

# 2015 Canadian Nationals

# Bienvenue au Brandon



**THIS PHOTO:** Arabian Mare Breeding Champion GC Le Marais owned by the Al Shahania Stud and shown by Michael Byatt

**TOP:** Arabian Mounted Native Costume AOTR Champion CSP Magician and Annalise Himmel

**RIGHT:** Canadian National Champion and Reserve trophies are actual bronzes by Jill McKinley

*Jill McKinley*

BY JANET DE ACEVEDO MACDONALD

**“Welcome to Canada. Enjoy the Big Red.”** With that, the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) officer slid our packet of horse papers back across the wide counter — all properly photocopied and stamped. Fifteen hours of horse hauling behind us, my friend and I were high-fiving giddy on the way back to the truck and trailer.

### THE FACILITY

Located smack dab in downtown Brandon, the Keystone Centre facility sits on 90 acres. Its Agricultural Sales and Events Manager Dave Mein said it takes about two weeks to set up the 21 outdoor barns, 11 indoor barns and haul in 1400 yards of dirt for the various arenas. To picture that much dirt figure a semi dump truck carries 30 yards of dirt — that’s 50 truckloads! “We have a horse show every weekend,” said Mein, “but most average

100 to 400 horses. Yours, with 700, is by far the largest.” He added the wood shavings sales run upwards of 7,000 bales during the show.

Since I was last in Brandon in 2012, the on-site RV parking has been expanded to include some sites with electric, water and sewer hook ups. For a flat fee, our RV was assigned to a spot adjacent to the outdoor exercise arena and sometimes too near the railroad track with engineers who liked to blow the whistle as they chugged through town. As a footnote, during the show the weather gods smiled. However, barns that arrived early for set up told of 90-plus temps and high humidity. Blessedly, that gave way to sun-filled days in the mid-70s and 80s, with cool overnights and mornings good for a brisk workout.

### OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Not everyone who qualifies chooses to show at the national level. It’s a commitment whether you’re with a trainer, an amateur show pal, or on your own. If you’ve had an unexpectedly successful season qualifying right through regionals, deciding to show at the upper echelon can mean pulling a rabbit out of a hat financially. For those of us traveling with horses from the U.S., a negative Coggins drawn within the previous six months is required. AHA is very good at giving its exhibitors the heads up on what documentation is needed to cross the border. Once again the diseases vesicular stomatitis virus and the tick-borne equine piroplasmiasis added hoops to jump through for entrants.

Both CBSA officers asked us where we started our journey and the route we followed. It was done in a casual manner, but the questions were posed in a few different ways. For those who crossed at the International Peace Garden as we did, any stopping in, off loading or, heaven forbid, picking up an animal in South Dakota without the proper paperwork or quarantine to any Canadian crossing was verboten.

### LOVE FROM BRANDON

The signs “Brandon Welcomes Canadian National Arabians and Half-Arabian Championship Horse Show, August 16-22” were often spotted in local eateries. The show also figured prominently on the BrandonTourism.com major event calendar. Ambassadors for the City of Brandon were on hand outside the show office to answer questions and share information on where to eat, shop, and visit in the area.

Reporters from the Brandon Sun newspaper and local TV news also combed the barn areas for stories. And well they should. Canadian Nationals is responsible for bringing \$5.5 million dollars into the local economy. The six-day show had 422 purebreds and 278 Half-Arabians shown across 205 classes. With 2,087 entries, the average entry per horse was 2.98 classes, which is trending up from previous years.

