

# SAM'S GRASS SICKNESS DIARY

Gill Suttle *takes a terrifying illness one day at a time*

**Day 1** Evening. Sam's\* off his food. He looks colicky; he's tucked up and tense, stamping around, clearly uncomfortable. But it passes quickly, and he settles. His pulse and temperature are normal.

**Day 2** He's eaten his breakfast, but isn't right. Has he eaten something? My first fear is an early fall of acorns, but there are very few on the ground. I'm giving a talk today, booked more than a year ago, and can't cancel other than for an emergency. So I can't get the vet until tomorrow.

**Day 3** The vet checks him all over and takes blood and faecal samples. He rings with the results: slight anaemia, lowered white blood cell count - means there's no infection - kidney function fine, so no acorn poisoning; a couple of liver enzymes elevated but albumen high - no ragwort poisoning. He gives me a powerful tonic for the anaemia.

**Day 4** Sam's more tucked up than ever, trembling, and sweating up intermittently. But he takes a number of small feeds throughout the day. His droppings are down to one a day.

**Day 5 - 6** He's losing weight fast, and barely drinking. But four feeds a day are going down. His pulse and temperature remain steady, and he looks alert.

**Day 7** Now he won't eat anything but fresh-cut grass. At supper time I make a great to-do banging bowls and bins, until Xan is screaming for his feed and Sam is joining in. I give him two variations on his feed, but he won't touch either. Now I am really, really worried.

**Day 8** No breakfast. He'll only eat cut grass. A sick dread is growing, and I go to the internet and look up Grass Sickness. Miserably I tick off the symptoms: rapid weight loss, refusal to eat, colicky symptoms, sweating, muscle tremors, tucked-up ribcage, "elephant-on-a-tub" stance, with all four feet tucked under, constant snuffling - caused by dry nasal inflammation. Two symptoms, though, are absent. High heart rate - his pulse is steady at or under 40 - and depression. He is alert and interested, even when his discomfort is at its worst and he stands with his feet tucked under performing a ghastly, slow piaffe.

I take him to graze in a neighbour's field, and he eats for an hour. But he must eat more than grass. I mix up different feeds with alfalfa chaff, boiled barley, plain barley, bran, beet pulp and eggs. He won't touch any of them. Raiding the fridge, I find three organic carrots, which he wolfs down - Sam and carrots have always had an extraordinary affinity.

**Day 9** The hunt is on for carrots. None of my usual feed merchants have any yet, so it's into town to clean out Morrison's. Sam adds them to his grass diet with approval. From now on he eats 6 lbs a day. This willingness to eat *something* is a good sign. Chopped carrots, though, don't tempt him to eat any of his other feeds. He simply can't smell them, due to the nasal



*Two classic signs of grass sickness - tucked-up ribcage and "elephant-on-a-tub" stance - as well as sweating up and weight loss.*

inflammation. I arrange a delivery of haylage - maybe more tempting than soaked hay. Too late to catch my vet - his day off - but I write an A4 list of questions.

**Day 10** Haylage arrives. No good. Back to grazing: again, he eats well. Spending every spare minute on the Equine Grass Sickness websites, I find something which knocks my cautious rise in spirits back to the floor. "Horses which eat only grass and succulents invariably do not survive." You *must* get highly nutritional food into them to offset the low intake. I speak to my vet, and am further depressed. There is no treatment, and the outlook is very poor.

**Day 11** I *have* to find something this horse will eat. Managing to track down some nets of carrots, I continue to a distant feed merchant with an impressive range of feeds, and settle for Bailey's No. 10

*\*Kyzyl Double or Quits*

# Kyzyl Stallions 2011

## KYZYL DOUBLE or QVITS

Bay, 15.3 hh, Anglo-Teke\*, 2005

*A striking young stallion with an exciting and quite unique blend of the best of British Sporthorse and Russian breeding.*

**Kyzyl Double or Quits** is \*97% Anglo-Teke (TB x Akhal-Teke). He has a beautiful temperament and very correct movement. His bloodlines are full of courage, soundness, stamina and quality.

