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# ALL YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT STATE STUDS IN POLAND BUT WERE SHY TO ASK



Over the course of several years of travels and conversations with people from the Arabian horse industry I discovered a list of most frequently asked questions about the Polish State Studs. The Pride of Poland Sale, taking place at Janów Podlaski in the stud's jubilee year (200 years of the stud's existence) seems to be the perfect opportunity to answer them in one go. All of the below – sometimes surprising – questions were asked more than once in conversations with experts from the equine industry, show organizers, representatives of the industry media and breeders from Austria, Qatar, Belgium, Italy and the United States.





**Q:** Is there still such a thing as a Pure Polish Arabian horse?

**A:** Yes. „Pure Polish” is a phrase distinguishing Polish breeding from others around the world. Regardless of its pedigree, every horse born in Poland is considered Pure Polish. Due to the general availability of „global” stallions there is no other way to define a Pure Polish horse. A horse by Polish parents, born abroad, will have a Polish pedigree, but will not be described as Pure Polish.

**Q:** Are only State Stud horses registered in the Polish Arabian Stud Book (PASB)?

**A:** No. All horses born on the territory of Poland with parentage proven by DNA tests are registered in the PASB and it doesn't matter whether they are of state or private breeding.

**Q:** Does every horse from a state stud have a „PASB” suffix added after its name?

**A:** No. Sometimes in foreign publications you can find a „PASB” suffix next to the names of horses, but it is not part of the name, only an information that the horse comes from Poland and is registered in the Polish Arabian Stud Book. So this suffix can by all means be removed from the pages of show catalogues.

**Q:** How many Arabian state studs are there in Poland?

**A:** Today in Poland there are three Arabian state studs: the oldest of them, celebrating its 200 year anniversary this year, is Janów Podlaski. In 1919 an Arabian breeding department was established here. Another



stud is Michałów, established in 1953 and from the very beginning intended as an Arabian horse stud. In Białka Arabian horses have been bred for only 35 years. But we must emphasize that in 2020 Białka will be celebrating its 90th anniversary, because the first horses came here in 1930.

**Q:** Is the 200 year anniversary of Janów Podlaski Stud the same as 200 years of Arabian horse breeding in Poland?

**A:** No. In Poland Arabian horses have been bred for centuries by private breeders, mainly by studs owned by Polish magnates, especially those from the Borderlands, as well as in smaller estates. Though the first stud in Poland to breed oriental horses was the stud of Polish King Sigismund Augustus in Knyszyn in the 16th century.

1778 is considered as the symbolic date which marks the beginning of Arabian horse breeding, when Crown Grand Hetman, Franciszek Ksawery Branicki (1729–1819) established a stud in the Szamrajówka khutor.

We must underline that it were the horses from private breedings that formed the foundations of the successes of horses from the Polish state studs in 20th century.

Janów Podlaski, established by tsar Alexander I in 1817 as a National Stud in the Kingdom of Poland, was the first State Stud on Polish soil. But he had to wait for more than a hundred years before it became synonymous with Arabian horse breeding.

And so the history of Arabian horse breeding in Poland is 239 old and Polish Arabian State Stud horse breeding – 98 years.

**Q:** How many mares are there currently in Arabian state studs in Poland?

**A:** More or less one fourth of all Arabian mares in Poland are the property of the three state studs. Since in 2016 there were 1090 mares registered in the PASB in total, this means that the State Studs own about 270.