Brandonites love the show. While setting up our stall area, my husband Ian chatted with two octogenarians that told him this route was part of their daily walk and they come each day to watch it transition — watching





**ABOVE:** Arabian 2-Year-Old Colts Jackpot Champion Beloved One NA owned by Patricia Dempsey and shown by Andy Sellman

**RIGHT:** Arabian 2-Year-Old Fillies Jackpot Champion RD Versaria owned by Murray Popplewell and shown by Claudinei Machado



Canada is the national governing body for all equine and equestrian sporting and recreational activities and interests (except racing) in Canada. Equine Canada sanctions four types of competitions each year: Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze. Our show is the Silver type. Because Equine Canada encourages all equestrian sport in all disciplines to participate in anti-doping measures and fair medication control to safeguard the health and

welfare of all, random drug testing is done at the show. What can and cannot be administered is more stringent than in the U.S. That said, in chatting with Dr. Marc Phillipot, the official show vet, he finds he actually talks more with owners about non-medicating measures that can be taken for horses with issues like irritated eyes, coughs reacting to shavings dust, or bug bite welts on horses stalled outdoors. Sprinkling water over shavings, soaking hay, and putting fly sheets on horses overnight are examples of things that can be done to keep the horse comfortable, showing, and not running afoul of Equine Canada regulations.

Jill Barton is one of four Equine Canada Stewards working the show. When asked how many years she's been a steward, Jill laughed easily

saying, "Too many." After witnessing Jill admonish an exhibitor for lunging her horse in the Westoba Ag Centre warm up area, I asked why it was a problem since I'd seen lungers and riders share space many times during the week. Not too surprisingly, the reason stems from the facility's liability insurance, but Jill admits during busy times lunging is tolerated in these no-lunging-anytime posted warm-ups as long as no horse and rider are exercising at the same time. "It's a safety issue too. In the nice weather, warming up can be done in the outdoor arena."

### ATTENDING THE SHOW

In addition to seeing horse show friends, the two things I love about a big show are the shopping and the show program. These books — for me 200-plus pages is a book — are filled with all kinds of good information. I don't get to see many of these different classes until the national show, so I'm interested to read the class descriptions and what the judges are looking for. I've been known to buy extra show programs and mail them to friends who couldn't attend too. Tens bucks plus postage is well worth it to put the smile on that face.

This technological boom time we live in has so many ways for us not only to stay in touch, but also to "go" to a horse show without leaving home through ArabianHorseGlobal.com. The AHA itself has jumped head long into social media with a presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest. Using hashtags for its national shows (#ahaCNL15) we can keep up on each other's show wins, horses, and where's a good place to eat?

Arabian English Trail and Arabian English Trail AOTR and the Half-Arabian/Anglo-Arabian counterparts were new to Canadian Nationals for 2015. Seventeen horse-and-rider

**TOP TO BOTTOM:** Arabian Western Pleasure Walk Trot 10 and Under Top Ten Ima Cowboy Cassanova and Xelyna Colon

Half-Arabian Reining AOTR Champion Freckles Got Trix and Velda Peach

Showmanship AATH Champion Ian Sage and BSF Copenhagen Angel+



teams competed in the fifth newbie, A/HA/AA Western Horsemanship AATR. With 19 exhibitors, the show's largest in-hand class was Monday evening's class 1372 A/HA/AA Showmanship AATH in the Westoba Ag Centre.

### COMMENTS FROM CENTER RING

Not only was this Richard Wright's first time to Brandon it was also his first time judging Canadian Nationals. He found his fellow judges an interesting combination of strong-minded individuals with long backgrounds in the horse business and with varied experiences. Richard admired his fellow judges, "not because we always agreed, but because our discussions were always insightful."

In the past, Richard has found the Halter classes lacking. "We've moved away from the overfed, heavy beef cattle look. The top horses in all divisions through Westman Place were exceptional not just at a show level, but on a worldwide level." He added that the horses looked like fit athletes, and their conditioning was exceptional.

Friday evening's Arabian Mare Breeding class received some of the highest praise from Judge Wright. "I saw mares that had the 'good old days' caliber of the Bask ++ daughters Dancing Flame ++ and Fire Music++."