By **WELTON DOUBLE CRACKER** ([www.weltonhorses.co.uk](http://www.weltonhorses.co.uk)), he carries on his sire's side **DOUBLE TRIGGER** ([www.doubletrigger.co.uk](http://www.doubletrigger.co.uk)) and **WELTON CRACKERJACK**.

His dam **GULARA**, elite-graded, is by **GAIGYSIS**, sire and grandsire of seven World Breed Champions.

**STUD FEE: £300 (NFFR)**

Available by AI, or natural cover to approved mares. Concessions available.



## XANADU

Metallic golden buckskin,  
15.3 hh, Akhal-Teke, 2006  
by **ATAMEKAN** out of **GULARA**

**STUD FEE: £200 (NFFR)**

Available to a few approved mares for natural cover.

## ATAMEKAN

Metallic chestnut, 15.3 hh,  
Akhal-Teke, 1989 - 2006

Grade I racehorse

Marathon Endurance horse

Tremendous jump, which he passes to his offspring  
*Frozen semen still available: please enquire*



Enquiries: **Please phone 01600 890730, email [enq@kyzyltekes.co.uk](mailto:enq@kyzyltekes.co.uk)**  
**or visit [www.kyzyltekes.co.uk](http://www.kyzyltekes.co.uk) (S.W.Herefordshire)**

Racehorse Mix, with a colossal energy per kilo ratio. Looking for a pre/probiotic, I pick NAF Pink Powder, recommended by the lady who runs the store. For good measure I buy a drum of molasses, which later goes down like a lead balloon.

Back home, I lay 1 lb of the Racehorse Mix reverently under Sam's nose. It is small and fine, even the oats whole, more like birdseed than coarse mix. He tries a bit; it slips down easily, and he eats the lot. For afters he gets Pink Powder, mixed with cornflour paste and syringed into his mouth. By the end of the day he's eaten 3 lbs of the mix.

**Day 12** By now he looks quite dreadful - it's hard to believe a horse can lose so much weight in under two weeks - but the Racehorse Mix is going down.

**Day 13** Now he's eating something, my next worry is the other end. What if I overload a constipated horse with a damaged gut and end up getting impaction? Back to the vet. He gives me a syringe with a laxative to give as an enema, a pleasure Sam receives when I get home. And that day, on coming back from grazing, he takes a long drink - thirty swallows - the first time he's drunk properly. I ring the Grass Sickness helpline, and get many answers from a kind, experienced and encouraging lady.

**Day 14** This horse is looking better. I begin to believe that we might win. I'm now sneaking some bran into his birdseed, and the enema has done its stuff. Again, he drinks long and deep on return from grazing. A pinch test shows he's not dehydrated now. I am learning ways to stimulate him to defaecate - take him to his own stud pile and, if that fails, to Xan's: the equivalent of peeing up another dog's lamp-post. He busts a gut (almost literally) to oblige.

**Day 15 - 21** Slow progress. By the end of the week he's daily eating 6 lbs Racehorse Mix, 2 lbs bran, 6 lbs carrots, some beet and as much grass as I can cut, plus grazing. But that's his limit; if I graze him too soon after a feed, he gets gastric reflux. He still refuses alfalfa; he tries to eat haylage, but it makes him choke horribly. He gets furious with it and strews it all round the stable. The muscle tremors have stopped, and the awful snuffling, and most of the tightness round his bottom rib has relaxed. It's impossible that he's actually gained true weight on these bare maintenance rations, and I realise how much of the rapid emaciation of EGS is caused by dehydration. He is up to three droppings a day - progress! I never thought I'd be so keen to shovel horse-s\*\*t.

**Day 22 - 28** A plateau. Sam's intake is steady and I'm pretty sure than, unless there are hidden time bombs like kidney damage from the dehydration, he'll survive. His total intake is 15 - 16 lbs food a day plus the grass.

