



# AL QUSAR

ARABIANS

## The tradition to breed Straight Egyptians in Germany

By **Monika Savier** - Photos: Joanna Jonientz - Lay-out: Mario Brunetti

**AL QUSAR** stud has been breeding Straight Egyptian Arabian horses for 20 years. Many of the foals „made in Al Qusar“ have found their homes in the greatest studs of Europe and the Middle East, influencing international breeding. **AL QUSAR** features a professional training center for show Arabians as well as vast pastures for foal rearing. The stud is located in North Germany where the premises nestle in the rolling hills of the Lunenburg Heath area.

**“A breeder who strives for success needs to stay true to the breeding concept he devised...”**



Robert Schlereth, Nafisaa Al Qusar, Muneera Al Qusar and Volker Wettengl.





Nazim Al Qusar (NK Nadeer x Mawiaa Al Qusar)

**You founded Al Qusar Arabians 20 years ago. Innumerable foals have been born here, and many of them can be met in the great studs of Arabian or European breeders. Is there something more the two of you wish to achieve? Is there a breeding goal you are still working to reach?**

Robert: Personally, I like a highly refined Arabian horse with big eyes, a short face, small ears, a chiseled poll, lots of expression, and good gaits. The legs need to be correct, but also in harmony with the body, so just like the whole of the horse, they must not be too heavy. This is something I am still working on.

**Are there shining examples you observe?**

Robert: With some of the foals out of Dr Nagel's sires, my heart starts to beat faster, these are usually horses I like, and I am delighted with every one of our own foals who demonstrates this highly expressive type and this kind of charisma.

**Why does Al Qusar breed Straight Egyptians only?**

Robert: That's the type of Arabian horses I like – at least, those of the Straight Egyptians whose ancestors originated in the Nejd area on the Arabian peninsula. The Russian lines are more large-framed, and the



Robert with NK Marva and El Masriya Al Qusar

Polish lines do not always correspond to my idea of an ideal Arabian, even if in Poland, they sometimes use new Egyptian lines experimentally, to produce noble show Arabians.

**Is it important to you to maintain the original lines, as far as this is possible to do today? When you make breeding decisions, how important is the pedigree to you?**

Robert: That's of secondary importance to me, actually. When I enter the stable in the morning to turn the horses out to their pastures, I want big black eyes to look at me from chiseled small heads – horses who will raise their tails high like a flag when I lead them out, and whose graceful elegance will never cease to delight me.

Volker: ... and they need to be able to form a relationship with humans, and to be good-natured. Of course, we pay attention to their legs and to all aspects of the body that need to be well developed in order not to impair functionality, and to even improve it. There is no such thing as a perfect horse, however, and if an Arabian horse does not have that super long neck desired for today's shows, that's nothing to me. But I want to be able to see the Arabian breed in the horse, and I want intelligence, and cooperation with his humans. And it's not just the "wow" effect that needs to be right when presenting a horse. It's family living with our horses here, and a mutual atmosphere of friendship is a must for that. It's what Arabian horses are famous for, after all. We have taken beautiful horses out of our breeding because we didn't like their character disposition. They were distrustful, sometimes they were approachable, sometimes they would react with some aggression – and sometimes, they would pass that on to produce foals who adopted their dam's basic negativity towards humans and would crawl up the walls when we entered their box stall. Every foal is wary at first, but they need to be easy to convince, and for that, they need the secure basis their dam provides – or doesn't provide. In that case, we have a problem.

Robert: With the difficult foals, every day we need to begin the trust-building all over again. Otherwise, they will continue to turn their hindquarters towards us and to threaten us without a reason.

**How do you go about building up a relationship with your foals. What sequence of procedures do you use?**

Robert: We emphasize body contact with the foals, we lead them a lot without a rope, and after 1 to 2 weeks, we put their first halter on them, very calmly and just for a short time. Rewarding is much emphasized, of course, as this



Mahdiya Al Qusar (NK Hafid Jamil x Mashahana Al Qusar)



Mahara Al Qusar (Teymur B x El Thay Bint Maheera)





FA Merrit Amun (Abbas Pasha I x El Fayum) and Mesha Al Qusar



Mashahana Al Qusar (Teymur x Maida Bint Bint Mohassen)

**“We cannot turn back the wheel of time, original Arabians from the Nejd desert don’t exist anymore, but in our mares’ pedigrees there are exactly these ancestors to be found. We try to breed, via selection, an Arabian horse who represents classic beauty and Arabian character above all – the traits that made it possible that these horses were able to have their intense rapport with people.”**

#### THE FARM AND PREMISES

45 roomy box stalls, almost all of them featuring exterior windows; 28 hectares (70 acres) of fenced pastures and paddocks; Spacious indoor arena, 40 x 60 m (130 x 195 ft); Outdoor arenas, Horse walker; Horse solarium.

#### ACTIVITIES AND SERVICE

Covering station; Show training; Training under saddle; Foal rearing; Consulting.

[www.alqusar-arabians.com](http://www.alqusar-arabians.com)

serves to consolidate trust. We often get horses for training, and we do observe differences in behavior between them and our home-breds. We don’t know how they were treated previously, of course, but generally speaking, the Straight Egyptians are the horses who are easiest to handle. Even among the Straight Egyptians, however, there are some lines who behave rather more mistrustingly, trying to keep their distance.

