that are designed to broaden the base of equine enthusiasts.
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“No Breeder is an Island”

Monika Savier asks some questions to Judith Forbis, the American icon of Straight Egyptian horse breeding.



You’ve noted that the studs in the Arab world have been able to implement a prosperous breeding programme through their ability to listen, to learn and to buy some very good Egyptian brood mares and stallions. In your opinion, what can these studs further do to enhance their breeding programs, in present day circumstances?

Judith F.: Breeders need to open their minds to the broader gene pool that is defined as Straight Egyptian by the Pyramid Society. Some Straight Egyptian Arabian horses which could offer useful outcrosses to highly inbred stock, have been discriminated against for various reasons: selfish marketing purposes; based simply on a poor photograph of a horse; accepting somebody else’s opinion (follow the leader) rather than on common sense and proven research. This has caused divisiveness within the breed that must pass away. Many ancestors have been accepted on faith alone (some Inshass or desert-bred RAS horses for example). On the other hand, many World Championships have been won by horses whose vilified ancestors are better documented than those accepted “on faith.”

Ansata has successfully used some of these vilified horses in its breeding program - as confirmed in my book, *Authentic Arabian Bloodstock Volume II*. We never discriminated in using any bloodlines that fit our program and the Pyramid Society’s definition of a Straight Egyptian Arabian Horse as listed in the Pyramid Society Stud Book. No breeder is an island, and some horses one might initially reject in a breeding program may later become useful - or needed.

Events with Arabian horses, regardless of the sport, used to be enormously important for social cohesion

between breeders, the exchange of ideas and horses, celebrating together, making deals and much more. This analogue world has been superseded by digital communication through social media and live streams.

Do we need to go back to direct communication between us, “coming together”? Are today’s shows suitable for this? How do they have to change to bring people together again, thanks to their love for the Arabian horse?

Judith F.: Social media has been a blessing and a cursing. Nothing is better than face-to-face contact with breeders and horsemen. In the past people brought their mares to the stallion. This afforded social as well as educational contact. However, outside mares sometimes brought in disease. AI made it easier and cheaper than shipping mares and stopped hauling stress on them, but it virtually eliminated social and educational contact with stallion and mare owners

Horse shows in the 50’s and 60’s and later IAHA’s Arabian Horse Fairs, The Egyptian Events, and Pyramid Society Breeders Conferences brought people together. Today’s horse shows provide some ambiance but they are competitive activities and the atmosphere is not the same as when breeders and Arabian horse lovers meet on focused social and educational affairs - away from shows.

The annual Egyptian Event in Kentucky began as a wonderful fraternal and educational gathering, but it primarily became a horse show and lost its purpose. Dividing time between show schedules and educational/social activities doesn’t work - the concentration is on one and not the other. I recently participated in a seminar at a major show and was given



15 minutes, as were the other speakers, to talk about “breeding and judging” within an hour! Advertisement about the seminar was inadequate and conflicted with other horse show activities. Thoughtfully organized educational workshops and social gathering activities need to be developed worldwide. Part of the fun in breeding horses is getting together with other breeders, sharing experiences and learning.



Judith Forbis at Al Rayyan Farm

Are women the better breeders? Where are their big points?

Judith F: From time immemorial women have played the most important role in Arabian horse history: caring for mares and foals in the tents and after the raids and wars.

Who can forget Lady Anne Blunt’s amazing journeys as documented in *Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates and Pilgrimage to Nejd* - as well as her unique contribution to Egypt and England as a breeder. There are few, if any, Arabians today that don’t carry Blunt or Lady Wentworth’s Crabbet bloodlines.

In the golden years of the Arabian horse in America, women were the primary breeders: Bazy Tankersley, Tish Hewitt, Garth Buchanaan, Alice Payne, to name a few icons. Later came my Ansata Arabian Stud, Barbara Griffith’s Imperial Stud, Lee Romney’s Somerset Farm, Becky Rogers Kehilan Farm, and Cornelia Tauschke’s El Thayeba Stud in Europe among others who have worldwide influence.

Some dynamic women are now stepping forward in the Gulf and Arab world - not only as breeders, a but as caretakers and trainers at major farms.

I have seen that when love departs a breeding farm, the horses’ spirits and their performance leave together.

What do women contribute - and have contributed the most: Love, Empathy, Vision, Intuition, Artistic Eye, Purpose, Patience, Passion, Wisdom, and Courage.

These are the stuff dreams and reality are made of - and women have been the hub of the wheel.

