

# Brandenburg-Anhalt IYB: Learning from the best

BY CLAUDIA FUCHS AND INES RATHKE / IYB

PHOTOGRAPHY: BRANDENBURG-ANHALT YOUNG BREEDERS

*To be a young breeder is much more than shared passion and being a good theorist. New generations of horsemen are learning their skills from former champions. Workshops, travels, and great experiences are key to building trust, friendships, and success.*

No fewer than 17 times have the young breeders from Brandenburg-Anhalt succeeded in taking the victory sash at the German Championships, whether individually or as a team. In 14 cases, they celebrated with the runners-up title; a record achieved since the merger of the two breeding associations in 2007.

The foundation for this success was laid in 1995 when Gerhard Francke for Saxony-Anhalt and Jörg Kottenbeutel for Brandenburg were still working separately, but following the Hanoverian example. The passion and the goal have not changed since their first meeting over 25 years ago, which is to inspire all interested young people with great horsemanship and nurture great team spirit.

Unlike competitive riding, young breeders are not depending on great sponsorship and funds to reach the top level. Competitions are open to everyone under the age of 25. Having your own horse, being a member of the horse breeding association or coming from a breeding family are privileges rather than conditions to becoming part of the team. Likewise, the participation fees for the various events are often waived or, if there is a small charge, meals are included.

Regular workshops are organised throughout the regions, mainly in spring time. Most of the trainers are former young breeders themselves or still active as senior members of the team. The leaders and members of the organising team are also professionals, usually due to their



*German young breeder champions 2022*

own achievements as active young breeders. They are inspiring the up-and-coming generations of young breeders' work through their passion for the cause, and are passing on their knowledge and experience as well as a great network from within the industry.

Reaching the age of 25 does not mean farewell, but rather a transition into a more supportive role. This gives the upcoming youngsters the chance to be trained by former National Champions and even World Champions; a recipe for success that still works today.

As everywhere in life, theoretical knowledge is the foundation of success. Topics range from general equine science, feeding, health, breeding, and husbandry. In order to convey this in an age-appropriate and playful manner, it is always adapted to the participants. For this purpose, toys are sometimes used to vividly convey horse color and markings, or the young breeders themselves slip into the role of the breed association employees in order to correctly register horses by means of graphics and verbal descriptions. In order to be able to practice at home and on the road at any given time, it will be possible in the future to conveniently access the theory from a cell phone via a quiz app in addition to the tried-and-tested theory manual.

Another important tool for prospective horse breeders, which builds on relevant theoretical knowledge is expert horse evaluations, including free jumping. Here, the old adage 'practice makes perfect' clearly applies, even though perfection may never be reached. There are always minor



*Antonia Ritter – Brandenburg-Anhalt junior world champion 2022*

details to be worked on and, to be sure, horses and ponies of different breeds are regularly used for evaluation for comparison to the respective ideal. Thereby the young breeders should not be educated to so-called 'mistake lookers', but to great horsemen who recognize potential when it is in front of them. Recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of different horses and assessing their potential is the aim of training. Achieving lots of practical experience, young breeders have the opportunity to assist and shadow the judges at breed shows of the association.

The supreme discipline of the young breeders *par excellence* is the in-hand presentation on the triangular track, where the presentation of the horses takes place like a studbook entry. The main goal here is to present the horses in the best possible way in order to receive top marks. In contrast to a classic studbook entry, the judges focus not only on the horse but also on the handler. Straight lines, communication, empathy, but also the necessary portion of risk-taking and ability to demonstrate the maximum of movement are only some of the evaluation criteria.

As with horse judging, the young breeders acquire excellence through repetition and practice. To this end, they regularly assist breeders with the presentation of their horses at foal shows, studbook entries, and championships. Similar to riding, they then learn how to handle different horses, some of which do not yet have much show experience. This makes it all the more important for the handler to radiate calmness and composure and to give the horses the necessary security. This has often paid off at competitions, where the team from Brandenburg-Anhalt has been able to shine thanks to a lot of feel for their horses.

In order to be able to assess their own performance, the clubs and the association organise several competitions in the spring and summer, where the requirements are always adapted to the age of the participants. The youngest participants, up to the age of 13, complete the disciplines of theory and in-hand presentation, separated into different age groups. From the age of 14, conformation judging is also an integral part of the competition and, wherever feasible, the judging of loose movement and free jumping.



*German Young Breeders' Championship winners' podium 2018*

A special format of the young breeders' competition takes place annually at one of the largest trade fairs in Germany, the Young Breeders' Rally on the occasion of the Green Week in Berlin. The competition is held in teams and is open to young breeders between the ages of 10 and 15 throughout Germany. Every year, young breeders from Holstein, Saxony-Thuringia, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, and the Trakehner young breeders follow this call.

In addition to the normal sections of theory and in-hand presentation, the competition includes Mounted Games, where the entire exhibition hall cheers enthusiastically. These games are once again based on team spirit, but also on skill and speed. This form of competition on such a large stage offers the young breeders an ideal and playful introduction to national competitions, and promotes motivation and the team spirit for which we are known.

In order to be able to inspire even more riders for the young breeders' work, the young breeders of Havelland organise the Young Breeders' Riding Cup every year, where a Caprilli test is part of the competition. Unfortunately, the cliché that young breeders can't ride still persists today. But this is far from true, as many active young breeders are successful show riders and even carriage drivers, for example Lina Nebe, the current regional indoor champion jumping in Saxony-Anhalt. All in all, the regional competitions within the breeding association area serve as an incentive among the young breeders to improve themselves and as a selection aid for the older young breeders for national and international competitions.

The German Championships, which are held alternately by the individual German breeding associations, are a firm fixture in the calendar every year, primarily in front of a magnificent backdrop at the main and state stud farms. The



*The young breeders of tomorrow learning about anatomy*

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**HARAS DE SEMILLY**

Richard & Sophie Levallois - 50680 Couvains - France

[contact@semilly.com](mailto:contact@semilly.com) - [www.semilly.com](http://www.semilly.com)

Tel +33(0)2 05 31 44 - GSM +33(0)6 72 88 71 51

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*Theoretical test for the next generation of young breeders*



*Top: Hanna Edler – presenting in-hand during the 2019 German Young Breeder Championships*

*Middle: Theoretical test during the 2019 International Young Breeders' World Championship*

*Bottom: Final words of advice before the in-hand showing during the 2019 IYB World Championship*

breeding associations each enter a junior and a senior team.

Every two years, the World Championships are held, depending on the aforementioned field of participants, with the subdivision into age groups: 16-19 years and 20-25 years. So far, the most distant venue visited for the World Championships was in 2017 when it was held in Calgary, Canada; more precisely at one of the world's largest equestrian facilities, Spruce Meadows. An unforgettable experience, which was funded by the state of Brandenburg and donations from individual horse breeding associations, to whom we would like to express our deep gratitude.

Being a young breeder creates great friendships around the world and often results in career opportunities thanks to the knowledge and network gained. In summation, Henning Dressel (25), a veterinarian and young breeder, explains that the young breeders' work gave him a lot for his later profession and in life, dealing with horses, especially young horses, as well as an understanding of breeding and sport. Everyone working with horses, in a yard or in an administrative capacity, is unanimous in their praise of the benefits resulting from their young breeder experiences. ■



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