**Q:** What does it mean that the Polish State is the owner of the horses?

**A:** The studs are commercial law companies, in which the Polish State has 100% shares. The studs are supervised by the Minister of Agriculture.



photo: Karolina Wengerek



photo: Krzysztof Dużyński



photo: Karolina Wengerek

Director of breeding at Michałów Stud Hanna Sztuka  
and President of Michałów Stud Maciej Paweł Grzechnik



photo: Oliwia Chmielewska

**Q:** Are the Polish studs of military nature, since their workers wear uniforms? Are the stud presidents generals?

**A:** No, the Polish studs are not military, but due to the cavalry traditions in Poland the workers wear ceremonial uniforms during special occasions. There were numerous state stallion depots in Poland in the past, which delivered horses for the army. They were considered to be companies of strategic

importance. The uniform is therefore a symbol not only of a continuity of Polish breeding, but also of the Polish statehood. During the years of the Second Polish Republic (1918–1939), when Poland regained its independence after 123 years of partitions, right up to the outbreak of World War II when Poland found itself under German and Soviet occupation, government officials from postmen to foresters, from stud workers to stallion depot staff, all wore uniforms similar to military ones. After the war this tradition remained.

As Michałów President Maciej Paweł Grzechnik informs, the Michałów uniforms will soon be slightly modernized. „We will be modifying the cut and colour”, he explains. „As well as tidying up the symbolism. The ranks on the uniforms will reflect the employee’s rank in the stud”.

**Q:** Will the state studs be privatised?

**A:** Arabian horse studs in Poland, as one of the best in the world, are a national treasure, that’s why there are no plans to privatise them. Although in the past, especially in the beginning of the 90s of the 20th century, when the political transformation in Poland was taking place, there were a lot of talks about this. Bogdan Szumański, the President of the Małopolska Hodowla



photo: Karolina Wengerek

Michałów Stud



Roślin (Małopolska Plant Production state company), owner of the stud in Białka, answers: „Privatization of Białka is not in the works. The Stallion Depot is and will be a part of the Małopolska Hodowla Roślin company.”

## Q: Has Janów always grown in strength?

**A:** No, the stud suffered ups and downs during its history.

For the first time the danger of liquidating the stud appeared in 1864. A committee was sent to Janów which eliminated 98 horses from the herd! The stud was saved thanks to the intervention of Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich, a reformer of the Russian cavalry, horse expert and enthusiast.

Also later history was not so fortunate for Janów.

In the first years of the 20th century the liquidation of the stud again appeared to loom on the horizon. However Count Alexander Nieroth, the then director of the stud, was luckily able to obviate this danger. He remained as director until his death in 1913.

Next World War I and later World War II completely ruined Polish breeding. However despite many adversities the Janów Stud is now celebrating 200 years of almost uninterrupted existence.

## Q: Do Polish horses descend from Russian ones?

**A:** No, it is the opposite – many Russian horses come from horses robbed in Poland. The first robbery took place during World War I.

In 1914, after the outbreak of World War I, the herd was evacuated to the Kharkov Governorate and in 1915 it was evacuated again – and did not return to Janów. „Practically the entire pre-war herd died in Russia and during the revolution of 1918”, writes Prof. Witold Pruski in his book „The history of Janów Podlaski Stud 1817–1939”. „When after regaining independence the Polish government rebuilt the stud, the foundations for it were made of completely different horses, imported from Austria and Hungary and acquired from various private Polish herds (...). The old Janów blood ceased to exist”.

Also the majority of private-bred horses died or found themselves in Russian hands due to the Bolshoi Revolution of 1917.

The second robbery took place in 1939.

Several days after the Germans crossed the Polish border the stud at Janów Podlaski evacuated itself East. At the news of the Russians attacking from the East, both people and horses turned back to Janów, reaching the stud in pitiful condition after a 12

