

## **Summary**

This proposal aims to provide security for our world significant horse gene pool which may otherwise be lost, by creating a Waler heritage chapter and studbook within the ASHS.

The Waler horse formed a base for the Australian Stock Horse, and whilst the aims of the ASHS and Waler Horse Society (WHS) and Waler Horse Owners and Breeders Association (WHOBAA) differ, the original old bloodlines preserved by WHS and WHOBAA are vital links to the original genetic foundation pool of the Australian Stock Horse. This gene pool is not only significant to our Australian horses, but as many of the old breeds no longer exist, it is of significance to the international gene pool.

The preservation of these old blood lines has been achieved through rigorous research into the origins of the breeding history of our studbook horses: the various stations that bred for the overseas market, and the types of animals they were trying to establish, while recognising the movement of horses on and off the stations for work purposes. This movement gave the Waler a very wide genetic pool and also meant that not only army remounts could be labelled as Waler but also the horses used as part of every day life, whether riding, coaching, farming or sport. For this reason WHS and WHOBAA have not looked at horses descended from the eastern seaboard because of the influence of modern breeds. WHOBAA has made the cut off point as 1949 when commercial breeding ceased, no modern blood since then, and has been rigid in adherence to this principle.

The Waler is an Australian rare breed and requires a robust future to ensure its preservation. We propose that the establishment of a heritage chapter within ASHS complete with stud book would both assist in securing the future for the Waler as a distinct breed in its own right, and provide a unique opportunity to refresh the heritage links and gene pool of the ASHS. It would also facilitate greater national and international recognition for the Australian Stock Horse and the Waler as the heritage breed within that through competition and trade.

## **Why**

As a result of our perseverance to preserve the Waler we find that the horses we have bred over the past 25 years are throwing true to type and showing the old breed influences, these are coming through very strongly: old Cleveland Bay, Percheron, Norfolk Roadster, Basuto, Barb and Lincolnshire Black to mention a few. This gene pool is huge and we have it on authority from academics at Melbourne University's Glenormiston Campus that it is probably the strongest gene pool of any horse breed today. We therefore have an urgent responsibility to secure the future for the Waler Horse, for the sake of our horse stock and also internationally.

The existing Waler Horse associations are small. Procurement of foundation horses is difficult and costly. Promotion of the breed is limited with existing resources. What has been achieved so far rests on the shoulders of a few, and those few are getting older and less able to provide the effort required to continue forging a place for the Waler in what is a small and crowded domestic market. The risk is that what has been so far achieved will dwindle over time and the original bloodlines will be lost, as they have been with other breeds elsewhere in the world.

We have the example of the Swedish Warmblood, now probably one of the highest grossing sport horse exports in modern competition, which was developed from the Swedish war horse to what it is today, rather than left to disappear as our Waler horse was. We have the example of the Lipizzaner, which uses outside bloodlines for a few generations to keep the hybrid vigour in their horses. Australia is a small country with a proud horse heritage, let's build on all the hard work done by our forefathers that gave us a horse that has proved itself with its hybrid strength, tractability and hardiness. The challenge is to co-ordinate our efforts in a united campaign for the old bloodlines, the Waler, and the modern bloodline, the Australian Stock Horse, for the greater good of both breeds, as we see in the European examples given.

We believe that to be successful on the world stage we need to establish a Waler stud book within a heritage chapter of the ASHS, to keep the original rare breed stud lines intact and separate, but to use the gene pool to help refine and define the modern Australian sport horse. We have the bones of a top competition horse, let's take the next leap together to establish it!

### **How**

Our proposal is that the ASHS recognizes the need to preserve valuable and rare old bloodlines to retain the best possible genetic pool to take both the Waler and Australian Stock Horse forward, and to contribute on the world stage to the quality of horse populations. If our proposal is accepted by the Board of Directors of the ASHS, and then by its members, a heritage chapter and studbook would need to be established. This would require a change to the Articles of the Association and the development of rules and regulations for registration. Classifiers would need to be trained and foundation horses registered to establish the studbook.

The success of the proposal can be evaluated by way of identifying the likely immediate benefit to ASHS (such as bone, tractability and hardiness of cross bred horses; choice for members of heritage or modern type; work, pleasure and competition profile); assessing progeny, performance and member satisfaction; as well as by the level of participation of existing Waler Horse owners in the ASHS, and international interest and recognition in the heritage (Waler) stud book and development of the Australian Stock horse and Waler Sport horse.

### **Cost**

There would be some ASHS expenditure required in order to consider our proposal, present a motion, implement the Association Article changes necessary, train classifiers and classify horses. This could be offset by a special class of registration fees for existing foundation horses, possible access to existing WHSA or WHOBAA trained classifiers, and potentially by sponsorship of the heritage chapter from within the existing ASHS membership by way of donation and a premium stud fee for access to the first generation of 'heritage' foals. International sponsorship may also be readily solicited through existing ASHS links.

### **Credentials**

This proposal is generated by a concerned group of members of both WHSA and WHOBAA, some of whom are foundation members of both Societies with many years of experience locating, working and breeding Walers. All are current owners of horses from the Waler stock stations so far identified, including the most recent foundation Waler genetic pool located, with all horses currently registered with WHSA and/or WHOBAA stud books.

International expertise exists, with a strong Lippizaner and Swedish connection to enable exploration of replicating the contribution to international gene stocks. There are also a number of Waler owners and breeders committed to ensuring the future of our old bloodlines by taking what seems to be a natural step and joining forces with a large, high profile Australian organization via a heritage chapter within the ASHS. We also have a well established rare breeds project at an internationally recognized community farm in Melbourne, and existing Waler show classes, providing established channels of promotion to both national and international audiences.

### **Conclusion**

This proposal aims to provide security for our world significant gene pool which may otherwise be lost, by:

- offering our credentials and horses to enable the ASHS to formally recognize, by way of the establishment of a Waler heritage stud book as a chapter of ASHA, the link to its heritage and the importance of the gene pool to the ongoing robustness of 'the breed for every need', the Australian Stock Horse, and our Australian rare breed, the Waler,

and

- to facilitate raising ASHS's profile as a significant contributor to national and international horse breeding for work, pleasure and competition.