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Al Shakhoura Farm: Straight Egyptians in Bahrain



Najdi Al Shakhoura
Naif Al Rayyan x Falha Al Rayyan

**If Bahrain is the Pearl of the Middle East,
then Al Shakhoura Farm is the Pearl of Bahrain**

There are at least two good reasons for fans of Arabian horses to visit the island kingdom of Bahrain in the Arabian aka Persian Gulf. Firstly: this is where the well-established Al Shakoura Stud of Mr Waheed Al Aali and his family is located, a stud that has been realizing an excellent breeding concept based on Straight Egyptian Arabians for almost 20 years now and has two to three generations of the finest purebred Arabian horses stocking their barns. Secondly: the kingdom of Bahrain is well worth a journey. It's a place rich in history, a small cluster of islands that are witnesses to the history of mankind, of horse breeding, and of the culture on the Gulf. It is likely that Bahrain was the „Garden of Eden“ of historic times, as there are freshwater springs all over the country and even in shallows of the sea. They gave rise to agriculture and animal breeding as early as thousands of years ago. Today, 5,000 horses live on the group of islands. 5,000 is also the number of years that Bahrain has been settled already. Called Dilmun then, it



The *Barbar Temple* is an archaeological site, considered to be part of the Dilmun culture, dating back to 3000 BC. Al Shakhoura farm is in his neighborhood.

carried a flourishing culture in 3,000 BC that is described in Sumerian texts. It was at that time that the city of Qal'at al-Bahrain was founded. At around 2,000 BC, Dilmun was where Sumerians and Babylonians traveled en route to India, in 300 BC the Greek came for trading,



The *Dilmun king Hundaru of Bahrain* paid annual tribute. On this relief from the palace of Nineveh the Assyrian ruler is seen receiving booty from a captured city, including finest horses.

in 700 AC they were displaced by Arabians who brought Islam to the islands. Later on, it was Persians who had a strong cultural influence on the inhabitants and are well known for their mastery in breeding Arabian horses. Maybe this history is why today, Bahrain is known for its cosmopolitanism, as manifested in the shopping malls and a formula 1 racetrack; the sand beaches, museums and desert landscapes; as well as historic Souks, authentic Arabian houses, fortresses, and prehistoric burial mounds. In between all the ancient witnesses to Bahrain's stunning past, there are small Arabian villages to be found here and there, and in many of them there are horse lovers living who are successful breeders of Arabian horses.



AL SHAKHOURA FARM, the oldest breeding stable of Straight Egyptians in Bahrain, featuring international lineages.

Waheed Al Aali is a successful building contractor with a good command of English and international experience. He knows the country and her historic sites, and he loves to tell the tales of his family's history – which the horses are a part of. It all started in 2001, when Waheed met Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al Thani who had, at that time, founded his successful Al Rayyan Farm in Doha, Qatar, decades ago. Much inspired by Judith Forbis and the Ansata horses in the USA, but also by Dr Nagel's Katharinenhof in Germany, Sh. Abdul Aziz had established his important stud as early as during the 1990ies. Meanwhile, he had become a role model and sometimes a mentor for many studs in the Gulf region. As a member of the ruling Al Thani family, he also had direct access to Al Shaqab stud, an asset of the state-owned Qatar foundation which promotes a culture of excellence, also and particularly in horse breeding.



Dana Al Shaqab (Safir by Salaa El Dine x Kamasayyah by Imperial Al Kamar), Hadban Enzahi strain, foundation mare of Al Shakhoura Farm.