photo: Ewa Imielska-Hebda



The commemorative plaque honoring Janów's former director Andrzej Krzyształowicz



photo: Ewa Imielska-Hebda



Breeding manager at Janów Podlaski Anna Stefaniuk



photo: Ewa Imielska-Hebda

photo: Ewa Imielska-Hebda



Pogrom, Janów Podlaski Stud

Janów Podlaski, the ceremony honoring the 200 years anniversary of the stud



photo: Ewa Imielska-Hebda

President of Małopolska Hodowla Roślin company, Bogdan Szumański, with Celita



photo: Ewa Imielska-Hebda

day long journey. Several hours later the Soviet troops came. All horses were robbed; they were loaded onto wagons and transported to Caucasus – to Tersk. Among the mares robbed by the Russians 7 were lost and 20 made it to Tersk, from where they were again evacuated in fear of the approaching German troops – by foot! – to Kazakhstan. Only 9 of them lived longer than 3 years, among them mares who would become famous dams in later years: the Ofir daughter Mammona 1939, great-granddam of Monogramm, foundress of a dynasty from which the majority of Russian horses today descend, and Taraszcza 1937, who produced Negatiw, the sire of Nabor and Bandos; as well as the wonderful Gazella II 1914 and the valuable Kewa 1923 (in 1953 her granddaughter Piewica was purchased, who began today's world-famous „P” line in Poland), the remarkable stallion Piołun 1934, the later sire of Priboj 1944 who left 203 foals at Tersk and the famous race horse Hardy 1926. And most of all the epochal Ofir 1933, son of Kuhailan Haifi.

### **Q:** Is it true that under the German occupation nothing bad was happening at Janów?

**A:** No. The years 1939–1945 were as dramatic for Janów as for the entire country. Indeed, the German administration gave rise to Janów Podlaski from ruin, but treated the horses as spoils of war and did not intend to give them back to Poland. So they were actually taking care of their own livestock.

In 1941 there were already 13 pure-blood mares in Janów, including Iwonka III 1936 (together with her daughter Bałajka), taken by the Germans from Kraśnica Stud. However this valuable mare was sent by order of Colonel Gustav Rau, a German equine expert and head of studs on the occupied territories, to Hostau in the Sudetes mountain range on the Czech side of the border. The Janów mares were bred to various sires, including colts which avoided being transported to Tersk thanks to their escape – the later famous Witraż, Wielki Szlem and Witeź II.

Andrzej Krzyształowicz, who during the German occupation worked at Janów the entire time, recounted that in Autumn of 1943 the Gestapo discovered a unit of the Home Army (Polish resistance movement) on the stud's premises. Seven grooms were arrested. Six of them were executed – only one of them returned to the stud.

In July of 1944 the Nazi authorities loaded all the horses onto trains heading West. For half a year the stud was stationed at Sohland near Rotstein (Saxony), after which it set off on foot to Dresden, by order of Colonel Gustav Rau, to the local cavalry





photo: Ewa Imielska-Hebda

barracks. The column reached Dresden at a time of the carpet-bombing by the Allies – on the night of the 13th and 14th of February, 1945. Many horses perished.

### **Q: Who is the breeder of horses born in the state studs?**

**A:** Horses from state studs belong to companies, as that's what the studs are. Therefore the breeders of the horses registered in the Stud Books are State Studs, not people with a name and surname. The stud managers are employed by the owner of the companies, the Polish State, which has 100% shares in them.

Jerzy „George” Zbyszewski once compared Arabian horse breeding to major fashion houses. „I like this comparison”, admits Hanna Sztuka, director of breeding at Michałów Stud. „Breeding is creating. I see it like this: if John Galliano designed for Chanel, then his services are huge, but the brand remains Chanel. When Chanel changed its designer, the brand did not

change. We are working for a brand which is Michałów. We believe that after us will come other designers, which will continue the tradition that we are continuing today.”

### **Q: Who was the longest manager of Janów Podlaski in history?**

**A:** In 1956 the management of Janów was taken over by Andrzej Krzyształowicz, who was associated with the stud since the 30s of the 20th century. As a worker of the stud he accompanied its evacuation during the war (1939) and later worked there during the German occupation. He retired in 1991, meaning he ran the stud for 35 years.

### **Q: Who was the longest manager of Michałów in history?**

**A:** The first president of Michałów Stud, Ignacy Jaworowski, took over the post in 1953 and held the position unceasingly until his retirement in 1997. So he was the head of Michałów for 44 years!

### **Q: Why do foals have names starting with the same letter as their dam's name?**

**A:** This system was introduced just after World War II in the then Polish studs: in 1950 in Albigowa Stud, 1951 in Nowy Dwór Stud and from 1952 in Klemensów-Michałów Stud. This rule is in effect until this day, not only in the state studs, but in private breeding as well.