#### What’s a horse’s everyday life like at your place?

Volker: All horses generally have their own box stalls for the night. That way, we can easily see what and how much they eat, they are left alone, and they can relax in peace without having to fight for it. In the morning, they get their halters attached and are led to pasture, singly and in-hand. Horses in show training are worked first and turned out on pasture after, as a reward. In a stud as big as ours, with mating facilities and show training included, there are always lots of work to do, seven days a week. In addition, there are often night watches to be held, and shows to be attended on weekends.

#### Do the market and the economic situation of the stud have an influence on your breeding decisions?

Volker: Well, of course they do. Not every Straight Egyptian horse finds a good market, and we kind of need to find a balance between good horses and good pedigrees.

#### Do you make your breeding decisions together?

Volker: Each of us has his own mare lines here, trying to achieve optimum results with them. Of course, we cooperate, we mutually advice and support each other. The economic situation is getting ever more difficult and the market in Germany is much reduced, with most horses being sold to the Near and Middle East. That’s a situation which does not make things easier for us, sometimes it’s an emotional strain.

Robert: Our horses grew up as horses should, with lots of freedom and living in a herd, just what a foal needs to grow and become beautiful. Somehow, they are our children, we raised them and we had fun with them. We were proud of them. When I see our horses somewhere in the Arabian world, no matter how spacey and nice the box stall is where they spend their time as one out of so many, my heart sinks. You do start to think whether breeding for that is really what you wanted.

Volker: Not all of the studs keep their horses in box stalls, there are some that have paddocks and turn the horses out daily, or ride them. All you can do is hope that your horse will be among these lucky ones.

#### What are the horses the two of you started out with, and how many generations have you worked with by now?

Robert: There were Bint Mohssen and her daughter Maida Bint Bint Mohssen who enabled us to found our Dahman Shahwan family. Maida Bint Bint Mohssen went on to become one of the foundation mares of Al Rayyan Stud in Qatar. Her daughter Majjahana Al Qusar out of Teymur B is continuing this line in our place, also represented by her daughters. Our Saqlawi family is based on El Thay Bint Maheera as a foundation mare, and on Naafisa with her Ansata ancestry. All of these families are in their 3<sup>rd</sup> generations by now. We discovered Teymur B in Babolna when he was two years old. He is an offspring of the Ansata Halim Shah son Assad, and he did not only produce a whole number of successful show horses and champions, but



Teymur B (Assad x 214 Ibn Galal I)



Mahir Al Qusar (NK Hafid Jamil x Mahara Al Qusar)

**“It was not by financial investments, but by our breeding strategy and hard work with the horses that we were able to implement our visions, after being lucky enough to acquire a group of selected foundation mares right at the beginning. For our start, it was crucially important that we did not sell our first good foal right away for good money, even if that would have been helpful at that moment. But that way, we would never have found out if our breeding concept was going to work.”**





he also transmits his extraordinary, sweet disposition. His offspring is easy to ride and really willing and intelligent, just as is Teymur B. He won the stallion approval event, and had a successful show career, even if we showed him just a few times. Usually, we were very busy making sure that our clients' horses made top placings in shows, and that was more important than training our own horses for that. He was quite busy servicing mares, too. Besides, he is the favorite riding horse of all the children coming here.

**Is there a potential target group of buyers when you decide for a certain mating?**

Volker: Basically, the horses need to be pleasing to us, first of all, and we select according to our own ideas. If there are customers or friends at our place who take delight in one of our foals, we will sell that one, as the farm can't be financed with the income from show training alone. And we are not prepared to go and breed according to any fashion fad that's current at shows. For me, Arabian charisma, a good character, and a nice disposition are definitely more important than working on details such as maybe trying to achieve a completely level croup, sacrificing Arabian flair for that.

**Both of you have been successful show trainers, but I notice**



Jabirah Al Qusar (Authentic Dahman x Jazirah El Chamsin)



Volker with Natifa Al Qusar



Pamira AlQusar (NK Hafid Jamil x Paminaa Al Qusar)



**that both of you have been withdrawing somewhat from the big shows. What changed?**

Volker: Too often, we saw that small breeders on the big shows will be passed over, unjustified, in favor of the horses owned by the main show sponsors. This is not a fair thing to do. So we prefer to attend the smaller shows, it's something we explain to our clients, the atmosphere there is still relaxed and the owners' money is less important when the champions are elected.

**For successfully selling a horse, is it important it should have won shows?**

Robert: No, not necessarily. Even outside of the show circus, you get offered good money for a good Straight Egyptian. Breeders from the Gulf States are still coming to Germany, looking for beautiful horses in the stables renowned for breeding Egyptians. We are on their roadmaps, so our horses can peacefully roam their pastures and don't need to be show trained. The number of German breeders presenting their horses on shows is decreasing anyway. However, we breeders still meet, as there are alternative ways of presenting horses, such as the worldwide web, or stud presentations. Now and then, it's quite okay to attend a show, of course, but it's not wise to get dependant on that – for the sake of the horses, if nothing else.