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welcome to its new affiliate!*

affiliations

Arabian

North American Shagya Arabian Society

The Shagya Arabian

The Shagya is one of the rarest breeds in the United States, with a little over 230 purebred and slightly fewer partbred horses. They have only been bred in this country since 1987. Breeders are few but dedicated and spread across the U.S. from coast to coast. Nevertheless, the North American Shagya Society has managed to grow, and continues striving to bring this incredible horse to the attention of the equine public.

The breed was originally developed for the Hungarian cavalry. The Hungarians prized the best traits of the Arabian horse: beauty, speed, stamina, affection toward humans, endurance, soundness. But they also wanted a bigger frame, more bone, quieter temperament, and overall better riding horse conformation. In 1836, the Hapsburg Empire purchased an extraordinary Arabian stallion from the Bani Saher Bedouin tribe in what is now Syria. This horse was tall for a purebred Arab, over 15 hands, and his name was Shagya. He became chief sire at the state stud in Balbona, Hungary and was bred to native Hungarian mares of "oriental type", Thoroughbreds, Anglo-Arabians, Lippizans and of course purebred Arab mares. The offspring were carefully tested for performance, temperament and type – all those not meeting rigid standards were gelded and/or sold. The ones that remained were carefully incorporated into the Hungarian breeding program, continuing to use Arab blood as the base and infusing the strains of other breeds until they achieved their ideals in type and temperament: a superior riding horse of distinct Arabian characteristics, good minds, good work ethics, big enough to carry the soldiers into battle, and wonderful, ground covering, floating gaits. The horses eventually became known as "the Shagya Arabians" even though they are not purebred Arabs.

They were prized throughout Europe as outstanding riding and driving horses and also as improvers of other breeds. The Shagya has made an enormous contribution to warmblood breeding through the Anglo-Shagya stallion Ramzes, whose dam was the Shagya mare, Jordi. Ramzes founded the "R" line in the warmblood industry. Ramiro, Romadour, Rembrandt



*Shandor (Shagal x 41 Shagya XXXIX), owned by Adele Furby, ridden by Brooke Voldbaek at the Champagne Classic Dressage show, Puyallup, Washington.

all carry Shayga blood through Ramzes. The Shagya stallion Czardas contributed to the Holsteiner line, producing outstanding jumpers including Salut II. Ramzes was so influential, the Germans coined the phrase "no riding horse without his blood. Then, World War II broke out, and the Shagya was almost wiped out. European breeders searched for surviving Shagyas and over the years have slowly been re-establishing the breed.

Shagya breeding in America began when a former Arab breeder, Adele Furby, discovered the stallion Hungarian Bravo on the Bitterroot Ranch in Montana. He was 23 years old, the only living Shagya stallion on the North American continent, descended from horses rescued by General Patton. Adele contacted personnel from the International Shagya-Araber Gesellschaft (International Shagya Arabian Registry) or ISG, for help in studying his pedigree, and with their encouragement, bought him and began the first Shagya breeding program in America.

The same traits that made them superb cavalry horses serve them equally well in the FEI equestrian sports. For dressage, Shagyas offer floaty gaits with plenty of suspension, work ethic and a desire to work in harmony with their humans. Event riders prize them for their courage, power, and enthusiasm for jumping. Ground-covering movement and calm minds make them excellent driving horses – and they have already proven themselves in endurance: Hungares, a Shagya, took the gold medal at the World Equestrian Games in '06.



Shagya's Sprite AF (*Shandor x *Shagya #112), ridden by Gretchen Aycock at the Dailis-based Jumper Club show.



Stephany Fine riding Janos (*Saïem x *Rashim) at the Fort Howes 100-mile FEI Endurance Ride, Ashland, Montana, June 2006.

Shagyas are all about form to function. Rectangular in frame (the square frame is not welcome) they have short backs with strong loin couplings, excellent lumbosacral placement that allows them to coil and sit – well-shaped necks of good length, correct dry legs with plenty of bone, lovely heads, and are spirited but not hot. They come in a variety of sizes to fit most riders, standing 15 hands to 16.1. Most bred for dressage and jumping are 15.2 to 16.1. A few breeders, concentrating on producing distance horses, produce slightly smaller Shagyas averaging 15 to 15.1 hands. In keeping with European standards and ISG rules, the North American Shagya Society holds breeding stock inspections every three years to maintain quality standards, much the same as the warmblood breeders do. Horses must pass inspection before they can be bred, and foals must have approved sires and dams in order to be registered.

Submitted by Terry Hey