

Horse Breeding in Turkey

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Abstract: In this paper the following aspects of the horse breeding in Turkey were treated: historical development, horse breeds imported to and bred in Turkey, their numbers, purpose of breeding and the herdbook system. The numbers of horses kept at the State Farms and the numbers of Arabian and Thoroughbred horses were tabulated by years. Also included in this presentation were information on the laws concerning horse breeding, equine federations and clubs, the numbers of equestrian and traditional sports clubs and their distribution by provinces.

Introduction

There is evidence that the horse was domesticated by ancient Turkish clans at Central Asia about 3000 years B. C. (1, 10) Although various breeds were utilised in different ways along the history, nowadays Arabian and Thoroughbred horse breeding for racing is practiced. While the horse population was as high as 1.3000.000 in the 1960s, it presently dropped as low as 271.000. (13) The purpose of breeding ranged from coldblood breeds as draught animal and for the army to warmblood horses for the cavalryman and for racing and sports.

In the history of state horse farms the breeds of Arabian, Thoroughbred, Native Anatolian, Percheron, Hannover, Anglo-Norman, Orlof, Nonius and Haflinger were brought and of these only the breeds of Arabian, Thoroughbred, Native Anatolian, Nonius and Haflinger were used for purebred and half-bred breeding. (24) At present mainly the Arabian horses are raised at the state farms as well as a few number of Haflinger horses. Thoroughbred horse breeding is carried out only by the private horse farms.

For the purebred Arabian and Thoroughbred horses, the registration in the herdbook, keeping records and arranging pedigrees/passports are carried out by the Higher Council of Commissioners (HCC) attached to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA). The records of other horse breeds are kept by the Ministry or by the institutions authorized and supervised by the Ministry. (10, 24) The money accrued in the Special Fund is used by the Ministry for the breeding of horses, facilities for horses and improvement of livestock production. (10, 16)

At present, the Arabian horses are bred at the State Farms of Karacabey (1924), Çifteler (1934), Sultansuyu (1930) and at the lodging facilities for horses of the Turkish Jokey Club (TJC) at Eskişehir-Mahmudiye and Şanlıurfa. The Thoroughbred horses are bred at the

lodging facilities at Karacabey, Central Insemination Station at İzmit and at the other insemination centers at İzmir-Torbalı, Adana-Seyhan, Trakya-Silivri all of which are owned by the TJC. (10, 11)

In the 24 provinces of Turkey, amble horses are bred and races are carried out. In addition there are 20 active federated equestrian club, 23 jerid clubs as well as 250 private horse farms raising Thoroughbred and Arabian horses. Use of horses in curing some ailments became popular in recent years and is in practice at a few centers. (10)

There are seven hippodromes at the provinces of İstanbul, Ankara, Bursa, İzmir, Adana, Şanlıurfa and Elazığ where horse races take place with Arabian and Thoroughbred horses and bettings on these races are very popular. (11)

Short History of Horse Breeding

There are indications that Turks were known as the nation who took the horses to the war fields and initiated the nomadic culture with horses. In ancient Turkish civilisations affection for horses is also manifested in religious beliefs. Using horses for sacrifice and burying the deads with their horses are the Turkish traditions in those periods. (10, 26) After the acception of Islam by Turks at 10th and 11th centuries the religious significance of the horse gradually decreased, however its position and importance in the society continued. (26)

In the Ottomans, expeditionary forces constituted the core of the first cavalier establishment. (10, 21, 26, 28) During this period another important establishment is the Sultan's escort cavalry. (10, 28) During the 14th and 15th centuries the "livestock clubs", along with raising horses, endeavoured also for genetic improvement. (26) In this establishment, to improve native horses, crossbreedings with Arabian and Persian horses were carried out. (17, 19, 25, 26, 28)

During the glorious years of the Ottoman Empire, horses in the country were very enduring, agile and strong. (26) Three breeding stallions used to develop the Thoroughbred horse were imported to England from the countries under the sovereignty of Ottoman Empire: Byerley Türk from İzmir in 1689, Darley Arabian from Aleppo in 1706 and Godolphin Arabian from Tunisia in 1730. (17, 22, 25)

Along with the stagnation period (1579-1683) and recession period (1683-1918) of the Ottomans horse breeding has also showed a continuous decline. Due to losing a great majority of breeding stock in the wars, economical conditions, lack of scientific methods and programs, both the number of purebred horses decreased and the height at withers of 1.52m in the 16th century dropped to as low as 1.34m at the beginning of the 20th century.