Earlier other solutions were used, for example after World War I the largest Polish studs took on a naming system which consisted of subsequent foal crops receiving names beginning with the same letter of the alphabet. This „countdown” begun in Janów Podlaski in 1919, when foals received names starting with the

photo: Ewa Imielska-Hebda



Elidus, Białka Stud



letter „A”. During 1940–46 Janów-bred horses received names from „A” to „G”, respectively. Unfortunately in the post-war disorder the naming system also turned into chaos. The alphabetic system was again introduced in 1947, starting the cycle from the letter „A”. Soon however today’s rule became effective.

**Q: Do all Polish Arabian horses race at the track?**

**A:** No, today the studs send only selected horses from the racing program to the track, as well as those which should undergo stamina trials. Arabian horse racing was initiated in Poland in 1927. The creator of the concept that the breeding program should also encompass racing trials was Bogdan Ziętański, who was also the starter in races at the track in Lvov. President Maciej Paweł Grzechnik has informed that starting from 2016 Michałów Stud is sending all fillies from a given crop to the track. „Only after such a trial the mare will be eligible to be introduced into the herd”, he ensures.

**Q: What is the Polish breeding tradition about?**

**A:** Polish tradition is about rearing horses together in groups, in a natural way. The horses are not isolated, but are allowed to remain longer in the herd. „This often makes a huge impression and causes surprise among the stud’s visitors”, notices Hanna Sztuka from Michałów Stud. „Fifteen mares with foals, together, and they don’t kill each other? No, they live in perfect agreement”.

**Q: Why does the Polish State maintain Arabian horse studs?**

**A:** The most important task of the stud is to maintain the genetic pool of Arabian horses by cultivating Polish sire and dam lines, which allows to preserve a variety of genetic population of the species. Therefore their aim of existence is not a business one. „Polish breeders are famous for their ability to breed horses, not only Arabians. It is our cultural heritage”, adds Hanna Sztuka. „Modern private Arabian horse breeding also comes from the tradition cultivated by state studs”.

**Q: What is the difference between the Pride of Poland and Polish Prestige auctions?**

**A:** Auctions at Janów Podlaski under the brand of Polish

Director of Białka Stud, Lucjan Cichosz,  
with Perika and her 2017 filly by El Omari



photo: Ewa Imielska-Hebda

Prestige were organized by Marek Grzybowski, working at the time in Animex, and his colleagues. He conducted the first auction in 1974. At the beginning of the 90s, during the political transformation, he left Animex and established the Polish Prestige company, existing until today. Since 1996 to 2000 he organized auctions under the banner of his own company. In 2001 the organization of the auction was taken over by Polturf company (until 2015). The established at that time brand name of the auction – Pride of Poland – exists until today. The Pride of Poland trademark is the property of Janów Podlaski Stud.

**Q: Who is the manager of the state studs today?**

**A:** The studs are administered by managers chosen in competitions organized by the Agricultural Property Agency, which is a government institution under the Ministry of Agriculture. Chosen as president of Michałów Stud in October of 2016 was Maciej Paweł Grzechnik, a PhD in agricultural sciences, specializing in animal husbandry. The Janów Podlaski Stud is managed since June 2016 by Sławomir Pietrzak, professor in agricultural sciences, employee of the Horse Breeding Department of the Biology and Animal Breeding Faculty in Lublin, equestrian judge, president of the Lublin Equestrian Club. The director of Białka Stud is veterinarian Lucjan Cichosz, stemming from regions near Krasnystaw, also a member of the Małopolska Hodowla Roślin board, owner of Białka Stud. The president of this state company is Bogdan Szumański, earlier a member of the Supervisory Board of the Tarnów Regional Development Agency, a member of which is Klikowa Stud, known as the organizer of many events for Małopolska horses. 🐾





photo: Ewa Imielska-Hebda