

ABCCMM - Equitana 2009

Germany, Essen, 14th - 22nd of March 2009

EQUITANA – the world's biggest horse fair with brazilian participation

ABCCMM participation on the EQUITANA, Essen, Germany



The whole presidium of the ABCCMM and 6 of the main breeders of Mangalarga Marchadores participated at the EQUITANA in Essen, Germany in order to inform about the Mangalarga Marchadores and to help with the foundation of the EAMM (European Association of Mangalarga Marchador). Although despite all efforts the horses were denied to come to Europe the interest of the Germans in this breed was very high and a lot of good conversations took place at the fair booth. One or the other conversation might lead into a prosperous business between Europe and Brazil.

As the Mangalarga Marchador is a very beautiful horse with a lot of very interesting capabilities, there might be a big interest in these horses. As Magdi Shaut, President of the ABCCMM, explained: "... a MM will not be competitive for the Olympics in jumping or dressage, race or other specialized horse disciplines. But people can do some dressage or some jumping with this horse. For sure, they will have the perfect horse as an allrounder and the perfect partner for riding in the fields as well as for the endurance sport - reliable, clear in mind and most comfortable in the perfect marcha for hours!"

The European and German market

The market for horses, easy to ride and partners in hobby and sports is increasing rapidly in Germany (i.e. Iceland horses: 1997 - 600 registered stallions and 5,600 registered mares in Germany. In 2008: more than 80.000 registered Iceland horses in Germany). About 750.000 riders are organized in clubs and associations belonging to the FN (= Federation Nationale = Deutsche Reiterliche Vereinigung). But the

market of the riders who are not organized in associations and clubs in Germany is estimated between 12 - 15 Mio. people. Those „beginners“ are open for new breeds. Especially breeds who transport also the way of living of the origin country have a big fascination (i.e. western horses, boots, belts, buckles, ropes, hats, saddle and tack etc.) The number of horses of those breeds are increasing permanently. Approx. 15.000 horses of different breeds are imported to Germany annually.

But what happened that so many people are not organized in the FN anymore? The FN riding schools and riding clubs mainly use warmblood horses. To sit on a warmblood horse in trot or even galopp needs many riding lessons and to even ride those horses in the fields needs very experienced riders. The warmblooded horse was bred for dressage and jumping. It can do extremely well in these disciplines and is the worlds best horse for it with a lot of moving, high lifts and spectacular gaits. But it is hard to sit in a saddle on a horse with spectacular trot. Furthermore, those horses are not used to be ridden in the fields. They are shy and run away because of a rabbit behind a bush. And they are very big (160 - 180 cm). People get afraid when they imagine to fall of a horse of this size.

Millions of people wanted to start horse back riding and they got a lot of alternatives to the warmblood horses during the last 20 years. The western riding scene was growing rapidly. It is the biggest of all riding scenes in Germany in the meantime. Gaithorses like the Iceland horse came to Europe and Germany. Spanish and portugese horses had a big faszination and many, many more. All those breeds and riding styles where easier than learning on a warmblooded horse. A new market was opened and hundreds of breeds as well as thousands of horses of these breeds found a new home and owner in Germany. So did the Mangalarga Marchador!

The actual position of the Mangalarga Marchador in Europe

When you ask Astrid Oberniedermayr – initiator of the horsefair “equimundo”, editor and publisher of a monthly horse magazine and owner of MMs - about the Mangalarga Marchador, she becomes very enthusiastic: “The Mangalarga Marchador is one of the best saddle horses of the world! We make wonderful trips with the horses during spring, summer and the beginning of autumn for several days. It happened more than once that people sitting on a “normal” horse envied us on our MMs during those trips. They are most beautiful, so willing to go and at the same time easy to handle and very cool. But the best about the MMs is the most comfortable marcha. Furthermore, they have many more talents. Especially during our dark, cold and rainy winter time we can work with the horses in the riding halls. They show a great talent for dressage, which is also very important for the gymnastics of the horse to keep it healthy and capable to wear us on their back. We even have Mangalarga Marchadores who are able to do the piaffe. This gives them a lot of power and energy in the back legs!”