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Naif Al Rayyan
 Al Adeed Al Shaqab by Ansata Halim Shah x
 RN Safia by Ali Kamal.
 Dahman Shahwan strain.
 Leading sire at Al Shakhoura Farm



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Looking at the Al Shakoura Farm foundation horses, it's noticeable that they mirror the background and development of Al Rayyan Farm with its concept for success that is unmatched in the Gulf region. One of the foundation members of the stud in Bahrain is a beautiful bay, Naif Al Rayyan, a son of World Champion Al Adeed Al Shaqab by Ansata Halim Shah and the mare RN Safia (Ali Kamal x Ansata Splendora) of the Dahman Shahwan family. This stallion has established himself in the stud as an outstanding inheritor and producer of both beautiful sons and excellent daughters. Then again, Naif Al Rayyan

and the foundation mare Falha Al Rayyan by Al-idaar out of Amar are the sire and dam of Najdi Al Shakhoura, who can already present highly typey offspring to his credit as a sire. Amar's dam is Ameera by Madkour I and Hanan, which makes her a full sister to Nagel's Jamil of the Obayan family. There is also Dana Al Shaqab, a daughter of Safir (Salaa El Dine x Aisha) whom Sheikh Abdul Aziz had discovered on Katharinenhof stud and used to breed famous Ashhal Al Rayyan with, together with RN Gazalla (Amir Al Badeia x Bint Sabah) who is a foundation mare on Al Shakhoura.



Salama Al Shakhoura
 Naif Al Rayyan x RN Ghazalla by Amir Al Badeia,
 Saglawi Jedran strain,
 foundation mare of Al Shakhoura Farm.

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Amal Al Shakhoura
Naif Al Rayyan x Dana Al Shaqab by Safir,
Hadban Enzahi strain,
foundation mare of Al Shakhoura Farm.



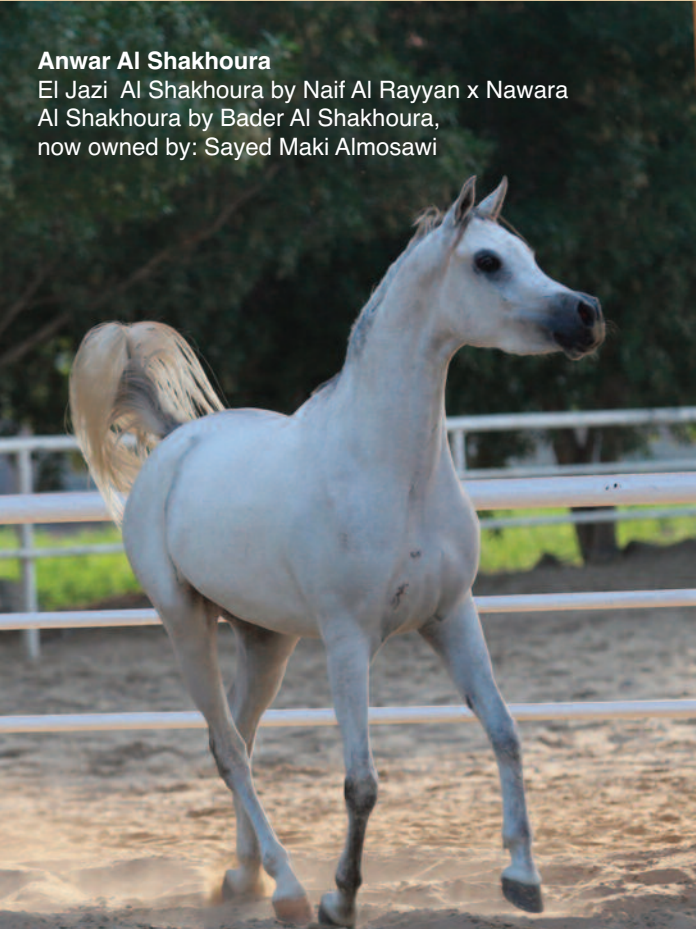
Rayyana Al Shakhoura
Naif Al Rayyan x Falha Al Rayyan,
Obayan Om Greis strain.



Tafari Al Shakhoura
Safir by Salaa El Dine x Falha Al Rayyan,
Obayan Om Greis strain.