The return of the now prosperous Arab population in the Middle East and the Gulf region to the traditional values of their culture, triggered a hype regarding the return and renaissance of the Arabian horses to the Arab breeding areas of origin. It sparked an intensive trade between the old breeders of the Occident and the new breeders of the Orient. But this trade has come to a standstill now that the best horses have been exported and there is no longer any need for new imports.

Are the golden years over and will the Arabian horse slowly disappear in the West because there is no longer any demand for it? Can other countries, away from the Middle East, still offer important

and advantageous qualities to the Arabian breeding in other climates, feeding and management?

Judith F.: Life is a circle. Who would have thought perpetuation of the classic Arabian horse would rest in Egypt after the Nejd wars; then in Europe, and more recently the USA, when it had seemingly been dissipated in its native lands. Now it has gone home again. History has proven love for this breed is timeless, borderless and provides a strong bridge between countries - in peace and in war. This planet has countless opportunities for the breed's expansion. However, the need for inspiration through educated and professional promotion (and some exciting movies and books such as *The Black Stallion*) is critical to exposing the breed to children and adults worldwide. High costs of everything associated with raising and showing all breeds of horses have caused a dramatic drop in registrations internationally - except for Arabian horses in the Middle East. Eventually the Arab countries will need a market for their ever-increasing production. Let's see who takes up the challenge and opens the market elsewhere - or if it returns full force to the West once again should economics change advantageously.

The classical Arabian horse is not only beautiful, but also has suitability for long-term performance, high age, high fertility, good feed conversion. It is charismatic and has a benign temperament, sociability, and people-oriented nature. Today's show horse has lost many of these aspects. Partly because breeding is now mostly realised using modern animal reproduction methods.

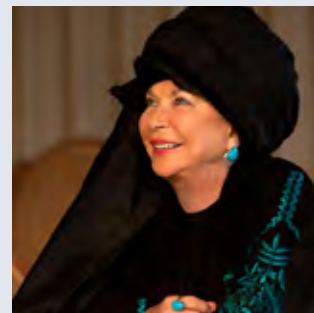
What do you tell a young breeder in the Middle East about the selection criteria and methods he or she should use for breeding?

Judith F.: I've written many books on this subject, but in short - I would tell a young breeder wherever he or she is, that history repeats itself. Take your time. Know the breed before you try to breed it. Study historical literature, Arab poetry, the classic Arabian horse painters and sculptors, well-illustrated educational books as well as farm films showing un-photoshopped horses. Learn bloodlines and combinations of families/strains that successful

established breeders have used and which ones work together and have stood the test of time. Travel far and wide to visit breeding farms, talk with breeders and get in your mind's eye what YOU want to breed. Do not buy anything based on emotion or solely on videos and photographs. And be sure that you have proper horse keeping facilities as well as knowledgeable and kind individuals to care for your horses. It is critical to consider what works for you - If price is a factor, choose the best you can afford and start with a quality well-bred filly - or perhaps an older proven mare if she is still fertile or in foal. Then when the time comes, breed her to the best well-bred stallion you can afford (that suits her) - and if you can't afford one, wait until you can. An experienced breeder, who was also an antique collector, once told me: "Better to have one significant piece rather than many insignificant ones". I never forgot it. One great mare or a great stallion can "make" a breeder or a farm's name. Be prepared to make sacrifices; accept the joys as well as the heartaches. We also learn by our mistakes as well as our successes. Being a breeder is not for the faint of heart. And above all...NEVER GIVE UP!

Thank you, Judith, for your inside and encouragement.

Judith Forbis is known worldwide for authoring numerous books about the Arabian breed including: *The Classic Arabian Horse*, *Hoofbeats Along the Tigris*, *The Abbas Pasha Manuscript* (with Gülsün Sherif) and *Authentic Arabian Bloodstock*, Volumes I and II, which have become the bibles for Egyptian Arabian horse breeders. *Ansata Hejazi - Born to Rule* documents the amazing stallion who inspired Arabian horse breeding in Kuwait after the Gulf War, *Ansata Bint Bukra - Born to Reign* extols this legendary mare, and *Qatar Foundation* has just published her newest work, *Al Shaqab - The Legacy of Arabian Horses*. She has also contributed to numerous magazines and other media, and scripted the Silver-screen Award winning documentary film, *Ansata, The Key of Life*.



“In the future hardly any old-style stud farms will still exist”.

