

## **Australian Arabian National Championships Report 2026.**

Planning for a show like this starts as soon as the previous one is over – basically as soon as the horse floats are leaving the grounds. Everything that worked well is noted, and what didn't work so well is also noted, so that lessons can be learnt and the same mistakes (hopefully) not made again.

Naturally, as they say “the best laid plans .....” always happens, sometimes in big ways and sometimes in smaller ways. Things like a severe thunderstorm. Things like loss of electricity, and loss of the PA. And other little things that cause upsets to programming or timetabling, and which we don't have much control over. And, of course, a severe fuel shortage Australia wide, which created havoc in many ways.

But, again, as they say “the show must go on” – and so it did.

The dressage was held early Wednesday morning in three busy outdoor arenas, so that everyone could be finished in time for the Non Pro and Home Produced classes in the main arena. Our international judges were Lindsey Rinehart (USA) and Juan Murilla (now based in Belgium), and our very own Helen Dohan, who would be a familiar face to lots of our members.

This was followed by a free pizza night, sponsored by the AHSA, for all competitors, strappers, helpers, stewards and judges at the Riders Retreat. It was a great night where everyone had a chance to mix and mingle, and to chat while having a casual meal.

Thursday saw all of the Arabian Derivative halter classes, and another well known Australian judge Kate Wheatley joining the judging team.

On Friday Kate and Helen shared the ridden Derivative classes, and which concluded with the Derivative, API and the Purebred show hunter classes, western pleasure, harness and then the silver snaffle classes.

After the completion of this full day, there was a free BBQ at the Riders Retreat which was very generously sponsored by the Dubai Stud.

Saturday was another full day, commencing with all of the Youth classes. There was a full program with handler classes, rider classes, hunter classes, bridle path hacks, working stockhorse, pleasure, and costume. These were followed by the endurance classes, led and ridden.

Then, just as the heavens opened up, and the rain teemed down deafeningly on the tin roof of the indoor arena, and the wind, thunder and lightning played havoc with everything that wasn't nailed down, the opening ceremony began.

This was a very brief event and made way for the Purebred halter classes. The stands were full and there was an air of expectation.

These classes were all extremely popular and culminated with the senior gelding, senior mare, and the senior stallion, which were all well supported.

Spectators stayed on after the end of the classes, chatting in small groups and commenting on how much they enjoyed the show.

**Yvonne Downes**