Anwar Al Shakhoura
El Jazi Al Shakhoura by Naif Al Rayyan x Nawara
Al Shakhoura by Bader Al Shakhoura,
now owned by: Sayed Maki Almosawi



Tafari Al Shakhoura is another daughter of Safir, out of Falha Al Rayyan by Alidaar. She is one of the most beautiful mares in the stud. And a further stock mare is the typey bay Salama Al Shakhoura by Naif Al Rayyan out of RN Gazalla, who has five offspring in the stud right now. Another outstanding inheritor among the stock mares is the chestnut Amal Al Shakhoura (Naif Al Rayyan x Dana Al Shaqab) whose offspring on the farm is well worth a long look. A further remarkable inheritor is Reem Al Shakhoura by Naif Al Rayyan out of Malika Al Shaqab. There is a doubtless show-crack, long-legged and typey Rayyana Al Shakhoura, who also is a daughter of Naif Al Rayyan out of Falha Al Rayyan by Alidaar. Among the youngsters, there are some particularly striking ones: typey grey filly Anwar Al Shakhoura (El Jazi Al Shakhoura x Nawara Al Shakhoura) and beautifully dished bay Jasser al Shakhoura (Najdi Al Shakhoura x Amal Al Shakhoura inbred to Naif Al Rayyan).



Salem Al Shakhoura
Najdi Al Shakhoura x Salama Al Shakhoura by Naif Al Rayyan,
Saglawi Jedran strain.



Alia Al Shakhoura
Safir Al Shakhoura x Nawara Al Shakhoura by Bader Al Shakhoura.
Saglawi Jedran strain.



Safir Al Shakhoura
Naif Al Rayyan x Dana Al Shaqab,
Hadban Enzahi strain.

FAHMI AL ESKAFI

INTERVIEW

Today the stud is home to almost 25 straight Egyptians representing three generations. How did it all start? Waheed Al Aali tells the story in a short interview.

Monika: What was the situation in Bahrain at the time when you started breeding Egyptian Arabian horses?

Waheed: There were no quality Egyptian breeders in Bahrain then, and many people did not differentiate between Egyptians and the rest of the Arabian breed. But the Egyptians have that special look, their eyes, their conformation, and I had fallen in love with them. Today, we even have a Straight Egyptian Show and about ten breeders in Bahrain. There are many more owners, of course.

Monika: What were your reasons to start breeding horses?

Waheed: I started to get interested in horses in the 1970ies, but with WAHO horses, I only started around 2001 when my daughter asked me to buy her a horse if she were to improve her school records. She did, and I kept my promise, and of course, company for that first horse was required and we acquired three mares and one stallion. After a short time, I knew I wanted to concentrate on straight Egyptians, so I asked Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al Thani, the founder of Al Rayyan farm in Qatar, who had collected so many good Egyptians, to start me off, helping me to choose suitable horses. After two years he presented seven horses to me to choose from, and that was really helpful. I acquired some Halim Shah and Hanan and Alidaar lineage that way, and I was very happy. This was my starting point.

Monika: Is there, in your opinion, somebody in Bahrain who is somewhat of a leading figure in breeding Egyptians?

Waheed: We keep in close touch with the Kuwaiti and Qatari breeders, with Kuwait perhaps more important, as they have a great number of breeders and are very cooperative, exchanging stallions and information among each other. In Qatar there is one big breeder, who has excellent stock, but as we say here, one hand doesn't clap. It would take more breeders in Qatar, to be able to help each other.

Monika: How do you keep contact with other breeders?

Waheed: I keep in touch with other breeders, they know what I am producing, and I go and see what they are producing. Sometimes I need their advice, sometimes they need my advice, and we also try to exchange stallions. It's not been done yet in Bahrain. I was the first Egyptian breeder here - when I started, there was nobody to cooperate with.

Monika: And nobody to compare with. What is it you like to see in a horse?