He gave a little skip recently on the way down to the grazing field.

**Day 32** Today he ate some boiled alfalfa chaff. A step forward? Desperately needed, as he's getting fussy over cut grass. It's now October, the grass is coarser, and I have to pick dead leaves out of it. The secret is to find clover - which the websites tell you to avoid...

**Day 33** In the last 24 hours Sam's eaten 2 lbs alfalfa, produced 5 dung-piles - and booked a mare into his diary for next year!

**Week 8** Sam is now eating 6 lbs boiled alfalfa daily. Over the week I've reduced the hard food from 6 lbs Racehorse Mix and Allen & Page Weight Gain down to 4½ lbs, and the number of feeds to 3. He began to eat some haylage a week ago.

Yesterday he rolled out-of-doors for the first time.

**Weeks 9 - 10** He suddenly tired of boiled Alfa-A and indicated his preference for "normal" food. He's still on special rations, but *he's eating properly and putting on weight.*

Sam was extraordinarily lucky in that this was obviously only a mild case of an illness with a 95% mortality rate; but he made his own luck too by his determination to survive.



*Another day's rehydration shows a rapid improvement*

# BREED RECOGNITION

## Maria Marquise Baverstock *brings us up to date*

When we set up Akhal-Teke UK in May 2007, our aims were to help owners register their horses with the General Studbook in Russia, create a National Catalogue and to apply to DEFRA for Breed Recognition. Taking stock nearly three years later, we can say that we have succeeded in achieving two of the three goals. Our contract with VNIIC (The Institute of Horse Breeding in Russia) has served us well and has even been replicated by other associations around the world, and the National Catalogue has been a useful resource (please continue to send us good photos for the "*Horses In the UK*" section of the website).

In November 2009 we put together a fairly impressive 30-page Application to get the Akhal-Teke breed recognised in the UK (thank you, Ruth Staines and Jacqueline Bradbury for proof-reading!). I say "fairly" because it impressed a lot of people (Swiss and Canadian associations asked if they could copy parts of the text for their own use and the Hispano-Arab Society wanted to borrow our webdesign) but DEFRA was not going to be easily impressed. After taking six months to (pretend to) read the Application, DEFRA advised that we did not have sufficient numbers of animals in the country to merit breed recognition. No matter that we fully satisfied every other one of their criteria: work in accordance with the rules of the "Mother" studbook, keep accurate records and do not discriminate against individual breeders. "No", said DEFRA, "without 17 stallions and 50 mares a rare breed is not viable." And (as an afterthought) "you are not even registered with the Rare Breeds Trust".

A phone call to the Rare Breeds Survival Trust soon put an end to that silly suggestion: not being native to the British Isles, the Akhal-Teke did not qualify. Photos of Gloucester Old Spot pigs on their website made it patently clear we "did not belong". We did think for a while about claiming that the Silk Route once extended as far as Exmoor but in the end decided not to bother. The refusal made no sense: the Akhal-Teke is a small breed with a closed studbook but it is also a global one. The animals we have in this country represent a sufficiently diverse genetic pool and breeders are intelligent enough to make responsible decisions about the levels of inbreeding plus, with AI now accepted by VNIIC, we can import semen. The numbers in Sweden and Estonia are even smaller, yet their authorities have granted their associations official recognition and the right to issue passports.

In the UK, most PIOs – Passport Issuing Organisations – were established in 2005. Some of these are Breed Societies and others are "general" associations, eg British Driving Association. Under the EU legislation, a Horse Passport has a dual purpose: it is a means of identification and a proof of pedigree. The latter function is only applicable to passports issued by Breed Societies who maintain a studbook of their breed. European legislation makes provision for those breeds whose origins are outside the EU: the breed society which represents a non-European breed in a given European country must demonstrate that it works in accordance with the rules of the "Mother" studbook. It was to satisfy this requirement that we originally signed the contract with VNIIC.

