

Canadian Warmblood Represented in the United Arab Emirates

By Barbara Daley

From March 17 to 28, 2008, I participated in an Export Trade Mission to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). I attended as a delegate for Canadian Warmblood and was joined by delegates from many other breed associations and equine related companies in support of breeding. As the trip's focus was the development of international trade, it was partially funded through a special initiative offered by Agriculture Canada, and managed on behalf of the horse industry by Equine Canada. The team leader, Susan Stewart of Equine Canada's Breeds & Industry division, has been making great strides with this program over the past several years, working to increase the awareness of Canadian-bred horses.

My trip to the UAE included a few days at the Dubai International Horse Fair followed by several days touring farms, businesses, and veterinary clinics as well as meeting with various stakeholders in the industry. I stayed in the Emirate of Dubai, and my travels also took me to other Emirates such as Abu Dhabi, Sharja and Ras Al Khaimah. The following excerpts are from a diary I kept of the trip.

Tuesday, March 18th | The view when landing in Dubai lent much insight into its development. The city was surrounded by many parcels of land, each of which was a man-made oasis, carved out of the desert. Single plots included fully irrigated lawns and dozens of full-sized trees. We arrived at dusk as the glitter of city lights came up.

Wednesday, March 19th | Our second day in Dubai was dedicated to settling in and constructing the Equine Canada booth at the Dubai International Horse Fair. It was both exciting and humbling to witness the setup of the booths, called stands by the locals, of the resident businesses. Many of them were massive in scale, constructed by carpenters on site, according to professionally designed plans, and featured coordinating fixtures and furniture.

Thursday, March 20th | Today was the first day of the Dubai International Trade Fair. The patron was HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Deputy Ruler of Dubai, UAE Minister of Finance and Industry. He was expected to go to pre-selected stands to meet with the attendees. Equine Canada was selected to participate. The introduction and ensuing conversation was covered by many photographers and television videographers.



Opening Ceremonies

Friday, March 21st | Nina Oneid, Trade Commissioner from the Consulate of Canada, came by and spent some time with us. She brought along trade fair bags with the Canadian maple leaf on them that we were able to use for promotional materials. These proved to be the perfect ice breaker when interacting with people who came by the stand.



Filming for High Life Dubai

Saturday, March 22nd | Sony TV stopped by the stand asking if they might film us later in the day for the program High Life Dubai, which airs throughout the Middle East. After I explained the purpose for Equine Canada's participation at the fair, they opted to film on the spot!

Sunday, March 23rd | As the trade fair was now completed, we embarked on the second part of our trip where we toured various facilities. Our bus took us to the Endurance stables of Sheikh Hamdan which is managed by Hassan bin Ali. With his permission we were able to video and photograph the details of the tour. Highlights included a medical clinic with full imaging and diagnostic equipment and a medical database as well as an open air stables. There were approximately 120 horses, with a staff of 120 who were provided with living quarters, common area, mosque and a kitchen equipped with a cook.

Monday, March 24th | The first stop today was the Emirate Equestrian Centre. Our host, Rashid Al Darbe, showed us around the complex which included stabling for school horses, boarding horses as well as the Dubai team horses. There were two different types of stalls, the outdoor ones for the winter and the indoor air-conditioned ones for the hotter summer months.



Emirates Equestrian Centre

It was interesting to learn that many horses summer in the UK, much as many Canadian horses winter in Florida or California.

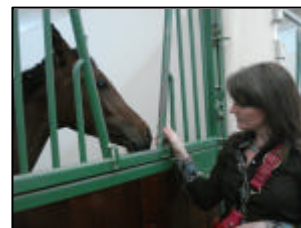
After the farm tour, we went to the Nad Al Sheba Race Track, where they were busy with preparations for the upcoming Dubai World Cup, the richest Thoroughbred race in the world. The building and track were beautiful. Much of the surrounding area was under construction, in keeping with the massive development Dubai is undergoing.



Dubai Equestrian & Polo Club

Our final stop of the day was the Dubai Equestrian & Polo Club. This beautiful facility, which could house over 300 horses, used a country club approach. One could obtain memberships for Polo or for leisure and social activities.

Tuesday, March 25th | Today's ventures took us out of the Emirate of Dubai and into Abu Dhabi. This Emirate, which is the capital of all the United Arab Emirates, is more conservative than Dubai. Our focus today was on the camel industry which has strong links to the equine industry, with grains and forage, as well as supplements and health care products, being sourced from the same suppliers.



With Young Warmblood at Abu Dhabi Equestrian Centre

Wednesday, March 26th | Back to Abu Dhabi, where we met with Patrick Buckley, the manager of the Abu Dhabi Equestrian Centre. This facility focuses on racing and also has a riding school and private boarders. We were accompanied by Neil Abrahams and his wife Alison. Alison is an Endurance rider from the UK, and was the first woman to win an international competition in the UAE. Neil is a Canadian now working for the UAE Equestrian and Racing Federation.

That afternoon we visited the Abu Dhabi Mounted Police Stables where we met with Ahmed Ali Al Hammadi. As Ahmad is also Chairman of the Endurance Committee for the UAE Equestrian and Racing Federation, he will be the main contact in facilitating the decision for potential incoming missions to Canada specific to that discipline.



Dr Juan Gonzales and the Canadian Contingent

That evening we met with Dr Juan Gonzales, one of Mexico's Olympian Eventers, at the Desert Palm Polo Club in Dubai. Like many, Juan is diversified in his approach to doing business. Along with being a rider and trainer he is also a veterinarian and a practitioner of natural methods. Having worked here for over 12 years he was able to provide good insights on business practices, and where interests and opportunities for Canada exist.

Thursday, March 27th | Today, my last day in the UAE, we visited two Emirates. The first was Ras al Khaimah, home to the RAK Endurance Stable where the manager, Anzaq Mehmood Chaudary, was kind enough to take us on a tour. Many of the horses had come from other countries including Argentina and Australia. Good horsemanship was a strong focus, ensuring these horses are competitive well into their teens.

A quick drive took us to the fourth Emirate of our trip, Sharja. Our first stop was at the Sharja Equine Hospital. We were told by our host that the hospital was relatively modest, and yet it was well equipped with the latest imaging and diagnostic tools. It was also a collection and insemination centre for both fresh and frozen semen. The hospital maintained an impressive inventory of frozen semen, representing many horse breeds.

Next to the hospital was the Sharja Equestrian Centre, which was hosting a Show Jumping competition that was sanctioned by the UAE Equestrian & Racing Federation. The show ran over two days, with two classes on each day. The highlight of the tour, provided by manager Ashraf Elliathy, was a massive indoor facility, which included stables, arenas and a library. Permanent seating as well as sponsorship signage demonstrated a commitment to increase commerce and participation in horse sport in this Emirate.



Paddocks at Sharja Equestrian Centre

On my last evening, my colleagues and I reflected on the day and made a commitment to ensure plans are generated from our ideas, and that in turn, these plans transform into action in the very near future. By working together to ensure the momentum is maintained, actions are focused, and necessary resources are obtained, we are confident that alliances between Canada and the UAE will build to increased commerce for both countries.

To see the companion slide show to this diary, go to:

www.EquineConcepts.com > Portfolios > Projects Managed.