After the Ottoman-Russian war of 1877-1878, the Çifteler (1885), Sultansuyu (1889) and Çukurova (1894) horse farms were established to breed horses suitable for the cavalry. However, due to insufficient knowledge and errors in application the horse farms were closed in 1908 and the land was distributed to the villagers and the breeding stock were sold. Again, in the years 1909-1913, 12 stallion studs were established across the country to improve the breeding stock and to supply the army with remounts the "remount organisation" was instituted. (26)

To improve the native breeds, breedings were carried out with Arabian, Thoroughbred, Anglo-Norman and Hungarian horses through the years 1829-1906. (28) During this period, regular races were started in İzmir in 1856. Furthermore horse races were organised in İstanbul through 1846-1867, in Manisa in 1894 and in Samsun in 1901. (26)

The Ottoman Jokey Club was established in 1909, but the conditions of war prevented the activities of the Club. The Cavalry Fraternity Equitation Club and the Association for the Genetic Improvement of Horse were established in 1913 and they became the organizer of horse races. General Mustafa Kemal had got horse races organized in Ankara in 1920. (10, 26)

Horse races similar to those in the west was realised in 1922 by the mediation of an English establishment named “Makrikeny Racing Syndicate”. At that time, a good horse was defined as that suitable for racing, war and riding. Hence, a horse suitable for racing could be a war horse. The racing sector is an important means in the genetic improvement of the horse, as well as providing financial resource to the horse-breeding. Financial resource is formed through the deductions made from the bettings on the horse races. (26)

The first horse farm of the Republic is the Karacabey State Farm (1924). (19) Afterwards, for the purpose improving the horses of the military and of the people, the State Farms of Sultansuyu (1930), Anadolu (1934), Konya (1934-1957) and Çukurova (1935-1979) were established. (10, 21, 23, 28) Later on Karaköy (1949-1971) and Altındere (1950-1982) State Farms were added to these. (10, 21) Besides the stallion studs put to service at Çifteler, Konya, Diyarbakır (Arga), Erzurum (Ilica), Sivas and Mercimek breeding centers in 50 provinces were established. (10)

The Law of Livestock Improvement issued in 1926 laid down conditions that a stud-book should be formed and pedigree records kept for Arabian horses; with another law put into effect in 1952, the same rules were also applied to the Thoroughbred horses. (26)

In 1927, riding schools were opened at the Karacabey and Çifteler horse farms and hostlers, coachmen and apprentices were trained at these schools for the horse farms, stallion studs and equestrian clubs. (28) Furthermore, in 1937 a law was issued about the schools for blacksmith and the blacksmiths were required to be supervised by the government veterinarians. (2)

In 1926, the Higher Council for Racing and Genetic Improvement was instituted to promote interest in horsemanship and to encourage the establishment of private horse farms. (28) Deeming its necessity as a “specialist institute”, the Association of the Breeders and Owners of Race Horses was instituted in 1943. (10) The State Breeding Farms established in 1949 were merged with the State Horse Farms in 1983 under the name “The General Directorate of Agricultural Enterprises”. (28)

The Jockey Club was instituted in 1950, and it was accepted as an association beneficial to the public in 1953 and its name was changed as TJC. (10, 11) According to the laws regulating the horse races, MARA has the authority to organize the racing and accept the bettings on the races arranged in Turkey and abroad, played both in Turkey and abroad. (7, 16) Starting in 1953, the Ministry transferred this authority to TJC for 20-year periods. The

Ministry has the authority to supervise and audit, any time, the records and accounts of TJC and issue directives on these. (10, 11, 16)

Racing are regularly carried out, at the hippodromes of the cities below, administered by TJC: İstanbul (1969), Ankara (1998) (1936-1979, City Hippodrome of Municipality of Ankara), İzmir (1996), Bursa (1986), Adana (1962), Elazığ (1979) and Şanlıurfa (2000). (11, 24)

According to the bye-laws for the Horse Races put into the effect in 1955, the technical personnel employed in the racing are selected by the HCC and appointed with the approval of MARA. The HCC has the authority to issue licences to the persons required by the bye-laws and to annul these licences when it becomes necessary. (8) Based on an additional article to the bye-laws issued in 1999, the MARA organizes courses to improve the knowledge and specialisation of the technical personnel.

