Arabian Horses
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ARABIAN HORSES

The Arabian horse is a particular breed of horse that likely evolved during the prehistoric period from Central Asian regions, eventually finding its home in Arabia and Egypt, perhaps introduced into Egypt by the Hyksos.

The existence of the Arabian horse in early periods is indicated by inscriptions found on the walls of ancient Egyptian temples. Its type is evident in the concave head, refined features, and arched tail carriage.

The modern Arabian horse emerged from the Arabian Peninsula after the period of Islamic conquest in the seventh century. Arab tribes produced horses whose beauty evolved from traits acquired from life in an unforgiving desert: large eyes, strongPage 231 bones, and great heart and lung capacity. These traits proved vital attributes in their use in military ventures and eventually in the founding of the modern English thoroughbred racehorse.

Arabian horse pedigrees were items of extreme importance to their Arab breeders. Oral transmission of a horse's history took place in front of witnesses who swore to its accuracy. The importance of Arabian horses held such high priority that they were used as gifts between tribal leaders, rulers of city-states, and later, heads of state, in diplomatic exchanges. Rulers such as Muhammad Ali of nineteenth-century Egypt sent expeditions into Arabia to acquire elite horses for his armies and his personal stables. Many travelers throughout the centuries noted the esteem in which Arabian horses were held.

Modern appreciation of the Arabian horse manifests itself in a worldwide network of Arabian horse breeders and owners who provide educational forums and exhibitions of their prized horses. They sometimes compete with one another in horse shows, or simply appreciate the unique heritage of their fine animals.

Bibliography


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