Cornelia Tauschke in an Interview with Monika Savier

Cornelia, you are one of the historic breeders of straight Egyptian Arabians in Europe and I'm sure you can tell me what has changed in the last 20 years and why.

Cornelia: A lot has changed in the show scene for Straight Egyptian Arabians in the past 20 years. It has become very professional and it makes no sense to show your horse without professional preparation and training. I am talking about the European show scene now, which is relevant for us, but it is also dominated by exhibitors from the Near and Middle East countries. For them showing horses is very important, it seems to me that showing is even more important than the breeding itself. Being at a show with the horses and winning is what it's all about. In the past we used to go to a show especially to compare and understand where we stand with our breeding. That's over today.

Is the show today there so that the winners can recommend themselves for breeding?



Cornelia Tauschke in Doha

Cornelia: In the Arabian Show Horse world, breeding is done en masse - mostly with using embryo transfer and other modern equine reproduction techniques to obtain a show winner from the mass number of offspring. This is less pronounced in the breeding of Straight Egyptians. The envy is not so intense and there is not so much prize money in their shows involved. There are horses that have excellent offspring but have never been to shows and have therefore never been champions. In Straight Egyptian Arabian horse breeding, we look at the mare families, because word has got around about which ones are known to produce beautiful foals.

It often happens that the show champions are frequently the horses of sponsors.

Cornelia: That's quite noticeable and of course it's a conflict of interest that shouldn't be there.

Nowadays, are there better horses in the Middle East than in Europe?

Cornelia: There are a lot more horses in this region and for a long time, many good horses were bought from breeders in Europe. We have had to let a lot of good horses go, partly to finance our own breeding programme.

Yesterday at the Katara Show for Straight Egyptians, the stallion of a European expat who lives here in Doha won the Gold Championship. Isn't that a sign that things are more honest here than one might think from the outside?

Cornelia: Yes, that could be the case, also because many judges judge here, and the rotation of judges



Cornelia Tauschke showing her stallion El Thay Mansour (Ansata Halim Shah x El Thay Maheera by Nizam and Mona II) a Multi-times Champion at the Asil Cup



Tauschke showing her stallion El Thay Mameluk at Egyptian Event, Baden Baden 1992

also makes it almost impossible to reach agreements. I'm happy for Glenn Jakobs, who is a farm manager and photographer and runs his own breeding program with very good success.

At the stud presentations of the large private studs, mostly owned by members of the royal family, we can see from the 5-generation pedigrees that the pedigrees here are often similar. The gene pool is

narrow, most of the horses are related to each other. No risks are taken with the breeding of out-cross horses.

Cornelia: That's true, the gene pool is relatively narrow, but you don't hear much about inbreeding-related diseases. But it's true, nobody dares to try something new and to integrate other bloodlines. Most have no patience to wait and see what new mating bring.

Foals from parents with big names may sell better, regardless of the quality.

Cornelia: But without shows it is difficult to promote them.

Apart from the shows, what other options do we have to effectively publicise the offspring?

Cornelia: We have created a sensible alternative by organising the Nobel Festival, which was intended to appeal to breeders and where the horses were also presented differently. Mares were presented with offspring, as well as the stallions, it was not only a great atmosphere, it was also very informative for people who wanted to understand how to breed to be successful. We made it twice and it was a great success.

But when we tried to do it again last year, we had very little feedback from the breeders. Many breeders are no longer that young, cannot stay away from their work for several days and don't want to take the cost and effort of preparing their horses well for the event and driving them to a location across Germany. For some it's also a matter of staff, as when you travel with some horses somebody needs to take care for the horses at home.

How could these problems be overcome?

Cornelia: These events could be decentralised and held in different regions. Breeders should get together in smaller groups. We are making this happen this year in the north of Germany, where three stud farms are organising an event together. Other stud farms could also make this happen, but overall, hardly

anyone is interested in taking on such a project.

In other words, Arabian horse breeding is slowly going down the drain in Europe?

Cornelia: I don't think so. It remains a niche with far fewer customers. I also no longer breed 15 foals a year

Perhaps we should act against the possibility of unlimited embryo transfer?

Cornelia: Embryo transfer is not done much by European SE Breeders. It is more practiced by breeders of Arabian Show horses. In many countries / registries the number of foals produced by ET has already been reduced to 2 embryos per mare. But what's the point? Then 10 will still be made and only the two best foals will be registered. And what about the other eight?

That's depressing. But back to Doha, how did you like the Katara Arabian Peninsula Horse Show?