Panel One judge Carmelle Rooker





LEFT: Dressage Training Level ATR Top Ten Ella Fruchterman and Sofine Strait Man+/  
BELOW: Arabian Hunter Pleasure Champion Klint Black+++// ridden by Cindy Shelton for Flois and Cindy Burrows  
BOTTOM: Ubiquitous Jack Russells



birthday.” Paul shows with Chuck Siemon Stables and this year is his 10th or 12th Canadian Nationals. “I like the fact that it’s fun and feels like a big family.”  
To have her owner tell it, Fames Harley Girl is a diva. There’s just no other way to describe this seven-year-old bay The Color Of Fame daughter. Of the many things she has made clear, showing indoors is preferred. Getting her wish in the Westoba Ag Centre, it was full steam ahead for the prima donna and her amateur owner Stephanie Eckelkamp, taking home three National Championships, three Reserves, and three Top Ten honors for In Hand, Dressage, and Under Saddle classes in the Sport Horse division. Stephanie, a widowed, single parent from Dresbach, Minnesota, crunches numbers by day, and is a second-generation horsewoman of a three-generation branch started by her mother trainer Jan Wiggert. Jan’s

echoed Wright’s comments on overall quality. Bey Monet TRJ, bred and owned by Ross Danielson of Buffalo, Minnesota, and shown in Wednesday evening’s Arabian Futurity Fillies Championship by Jeff Schall, was one of two horses that were top of mind not only for beautiful but also for being structurally correct. The other horse receiving similar accolades from both Wright and Rooker was Patricia Dempsey’s two-year-old Ever After NA colt, Beloved One NA, handled by Andy Sellman in the Two Year Old Colt Jackpot.

that national championship thrill, MM Zhivago took Top Ten honors in the Arabian Futurity Colts with handler Kim Morgan. “It was great to celebrate these victories with Kim. She’s been a great friend to me in this business.”

CL Berry Supreme+// has been Paul Heiman’s horse for 20 years. Owner of the 120-acre Valley Hei Farm in Mason, Ohio, the 89-year-old Arabian Country English Pleasure AAOTR 40 and Over rider gives me hope as a horse lover who hasn’t begun showing in the saddle yet. “I started taking lessons when I was 63, and got my first blue ribbon on my 65th



VIGNETTES

Prospecting for stories is fun, like panning for gold. Facebook is a stream rich with nuggets. After settling in, I posted on my personal page that I was interested in talking to exhibitors about their Canadian Nationals experience. That, and stopping in the show office a few times to learn what they were hearing, helped me find these gems to share.

“I’ll never forget hearing number 595 called,” said Patti Meir, the proud breeder, owner and handler of the 2015 Arabian Stallion Breeding AAOH Champion 2012 Eden C son, MM Zhivago. Two days after

younger daughter Kate Wiggert-Johnson and 11-year-old granddaughter Lyric Johnson, also amateurs, share Kate’s 11-year-old purebred gelding TAL Java Bey, and mixed it up showing in 10 Sport Horse In Hand, Dressage, and Hunter Pleasure classes.

“Our season begins Memorial Day Weekend and we have certainly peaked nicely at Canadian Nationals,” said Jan. “We’re having a good season, with many successes, but we’re more the 30-year overnight success story. We’re not quitters. We learn and keep coming back.”

Marg Woodruff of Bono, Arkansas, and her 24-year-old gelding KN Rio Tuff+ have that same kind of grit. The two have been together 20 years. Marg entered Rio in trail classes, including the new Arabian English Trail Open and AOTR, and they went home with two National Championships in English Trail, along with two Top Ten honors in Western Trail. “I’ve had Rio since he was four and we’ve done pretty well,” said Marg. Her humbly stated, “pretty well” includes gathering enough Amateur Achievement Award (AAA) points for her Rider of Supreme Honor Champion.

Another honorable mention in the AAA category is 11-year-old Ella Fruchterman of West Lakeland,



ABOVE: Sport Horse Under Saddle Champion Jennifer Ramsey and Amazing Grace DB with Top Ten Anne Burnett Ramsey and Farrha

BOTTOM: Arabian Country English Pleasure AAOTR 40 and Over Top Ten CL Berry Supreme+// and Paul Heiman

Minnesota. Aboard her 16-year-old geldings Sofine Strait Man+// and Starfires Orion+// Ella achieved three national Top Ten honors in Dressage, and enough points for her Rider of Supreme Honor Champion.

