



# We show more than meets the eye

interview by: Jacek Turcki | photos by: Marta Baranowska

**M**ONIKA LUFT – publisher of [polskiearaby.com](http://polskiearaby.com) website and the Tutto Arabi Poland supplement, talks about where Polish breeding is at the moment and what is not seen at first glance.

**Jacek Turcki:** *Is Monika Luft a breeder of Arabian horses, a promoter of the breed or a publisher of [polskiearaby.com](http://polskiearaby.com) website? How do you see your role in this community?*

**Monika Luft:** *I have to admit that I perform all of the above, depending on the situation – however I focus most on journalism. But when need be, I also devote my attention to breeding, for example I already cannot wait to see the result of mating an Espadrilla daughter with Shanghai E.A. There's no way to be bored!*

**Monika Luft with Bajaderka (Złocień – Bagatela by Pesal), a multi champion mare**



**J.T.:** *Does the place of your origin affect your capabilities? Is it good or bad that you're from Poland?*

**M.L.:** *It depends. Good, because Poland is a country that is associated with Arabian horses. Because you're from Poland, the Arabian community doesn't treat you as a person from nowhere, but as a person from a country that has produced fantastic horses, that have written themselves down in the history of the breed and keep on adding new chapters. The Poles are backed by a many year tradition and not just a temporary fancy; we have a source from which to draw experience and inspiration. But it is also a disadvantage, because Poland is a small market, lying on the outskirts of Europe and there is a small number of top breeders. Our market cannot equal that of the United States or Italy, not*



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Emmonida (Gazal Al Shaqab – Emmona by Monogram),  
a daughter of two World Champions



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speaking of the Middle East. Here people don't have so many funds at their disposal. Furthermore we speak a language which nobody understands and guests from abroad visit us only once a year – for the National Championships and the auction. Apart from that one occasion it is not easy to get people interested in Arabian horses to visit Poland. Although the recent enthusiasm and delight of football fans, who came for the Euro 2012 Championships, show that it's worth it!

**J.T.:** *Are you aware that if you wanted to realize this passion just 20 years ago, it would be almost impossible?*

**M.L.:** *I think that everyone in this field is aware of that. Private breeding in Poland was reborn only after the fall communism. The socialist country needed dollars and fortunately for that Arabian horses endured – in state studs. But modern private breeding is just 20 years old, which is no more than several equine generations. It is not a mature breeding, but still in a nascent state and so struggling with many problems of toddlerhood. We have to keep in mind that it is a very difficult field, in which only the most persistent, the most determined and the most passionate will survive. On the other hand it is a moment when a lot can still happen in Polish breeding. There is a rich tapestry to work with, a lot can still be achieved, even if one starts just now and even if many foreign clients associate Poland only with state breeding.*

**J.T.:** *What are the advantages and the weaknesses of private breeding?*

**M.L.:** *One of the advantages is that a private breeder has no obligations hanging over him. We often hear that state studs have an obligation to maintain a certain gene pool. A private breeder is of course relieved from such a commitment. However he is limited by funds, because he has to pay for everything out of his own pocket. That in turn affects his breeding decisions, which are not always dictated solely by knowledge, intuition or dreams, but by a lack of appropriate funds. Instead of breeding to a dream stallion, we breed to one that we can afford. Instead of having only superb broodmares in our barns, we have to settle for average ones. However a certain freedom in decision-making is definitely an advantage of private breeding. Yet its weakness is that turbulences in one's private life can mean an end to breeding.*

**J.T.:** *Recently we have not witnessed any spectacular successes of Polish horses on the international scene – last year neither Aachen, nor Paris were very thrilling for us. Do*

*you think that it is a signal of a deeper crisis? That the peleton rode off and without unlimited funds, which are available to Arabic owners, it is impossible to catch up?*

**M.L.:** *No, I don't think I would call it a crisis. Breeding, just like other fields, is subject to fluctuations of the economic market. Sometimes things go well, sometimes the opposite. It's natural. For instance during the June show in Bialka (where Polish breeders bring their latest get), it was evident that the state studs had almost nothing to show in the junior male classes. But that doesn't mean there's a crisis in state breeding. They simply suffered a temporary decline, but maybe the next World Champion has already been born – or will be born next year – in private or state barns. However the world economic crisis definitely took its toll on breeding, though it touched Poland to a lesser degree than it did other countries. Breeding does not take place in a void, it is linked to economic processes, which take place all over the world. Less buyers, smaller prices... I also see one more tendency: it will be more and more hard for a small Polish breeder to personally lead his graduate to success. Perhaps he will breed a great horse, but it will be led through the show arenas by another, wealthier owner. Because breeding a good mare to a good stallion may give a great result, but then you have to actually do something with the foal. Investing in it usually exceeds the abilities of a normal, not very wealthy breeder. I think it is a sign of our times.*