Cornelia: Very good, we saw some very nice horses. The classes were big with 10 to 15 horses, so there was

real competition, unlike shows in Europe where often only 3-5 horses compete in a class.

I was also impressed by the organisation.

Cornelia: Yes, it was absolutely perfect. There is a lot of money spent to for the events to organize them to perfection. In Europe most show organizers do not have large budgets.

But in Europe we have agriculture, green pastures, we should keep that...

Cornelia: Of course it's much better for the horses, they can stay outside for months until winter comes. Nevertheless, there should also be shows for Straight Egyptian horses, a minimum of competition makes sense to see where you are in comparison to other breeders and their horses.

What do you think of the name of the show: Katara Show for Peninsula Arabians?

Cornelia: If the breeders here make this claim because part of the original breeding came from the Nejd, why not? But for me they remain the Straight Egyptian Arabians, where they have been specially selected, registered and documented over the last 200 years. Most of the foundation stock of the farms in Europe, the USA, Australia and the Gulf countries was purchased from Egypt.

In Europe, the USA and Australia, it is taken for granted that women ride and many also breed horses. Will breeding change in the future since the focus of horse breeding is on the Middle East, where women hardly have the financial and cultural opportunity to have their own stud? Do you see a difference in the method and the result when women are responsible for a stud?

Cornelia: I think there are differences. Men in breeding like to explain how they want to put a horse together, "so I need this part of the stallion, the mare then adds the other part and that's how the ideal horse has to come out"... Women, on the other hand,



Cornelia Tauschke trained El Thay Ibn Halim Shah for racing to pass the stallion licensing. He was unbeaten in 5 races - shown when he was awarded race winner



Cornelia Tauschke driving two Shagya Arabians at the Hungarian State Stud Babolna

try to question more “why does the horse inherit like this and like that...where does it come from”. There are very successful stud farms that are run by women. Of course, it’s good if they have a husband at their side who has the necessary capital.

When I think of good female breeders, I naturally think of Judith Forbis, Sigi Siller (Om El Arab) and now her daughter Janina, Marion Richmond, Sylvia Garde Ehlert and others who have built up a remarkable breeding programme over many years. There are also several women in the Middle East who have their own stud farms and breed successfully, for example Sheikha Sarah Fahad Al Sabah (Kuwait) who runs her own breeding program ‘Al Arab Stud’ and is the General Director of Bait Al Arab Kuwait Stud Stud, or Sheikha Fatima Bint Hazza Bin Zayed Al Nahyan (UAE) who is very successful with her Al Shiraa Stud and there are more to be named.

In the large stud farms that are successful at shows, it is almost irrelevant today whether men or women are behind the programme, because the breeding decisions are usually made by the trainers. They deliver an all-round package orientated towards success. Traditional breeders, breeders like Dr Nagel, like me or the breeders just mentioned and others, we are threatened with extinction, some highly respected breeders already passed away and no one from the

family took over. I won’t have anyone to continue running our stud. In the future hardly any old-style stud farms will still exist.

I recently read about a mare who already had 16 daughters at the age of 16, so you can see how early embryo transfer was started with her and there were certainly some average colts that were not registered. Breeding has taken on a whole new dimension. What we do on a small scale with our horses is because we enjoy it. It’s true passion and our friends and customers buy a horse from us from time to time because it is not a mass product. They see the families and they see how the horses are kept and taken care handled and loved.

Ultimately, we old breeders no longer fit into today’s Instagram and Facebook world. This constant self-promotion of some young people with their horses - we don’t do that; it doesn’t suit us - they are in a different world.

Thank you, and good luck, with the El Thayeba stud in Germany.



Cornelia Tauschke was in love with horses since early childhood. She learnt riding on warmblood sport horses. Together with her late husband, the El Thayeba Arabian stud was founded in Bavaria in 1971 and dedicated itself entirely to the straight Egyptians. In 1981 she moved to Grossenkneten, in the North of Germany. She has been involved in the organisation of the legendary NOBEL Festival in Holland, an alternative to the ECAHO shows with a stronger focus on education and welfare. Cornelia passed the exam as specialized stable manager and got the license as trainer of personally owned racehorses from the German Jockey Club. For many years she trained and showed the own horses at National and International Shows as well as at Stallion Licensing Shows. El Thayeba is a family owned and operated stud with about 25 Straight Egyptian Arabians and existing for 53 years”.

www.el-thayeba.com