The MARA and TJC jointly organize training courses for the hostlers in the cities with hippodromes. The training of jockeys and apprentices also continues at the Ekrem Kurt Apprentice Training Center which was opened in 1985. Up to the recent years the training of the coaches was through master-apprentice relationship. Recently, at one of the two-year colleges of the Kocaeli University in the Marmara Region training is offered in the fields of coaching horses, farriery, horsemanship and saddlery. (10)

Upon the emergence of African Horse Sickness in Turkey in 1964 the International Equestrian Federation (FEI) imposed an embargo upon the Turkish horses and this prohibition lasted until 1968. Since the export and import of horses to the EU-countries is prohibited in recent years, because of Malleus Disease Turkish equestrians can only participate in the Balkan races. However, the Permanent Veterinary Commission of European Union officially announced that the prohibition of the temporary and permanent importation of registered living horses to the EU countries was annulled on 31.07.2002. (24) Hence, the exports have started of Thoroughbred and Arab horses to Kazakhstan, Bulgaria, Egypt, France, United State and United Kingdom. (14, 24)

The traditional equestrian sports such as jerd and amble races are being played since the Ottoman periods. Based on the law about the organization and duties of the General Directorate of Youth and Sports, “The Regulations for Equestrian Jerd” and “The Regulations for Amble Equitation” were issued. (5, 6) The oldest jerd club is the Erzurum Equestrian Sport Club established in 1957. There are presently about 22 more jerd clubs in Turkey. In addition, the Karun (Croesus) Jerd Club in the Province of Uşak has a ladies jerd team. For the equestrian jerd one of the most suitable breeds is Arab horses. Also, the other traditional sport Amble Racing is carried out in 24 provinces within the framework of the Federation of Traditional Sports Branches.

There are 20 equestrian clubs in Turkey registered to the Turkish Equestrian Club. Their distribution by the provinces is as follows; Ankara (6), İstanbul (5), Konya (2), Bursa (2), İzmir (1), Kocaeli (1), Mersin (1), Adana (1) and Antalya (1). (10)

The Horse Population and the Purpose of Breeding

While the horse population in Turkey was about 855.000 in 1909 (FAO), it dropped to around 480.000 in the '30s (FAO) due to the loss of breeding stock in the wars, economical conditions, lack of scientific methods and programs. (13)

Table 1. The horse population in Turkey by years (13, 18, 19, 20, 24)

Years	No. of horses	Years	No. of horses
1909	855.128	1981	794.000
1913	894.985	1991	513.000
1927	491.271	2000	309.000
1936	670.992	2001	271.000
1946	1.037.000	2002	271.000
1951	1.173.000	2003	249.000
1961	1.312.300	2004	271.000
1971	1.049.000	2005	271.000

The population of horses started to increase after 1935 with the effect of the establishments of horse farms and stallion studs and reached up to 1.300.000 in the '60s. But, because of the reasons such as the decline in the usage of horses in the army, mechanization in agriculture and motorized vehicles, the number of horses showed a decreasing trend and dropped to 271.000 in 2005. (13, 23)

In the '50s the replacement of animal power with motorized vehicles in agriculture and in 1959, the formation of motorized units and the dispersal of the cavalry units in the army were the main reasons of the decrease of interest in horsemanship dating from the second half of 20th century. Therefore there was also a change in the purpose of breeding. From a breeding for draught and riding to a breeding for sport. (24)

At the State Horse Farms, main breeding work was on the Turkish Purebred Arab Horse. The other breeds raised are Karacabey Nonius as a work and draught animal; jumping horses of various genotypes for the equestrian sports; Thoroughbred horses for the racing-track; superior work and riding horse of Haflinger which is powerful and easily managed. (28)