**J.T.:** *Are you aware that you are a bit of a spokesperson for Polish Arabians abroad?*

**M.L.:** *I wouldn't attribute such a significant role to myself, but it is true that Polish private breeders often have problems with reaching foreign clients. Because how can they? The auction allows only several private horses to be showcased – two or three. There aren't any more events on an international scale in Poland. The guests of the Arabian Horse Days and the Pride of Poland auction focus on state studs. Therefore through the texts on our website we try to show more than is visible to the naked eye, more than the obvious.*

**J.T.:** *Would it be easier for you to operate in this field if you were a judge at the same time?*

**M.L.:** *Definitely. It's obvious that a lot in this business – like in every other – depends on personal contacts. However I concluded that it would remain in conflict with being the publisher of an informative website. Although the combining*



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**Bajaderka**  
(Złocień – Bagatela by Pesal),  
Int. Champion Mare, Class Winner at  
the Białka Junior Spring Show (twice)

*of many roles – breeder, judge, agent – is common in this community, I'd rather limit myself to what is most dearest to me – journalism and caring for a couple of horses. I have horses for two reasons – one, for pleasure and two, thanks to being personally involved I better understand the problems of breeders.*

**J.T.:** *Are there subjects which in particular bring you great joy?*

**M.L.:** *The most interesting and most inspiring are always personal stories of individual people. The stories of horses are mainly stories about people. The coverage of a show is a journalistic form which gives the least amount of satisfaction. I usually try not to limit myself to just dry results, but try to draw conclusions and share my reflections with the readers. However a natural repeatability of subjects in this field doesn't*

*make the task any easier. And stories concerning people always bring something new. I most like those stories which show that you can realize your dreams, nurture passions, have a bit of a positive craziness and achieve successes thanks to those "quirky" traits. I think that the Americans are especially sensitive to romantic "equine-human" stories. They had Seabiscuit, Secretariat and other horses, which thanks to the charisma of their owners had a huge impact on history. The most famous of these stories find their way onto the big screen, others are known only in a small circle, but definitely every one is more universal than even the most astute coverage of any kind of event.*

**J.T.:** *I know that you're gathering materials for another book – will it be a story based around Arabian horses? Modern or historical?*



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Baklava  
(Kabsztad – Bajaderka by Złocień),  
inbred to Laheeb



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**M.L.:** Like I said, we have a pioneer period in Poland. The reason for this is the afore mentioned recent rebirth of private breeding after numerous turmoils of history. That's why I plan to tell a modern story, though with references to times past.

**J.T.:** Do you like to compete? Not having your own stable, you were able to win three classes in Bialka with your horses in one year, carefully selected like contestants for a tournament. You hold the record for the highest sold private owned horse at the Janów sale. Now you have broken the record in the amount of breedings to Shanghai E.A. sold in Poland. Your website has also broken a record number of views. Is competitiveness a part of your character?

**M.L.:** No, I'm not the competitive type, more of a person who believes in work at the foundations. I slowly work at achieving effects in various fields. But it's true, thanks to luck and enthusiasm, as well as a lot of effort and persistence, I was able to claim several "records".

This gives you a drive to do more and hope that new projects associated with Arabian horses will have a chance at succeeding. I'm quite aware that I will probably not be able to repeat these achievements. But I have shown that winning three classes in Bialka or that achieving a price similar or higher to those achieved by state bred horses is within reach of private breeders. And that means that it's worth trying.

**J.T.:** Do you have people you look up to in this community?

**M.L.:** There are many people who can achieve remarkable things. I always support those who face great challenges, which seemingly exceed their capabilities. I am impressed by people who mark their presence not thanks to unlimited funds, but thanks to their vision and passion. I have great admiration for breeders such as the Buzzi family in Italy or Equus Arabians in Spain, who led their horses to successes on a world scale all on their own. Very inspiring is the story of the owners of WH Justice, who made a star out of a colt that few saw as a future star.

**J.T.:** What does another year of cooperation with the influential „Tutto Arabi” magazine mean to you?

**M.L.:** It seems that thanks to reaching to a wider group of readers from abroad, we help people understand the diversity and complexity of Polish breeding. We also give Polish private breeders the opportunity to promote themselves on an international scene. Of

course I'm talking about those breeders who are aware how important recognizability is. In Poland it is generally assumed that clients will come by themselves, especially when one has something valuable. Although this might happen, it is usually an exception to the rule. Studs which show their achievements with time develop their own "quality brand". Those who think that their brand will come all by itself may never live to see it.



Epikasja  
(Werbum – Espadrilla by Monogramm),  
Top Five in class at the Bialka Junior Spring Show (twice)