Fact is, that people who once bought, owned and rode a Mangalarga Marchador have not changed to another breed anymore! In the meantime, there live about 800 Mangalarga Marchadores in Europe. These are extremely few compared to the Iceland horses with a population of 80.000 horses only in Germany. The biggest breeder of Mangalarga Marchadores in Germany, Robert Schmitt, also a new member of the board of the EAMM and responsible for breeding, owns about 80 of them. Others have 60, 40 or 20 horses. But the market in Germany is not a breeders’ market, because the density of the population is too high. Fields to have horses grow up are too expensive, salaries are too high, feeding and bedding is very expensive, too. The market in Germany is the market of users: millions of riders, who own one or two horses, sometimes more.

The gaithorses’ scene in Germany

The gaithorses' scene developed properly with many different broods during the last 10 years. Why does Astrid Oberriedermayer prefer a Mangalarga Marchador before another gaithorse breeds? "The answer is very simple," she said, "because it is the best horse for me and I can explain that: many imported Iceland horses get a skin disease called "Ekzem" which is very bad for the horses. Furthermore, they are only 138 - 143 cm, which is too small for me and they look like ponys. They are ponys. American Saddlebred are beautiful horses, but they are bred for shows and not for riding in the fields. They have spectacular gaits but they are nervous and not easy to handle. Me personally, I don't like the unnatural way they move. Paso Finos are too short and quick in steps, also used for short show events and not good for riding them for hours on long distances. They gain no ground by walking. Paso Peruanos are very lateral, almost no more trot and often problems with galopp. The angles are very long which is good for a very soft gait but causes health problems for the horse. Tennessee Walkers and Missouri Foxtrotters are beautiful horses but they do not have the gait comparable to marcha. In my opinion the Marchador is simply the best!"

These are convincing arguments and the Mangalarga Marchador owners who came to the EQUITANA in order to found the EAMM - European Association of Mangalarga Marchadores - think more or less the same. More than 20 people from Germany, Netherlands and Switzerland came to found that association with the help of the ABCCMM. One of the goals of this EAMM is to make the Mangalarga Marchador more popular in Europe. With 387.000 registered horses in Brazil, the Mangalarga Marchador is the third biggest breed of the world. But almost nobody knows them in Europe. With the help of the "mother" association ABCCMM the EAMM wants to change that rapidly.

Mangalarga Marchadores with the most comfortable gait

Dieter Mader - trainer for dressage, gaithorse trainer and member of the board of the new EAMM responsible for sports and training - has the following opinion about the gaits: "What people are looking for when they buy a gaithorse, is the most comfortable gait in addition to the gaits of "normal" horses. For example the spanish and portugese horses have walk, trot and galopp. The trot with the diagonal moving of the legs is very important for the gymnastics of the horse and for the dressage. But the trot of spanish or portugese horses also was bred in being very comfortable, no big and high movements. When you see a spanish or portugese rider, his horse might sweat, not he himself. On a warmblood horse it is often the other way around. So people want to have the most comfortable gait: marcha. For sure, marcha do centro is the most comfortable gait. A little moving to the diagonal (between centro and D1) as well as a little moving to the lateral (between centro and L1) will still be most comfortable. All further developments in the one or the other direction will finally lead to less comfort and at the end to trot or pace. There are possibilities for the rider to help the horse to "find" this marcha do centro by riding it in special lessons and special training. But therefore, you need to have a lot of experience in riding gaithorses. Most people in Germany are not so experienced and need horses who have the perfect marcha without a lot of influence by the rider."

Marina Geyer, MM breeder in Germany and member of the board of the new EAMM responsible for the office, thinks about the european market the following: "Mangalarga Marchadores are most beautiful, they are talented in many ways and they have this wonderful gait, called marcha. Everyone, who is interested to buy and own a horse, will testride some horses and decide what he likes best. This simple truth will rule the market. We have a saying: the fish has to like the worm and not the other way around! The more Mangalarga Marchadores we will have to offer, the more people will get to know this breed. We are really looking forward to receive many wonderful horses here in Germany from Brazil and increase the community of MM owners and riders as we are sure, that this is a very convincing breed. There will be marketing activities necessary in the near future. But we hope we will have our own European Championship of Mangalarga Marchador in a couple of years."

This is a big market and many people will be very thankful, that someone introduced this wonderful horse in it. This is the conviction of the foundation members of the EAMM here in Europe on the EQUITANA.

Photo: people from left to right

Hans Perren – Finance Director

Mireille van Moer – Sports and Training

Astrid Oberniedermayr – President

Dieter Mader – Sports and Training

Alice Fonseca – International Relations

Robert Schmitt – Breeding

Hans Stickel – Vice-President

Marina Geyer – Office