The need for breeding horses for the scientific activities started in 1924 were met through local purchases (Arab stallions and mares brought from Şanlıurfa and its environs); the stock remaining from the Ottoman palace; Arab horses imported from Irak (1930), Syria (1932) and Lebanon (1936). (22, 28) In addition, Noniuses from Hungary, Haflingers from Austria and Thoroughbreds from Great Britain were imported to the Karacabey horse farm and, breeding and crossbreeding works have been performed. (20, 27)

The Nonius stallions imported from Hungary to the Karacabey Horse Farm in 1923 were mated with the native mares to yield the Karacabey Nonius. Also through planned crossbreeding work between Arab stallions and native mares the Karacabey Half-bred Arab was obtained. In 1961, Haflinger horse from Austria was imported and was used to breed Half-bred Haflinger horses. (28)

Table 2. Breeding horse stock at the state horse farms and their distribution by some years (28)

Years	1956				1981			1995		2005
Horse Farms	Pb. Arab	Hb. Arab	Nonius	Kb. Nonius	Pb. Arab	Haflinger	Hb. Haflinger	Pb. Arab	Haflinger	Pb. Arab
Karacabey	149	240	19	54	93	59	47	247	75	434
Çifteler	289	217	-	-	203	-	-	257	-	310
Sultansuyu	156	-	-	-	151	-	-	242	-	262
Çukurova	187	193	15	51	-	-	-	-	-	-
Konya	75	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Karaköy	217	78	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Altındere	61	16	1	10	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	1134	746	35	115	447	59	47	746	75	1006

Kb: Karacabey Pb: Pure-bred Hb: Half-bred

As a result of mechanization and abolishment of the usage of horses in the army and agriculture, the breeding of Nonius and Haflinger horses gradually ended. The breeding of jumping horses started in 1962 to meet the need of the army and equestrian sports in Turkey. For this purpose Karacabey Horses and Karacabey Noniuses were used. (24)

At present the major part of the horses are Arab and Thoroughbred horses raised for racing. There are several associations related with the breeding of these horses: The Association of Turkish Race Horse Breeders and Owners (1943), The Association of Thoroughbred Horse Breeders and Owners (1989) and The Association of Pure-bred Arab Horse Breeders (2001). (10)

Table 3. The numbers, by years, of colts and breeding mares of Arab and Thoroughbred horses registered in the stud-book (15)

Years	Thoroughbred Horse			Arab Horse		
	Male Colt	Female Colt	Breeding Mare	Male Colt	Female Colt	Breeding Mare
2000	363	382	1269	281	270	1024
2001	468	475	1584	316	361	1057
2002	555	565	1839	408	386	990
2003	674	696	2141	431	466	1191
2004	710	735	1447	499	524	1048
2005	249	283	533	251	282	533

Table 4. The comparison of the racing Thoroughbred and Arab horses by years (14)

Years	Thoroughbred Horse		Arab Horse		Total
1975	276	%39	426	%61	702
1980	337	%48	367	%52	704
1985	297	%45	363	%55	660
1990	579	%51	550	%49	1.129
1995	804	%55	668	%45	1.472
2000	1.374	%60	928	%40	2.302
2001	1.685	%61	1.085	%39	2.770
2002	1.878	%61	1.217	%39	3.095
2003	1.996	%60	1.351	%40	3.347
2004	2.206	%60	1.498	%40	3.704
2005	2.411	%59	1.662	%41	4.073

While, of the racing horses 60% was Arab and 40% Thoroughbred in 1975, it reversed in 2005 to 60% Thoroughbred and 40% Arab.

Tablo 5: The numbers and proportions of racing Thoroughbred horses of various ages by years (14)

Years	Two-years olds		Three-years olds		Four-years and older		Total
1997	237	%25.85	299	%32.61	381	%41.54	917
1998	254	%25.00	318	%31.30	444	%43.70	1.016
1999	355	%29.75	351	%29.42	487	%40.82	1.193
2000	344	%25.04	479	%34.86	551	%40.10	1.374
2001	441	%26.17	521	%30.92	723	%42.91	1.685
2002	432	%23.00	630	%33.55	816	%43.45	1.878
2003	545	%27.30	607	%30.41	844	%42.29	1.996
2004	677	%30.69	725	%32.87	804	%36.44	2.206
2005	806	%33.43	854	%35.42	751	%31.15	2.411

Tablo 6: The numbers and proportions of racing Arab horses of various categories by years (14)