AOTS is the acronym for amateur horse owners who train and show their own horses. Anne Burnett Ramsey and Jennifer Ramsey from Elk City, Kansas, and their mares Farrha and Amazing Grace DB, are two of a growing group who choose this route to the show ring. Three years ago Jennifer started an AOTS Facebook Group, now almost 400 members strong. Midsummer, posts went out asking about Canadian Nationals plans and who wanted to stall together in Brandon. Dian Bales of Oklahoma, long-time horse show friend of the Ramseys, with Oso her Miniature Aussie in tow, said she was in, and helped Marg haul KN Rio Tuff+. Greg Held and his three daughters Karissa, Alexis and Lindsey from the Madison, Wisconsin, area brought their two horses, VPA Bravo and Amigos Commander, and settled into the AOTS row, as did mother and daughter team Melanie and Madeline Erce, with their

18-year-old multi-national champion gelding JW Alexandrite+//. I said yes too, bringing our four-year-old purebred gelding AMF Renoirs Legacy. I’ve known the AOTS group since Jennifer started its annual Secret Santa gift exchange. In June, and with encouragement from both Ramseys to learn about the Sport Horse division, Ian and I had talked with Madeline about her interest in showing our gelding in hand and under saddle. These seven horses were awarded six national championships, one reserve championship, and numerous Top Ten honors. Farrha earned her Legion of Honor and Amazing Grace DB earned her Legion of Merit. Madeline Erce became number ten in the nation in the AHA’s Amateur Achievement Awards program.

Number one on that AAA leader board is Rebecca Fielding of Idaho Falls, Idaho. A self-described stay-at-home mom with children ages six, three and six months, Becky has grown up in the horse industry. “I broke my first horse when I was seven. Because Mom’s a trainer, I don’t feel I really qualify as AOTS, but I did everything with Jack myself.” Jack is Half-Arabian

**RIGHT:**  
Arabian Regular Working Hunter Reserve  
Crimson N Smoke+++// and Kelly Alcorn

**BELOW:**  
Half-Arabian Regular Working Hunter  
Champion EVG Ellie Mae and Allan Ehrlick



gelding E-Jack Daniels+++// who received Top Tens in HA/AA Regular Working Hunter, HA/AA Hunter Hack, HA/AA Sport Horse Under Saddle, and A/HA/AA Hunter Seat Equitation Over Obstacles ATR, one Reserve Champion in HA/AA Regular Working Hunter ATR and a national championship on HA/AA Regular Working Hunter AAOTR. That championship was Becky's second for the show. Her first ever was with her 12-year-old Half-Arabian mare, Winsomes April Fool++++//

in HA/AA Sport Horse Mares In Hand Dressage Type.

When asked why she shows Sport Horse exclusively, Becky said she likes the camaraderie. "It feels more like a family, and I make more and more friends every year."

Showing at Canadian Nationals represents a culmination of the right things coming together. For 15-year-old Tabitha Bell, just getting to Brandon, ready to show in mind, body and spirit was a monumental accomplishment. At this year's Youth Nationals, Tabitha and Ima Rockin Pop Star aka "Stella" made it to the Friday night finals riding Western Pleasure, but in the championship class, Tabitha couldn't continue when her left reins-holding arm went numb. Her request to be excused was granted. Everyone except Tabitha and Michele Reser, whose husband Joe trains Stella,

thought the show season ended right there. Even as Tabitha lay tired and worn out, mother Jennifer recalled, "Michele told Tabby 'We can work it out,'" meaning they'd figure a way for her to go to Canadian Nationals the next month. And they did. The triumvirate's work paid off. Tabitha and Stella won unanimous championships in HA/AA Western Pleasure JOTR 18 and Under and placed third of eight for Top Ten honors in HA/AA Western Pleasure JTR 18 and Under. And goals keep being set: Tabitha's learning to drive a car, she and Vickey Bowman, her trainer at home in Utah, are focused on strengthening her right-hand side to use riding Western Pleasure, and you can expect to see this dynamic duo competing Side Saddle Western Pleasure in 2016 where we should all cheer our hearts out from the rail.



