



Shagya

North American Shagya Arabian Society

Why do Shagya Horse Owners Choose the Shagya Breed?

Shagya owners choose the Shagya breed not only because they like the looks of the horse they see, they know that these qualities are backed by judicious requirements of the International Shagya Registry (ISG). The ISG requires inspections, and horses must meet minimum standards before being approved for Shagya breeding.

A Shagya is bred for elegant type, great hardiness and toughness, endurance, easy keeping, and inborn friendliness toward humans as part of a quality modern riding horse. These qualities are what attract people to the Shagya breed. But it is the rigorous registry process and resulting controls on breeding stock that helps increase the odds that they will actually get these qualities in a Shagya horse. The registry process convinces people to own a Shagya. Shagya lovers and owners know that a registered Shagya is much more likely to carry and consistently produce these qualities. Why do Shagyas have such a reputation? Inspections and standards for breeding stock is one reason.

Are Inspections Important?

Shagyas are different from most horse breeds because breeding stock must be inspected and approved in order for their offspring to be eligible for registration as a "Purebred Shagya-Arabian" – the "official" name for a Shagya in an ISG-member Shagya Registry. Inspections provide quality assurance and quality control. The Shagya breed is based on hundreds of years of a systematically managed Austro-Hungarian government breeding program – a program to improve and maintain breed quality. Each breeding horse was selected and evaluated based on its presentation of the desired Shagya qualities and its ability to reproduce those desired qualities. With each generation, this structured and managed program produced increasingly more consistent and predictable qualities in the Shagya horses.

Inspections of breeding stock were not

invented in the United States. European warmblood breeders have used this system of inspections for years, and this is one of the reasons that horsemen the world over buy their sport horse prospects from German, Swedish, Dutch and Danish breeders. Inspections have been an integral part of the International Shagya registry for over 25 years; an even more rigorous selection process occurred prior to that. Inspections in the U.S. adhere to the specific rules overseen by the International Shagya Registry.

People who know the Shagya breed would agree that Shagyas more consistently produce their breed qualities than almost any other horse breeding program. Consistency will never be 100%. Improved consistency and predictability of desired type is achievable and worth striving for.

Shagyas are an international breed with an international identity and reputation. The NASS-registered purebred Shagyas in the U.S. are part of that international gene pool now and in the future. A quality breeding program is rightfully a high priority for the International Shagya organization and has a huge effect on the Shagya breed today and in the future. As we consider what is best for the Shagya breed now and into the future, we must consider our horses today and those horses representing the breed in the future.

Are inspections reliable for evaluating horses?

Many different activities use human judges and a points system to rate an animal, a performance, or a product. Are inspections perfect? Absolutely not. Are they an accepted approach? Yes. Are inspections a valuable tool to help us maintain the qualities of this great breed that we all value? Yes. Let's examine this a little more.

Inspections are a tool. Without any kind of screening process, the Shagya breed would risk following the path that so many other horse breeds and domesticated animals have followed – selection based on the interests of the market. The market has influenced horses to be bred for a certain characteristic that may sometimes be at the expense of a correct conformation or proper function. Not only might any number of undesirable qualities slip into our

breeding stock, but the reliability of producing the breed's desired qualities would also be lowered. The wonderful strengths of the Shagya would slowly disappear with each generation.

Can inspections be improved?

Certainly. Inspectors are ISG trained and certified. There are many adjustments that could be made to improve inspections. One simple change would be to increase the number of foreign inspectors used. For now, there are not enough eligible horses to participate to afford an increase, but this one change could help improve confidence in inspector objectivity. It could also improve confidence that assessments are consistent and inspection protocols are followed. Other improvements to the current inspection process could be explored.

Are inspections a reasonable expense?

Inspections have always been a part of the purebred Shagya registry. They do cost money both to the Shagya organization and to Shagya owners. Inspections provide a valuable registration certification at the end – one which gives prospective owners important information about the Shagya qualities of the horse they are considering buying or breeding. People value predictability. When people buy a young or untrained horse, they invest a lot of money before they ever know if that horse is going to be suited for their sport of choice or their breeding program. Improved predictability and consistency has great value. Considering their importance to the breed's reputation and their potential effect on sale value, inspections are a reasonable and necessary expense.

Closing

We all strive to preserve the qualities of the Shagya horse. That is the essence of the Shagya. Inspections are a valuable tool that helps us preserve those qualities. Inspections are not so much an expense as an investment and adherence to standards that have made the Shagya what it is today. Anything different is not a Shagya.

NASS website www.shagya.net; 678-873-1097.

Next Month – NASS September 2009 Breeding Inspection Tour Locations.

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