Years	Three-years olds		A Category		B Category		C Category		Total
1997	198	%23.24	226	%26.53	234	%27.46	194	%22.77	852
1998	189	%21.85	248	%28.67	231	%26.71	197	%22.77	865
1999	218	%22.80	285	%29.81	236	%24.69	217	%22.70	956
2000	262	%24.46	321	%29.97	240	%22.41	248	%23.16	1.071
2001	338	%27.06	340	%27.22	285	%22.82	286	%22.90	1.249
2002	357	%29.33	381	%31.31	337	%27.69	375	%30.81	1.217

Table 7. The numbers and proportions of racing Arab horses of various ages by years (14)

Years	Three-years olds		Four-years olds		Five-years olds		Total
2003	450	%33.31	343	%25.39	558	%41.30	1.351
2004	503	%33.58	420	%28.04	575	%38.38	1.498
2005	611	%36.76	481	%28.94	570	%34.30	1.662

When the data, on the numbers and proportions of racing Thoroughbred and Arab horses of various ages, were examined, it is seen that in both breeds the numbers and proportions of the horses, racing for the first time, increase.

Some coldblood horse breeds are raised for the equestrian sports (hurdle jumping, dressage, endurance) performed under the auspices of Turkish Equestrian Federation. For the Pony clubs, Pony breeds; for the equestrian jerid, Arabian horse and short-armed Hınıs horse; for amble races, native horse types are raised. (10)

The native horse types are grouped as Anatolian native type, Uzunyayla type, Malakan horses and ponies. (10, 27)

Organization of Stud-book

Based on the Law of Livestock Improvement and the bye-law on the “Registration in Stud-book of Purebred Arabian and Thoroughbred Horses”, the registration in the stud-book, keeping records and arranging pedigrees/passports are carried out by the Higher Council of Commissioners attached to the MARA. (10, 12) The records of other horse breeds are kept by the Ministry or by the institutions authorized and supervised by the Ministry. The Central Doping Laboratory is in Ankara within the Etlik Central Veterinary Control and Research Institute of MARA. This laboratory is authorized for testing doping and blood, determination of breed and parentage. (3)

Financial Support for Horse Breeding

Based on a law issued in 1953, a special account in a public bank is opened for MARA. If the revenue from races in the current year is more than that in the previous year, 40% of the difference is transferred to this account. With the law titled “The Law Related to the Changes to be made in the Law on Horse Races” accepted in 2006, the money accrued in the special account is used by the Ministry or by the authorized racing organization for the genetic improvement of horses and the modernization of establishments related to races. (16)

Conclusions

Turkey is among the leading countries in the world having a wide range in bloodlines for Purebred Arabian Horse with 14 Sire bloodlines and 46 Dam bloodlines. (10) After 75 years of selection “Turkish Arabian Horse” was produced. (3, 22) In order to prevent inbreeding in Turkish Arabian Horse, stallions, mares and colts were imported from the United States, Poland, Germany and Austria. (3)

The breeding and improvement of Arabian horses are continued at the State Farms of Karacabey, Çifteler and Sultansuyu and at the lodging facilities for horses of the Turkish Jockey Club in Eskişehir and Şanlıurfa. The Thoroughbred Horses are bred and improved at the lodging facilities in Karacabey, Central Insemination Station İzmit and at the other insemination stations in İzmir-Torbalı, Adana-Seyhan and Trakya-Silivri, all of which are attached to the Turkish Jockey Club. The traditional equestrian sports such as jerid (Erzurum and environs and Uşak) and amble races (in various provinces throughout the Country) are still kept alive even though in the trend of decreasing. (10)

Turkish Jockey Club together with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs are the members of the following organizations:

IFHA (International Federation of Horseracing Authorities) (1994)

WAHO (World Arabian Horse Organization) (1997)

ARF (Asia Racing Federation) (1970)

IFAHR (International Federation of Arabian Racing Authority) (1998)

ISBC/ASBC (International Stud Book Committee/Asia Stud Book Committee) (1998) (10)

All of the founder strains in Turkey were approved by WAHO. (3) Furthermore starting from 1926, the import certificates of the pedigrees of all horses recorded by MARA, were approved by ISBC. (4)

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