Waheed: I don't like long backs and short legs. Once such horses get to be eight or nine years old, the back starts to sag. So I try not to use lines that have that problem. But I am not bashing anybody, I just try to get away from certain traits I don't want in my program. If you did not like the look of one of your horses, would you use him in your program? No, you would not. If your neighbor had a stallion and you did not like the offspring he produced, would you use him in your program? No, you would not. This is selection. Some breeders in this part of the world won't use certain horses in their programs, so they engage in a kind of negative selection. In my opinion, selection adds to the mystery and fascination that surrounds this noble creature.

Monika: How did you develop your idea of what you would like to see in your horses?

Waheed: Actually, Sheikh Abdul Aziz had a lot of influence on my and other people's breeding



Yasmeen Al Shakhoura
Najdi Al Shakhoura x Amal Al Shakhoura
by Naif Al Rayyan,
Hadban Enzahi strain.



Dalal Al Shakhoura
El Jazi Al Shakhoura x Nawara Al Shakoura
by Bader Al Shakhoura,
Saglawi Jedran strain.



Adham Al Shakhoura
Najdi Al Shakhoura x Reem Al Shakhoura by Naif Al Rayyan,
Dahman Shahwan strain.

in the initial stage. But in the course of time, everyone develops an individual look, his own idea of what he wants. Many breeders like what Abdul Aziz produces at Al Rayyan, but they still want to have a different look. Me, I definitely want to develop a look of my own with my horses. I like a well-arched neck, for example, a clean throatlatch, a good shoulder. I don't want the short legs that many Egyptians have and which many breeders don't mind if the horse just has a nice head with beautiful eyes. I think long legs are also part of the beauty of the horse, of his elegance, just as is a long neck.

Monika: Do you aim at producing show champions?

Waheed: I am not much for shows, as judges often have their own view of horses, and I don't always agree with them. They also change their opinions on the desirable look every few years. I have a certain look in mind and I try to

achieve it - never mind what's the current fad in the show business.

Monika: Do you test the functionality of your horses in some way, by breaking them to riding, for example?

Waheed: We ride all the stallions, but with the mares, we sometimes miss out on that, because we breed them at three years old.

Monika: This is good training and education for the stallions, they also learn to respect people that way.

Waheed: We at Al Shakhoura are lucky to have stallions and mares with a very nice character, they are really like pets, they come and ask for a pat or a carrot. They want to be part of the group with their humans. Some lines - outside of our stud - are more aggressive, and we avoid using them. Some of our horses here are from Nagel lines, and these lines are known for their sweet, friendly character. I also love them for their type, they are almost like something from outside of this world.

Monika: What are your plans for the future?

Waheed: I strongly wish to consolidate that distinctive look I want for my horses, which means I will consider a certain degree of inbreeding. I will pursue that path as long as I see improvements in the looks, the conformation, and the movements. Many people don't like inbreeding, but with good foundation stock, there is little risk of bringing out any negative traits. The problem is not with the horses, but with the breeder, who needs to know what he is doing when mating horses with certain traits. He needs to concentrate on the good traits, not the bad ones.

Monika: Thank you for that interesting interview! And don't forget: we breeders in Europe look forward to you visiting our studs! We, too, are in need of a mutual exchange of strategies, views, and ideas – topics we can work on together.



Arsan Al Shakhoura
Safir Al Shakhoura x Salama Al Shakhoura by Naïf Al Rayyan,
Saglawi Jedran strain.



Jasser Al Shakhoura
Najdi Al Shakhoura x Amal Al Shakhoura
by Naif Al Rayyan,
Hadban Enzahi strain.



Malika Al Shakhoura
Najdi Al Shakhoura x Reem Al
Shakhoura by Naif Al Rayyan,
Dahman Shahwan strain.



Nawara Al Shakhoura
Bader Al Shakhoura x Salama Al Shakhoura
by Naif Al Rayyan,
Saglawi Jedran strain.