The author and her husband with Arabian Sport Horse In Hand Gelding Hunter Type Reserve Champion AMF Renoirs Legacy handled by Madeline Erce



Half-Arabian/Anglo-Arabian Sport Horse Mares In-Hand Dressage Type Champion Winsomes April Fool++++// with handler Rebecca Fielding

Earlier in 2015, on March 26 to be exact, it didn't look as if another Stella was going to make it to Canadian Nationals either. In fact, maybe she wasn't going to make it at all. On the morning the Alves family were ready to depart their farm in British Columbia for Ottawa, Ontario, for daughter Natalie to receive the Canadian Equine Junior Equestrian of the Year for the 2014 Show Year, Stella was found at 4:30 a.m. in great distress. By 9 o'clock she was in colic surgery. Six hours later, with what the surgeon termed "a freak twist" that didn't require any intestine to be removed, 17-year-old Half-Arabian Shake It Up Baby began her three week post-op stay, followed by 90 days of complete stall rest. At the 60-day mark, Natalie, who spent hours a day visiting with Stella got the okay to hand walk. On June 24, the vet cleared her to return to work. Not one week later, on June 29, Natalie entered Stella (who had qualified in 2014) to show in Canadian Nationals. Riding shotgun while dad Antonio Alves drove, father and daughter hauled Stella and two other horses 26 hours over two days with overnight stops along the way from Mission, British Columbia, to Brandon, Manitoba. The results: National Champion in HA/AA Ladies Side Saddle English; Unanimous National Champion in HA/AA Ladies Side Saddle English ATR; National Champion in HA/AA Country English Pleasure JOTR 18 and Under; National Champion in HA/AA English Show Hack JTR 14-18, and Reserve National Champion in HA/AA Country English Pleasure JTR 18 and Under.

Friday, August 21, was Armed Forces Day at the show when members from the various branches of Canadian Armed Forces stand with class members for their win photos.



**ABOVE:**  
Unanimous Champion Ladies Sidesaddle English ATR Shake It Up Baby and Natalie Alves

**RIGHT:**  
Half-Arabian Park Horse AOTR Reserve Champion Halsteads Deven and Michelle Pease-Paulsen



**BRANDON. MERCI, À LA PROCHAINE FOIS!**

A big thank you to the folks I interviewed and to those who pointed me in their direction. Office staffers Kathy Butkovic and Carol Spriggs — both from Edmonton, Alberta — were always so welcoming and nothing was ever too much to ask as an exhibitor or someone trying to ferret out the good stories happening at the show. Thanks too for a show well organized and executed by the Canadian Nationals Show Commission. There's a lot of work that goes into putting

Many show attendees showed their support of Canadian and U.S. military troops by wearing red that day. I'll remember it too as the day the four-year-old gelding my husband and I bred won his first national reserve championship with Madeline in Arabian Sport Horse In Hand ATH Hunter Type. It was a good looking group, and it was a thrill to do so well. My hats off to its national champion Sir Soxx A Lot and Nicole Rowley from Thorp, Washington. His beauty and way of carrying himself caught my eye earlier in the week, and I told his people so after photos.

an event of this caliber — plenty of hours put in by both paid staff and volunteers — and it was great. I look forward to next year when I hear "Welcome to Canada. Enjoy the Big Red." 🇨🇦

*Janet de Acevedo Macdonald is executive producer for America's number one travel radio show, Rudy Maxa's World. She is co-owner of both U.S. National Champion stallion Legacys Renoir+ and Canadian Reserve National Champion AMF Renoirs Legacy. Janet lives, works and travels full time in a 32-foot RV with her husband Ian and their miniature poodle Buddy.*