But just as we were about to go to Appeal, DEFRA's own fortunes changed. Ever heard of "government cuts"? Well, it seems that the system DEFRA set up in 2005 is too expensive. NED – National Equine Database – to which every Breed Society with a PIO status must feed information annually is too costly to run and may be put up for tender! Meanwhile, PIOs may lose their right to issue horse passports and might be replaced by a single central Passport-Issuing Authority. "Breed societies will continue to play "the vital role in maintaining their studbooks", says DEFRA (as if it cared).

So suddenly, it has all changed: two months ago Akhal-Teke UK was an aggrieved UK representative of a non-European rare breed, vying for breed recognition and a level-playing field with other PIOs, and today we are laughing: we already have our national catalogue and recognition from our Mother studbook, and now the British Akhal-Teke can enjoy equal rights with other British equines who may soon all have the same boring, non-descript passport! No admin expenses, no printing costs, no need to order those colourful plastic covers – a lot of hassle for the tiny number of foals born here annually. ATUK, of course, feels a lot of sympathy for the the existing PIOs who are furious about DEFRA's disregard for the efforts they put into complying with the current system and ready to demonstrate in front of 5 Mill Bank.

So where are we with the official status of the Akhal-Teke breed in the UK today?

Here are a few important points to note:

- A purebred Akhal-Teke is a horse whose parentage has been verified through blood typing or DNA profiling;
- A pure- or partbred Akhal-Teke foal can, and should, be registered with the General Studbook in Russia whose "passport" serves as a proof of pedigree worldwide but is not a legal equine identification document in the UK; cost of Russian registration is between 35 and 50 euros, depending on age at the time of registration; ATUK service is free.
- Generic passports can be obtained directly from existing generic PIOs such as Scottish Sports Horse Society; they are a legal requirement in the UK but are not a valid proof of pedigree for an Akhal-Teke.
- Breed-specific passports can be obtained via Akhal-Teke UK from the Swedish and now also Estonian Associations; these are valid as a proof of pedigree worldwide and, unlike generic passports, are issued upon the presentation of the parentage verification; cost of Swedish passport is £45 plus bank transfer fee (can be shared between owners);

NB: the Akhal-Teke Society of GB passports obtainable from the Miniature Horse Society have the status of generic, rather than breed-specific, passports.

- Participation in BEF Futurity is possible for all British-born Akhal-Tekes, provided their passport confirms they were born in the UK.

If you need a passport or want to register your horse, contact Akhal-Teke UK: [www.akhaltekeuk.com](http://www.akhaltekeuk.com)

# Akhal-Teke Album 2010



Jacqueline Bradbury and Aschir take on the BE 100 at Shipton Moyne  
*Photo by courtesy of Goldeneye Photography*

Lorna Winn-Jones' mare Saintwestwell Black Gold, by Saintwestwell Sky Breeze out of Gatj.



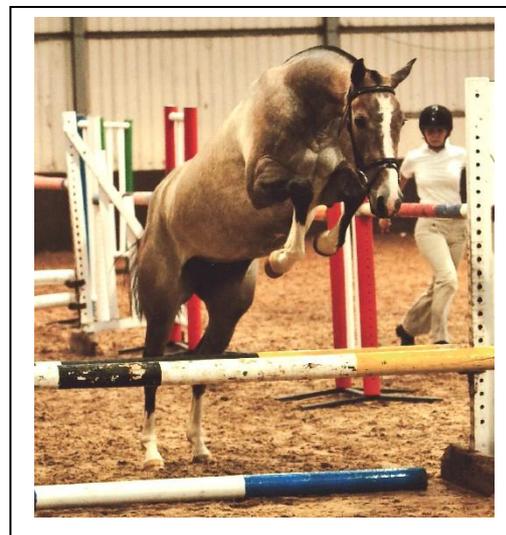
Beth Dee with Midoak Magic Icon (Monty) at Evesham

Pharach Firedance enjoying life among the buttercups



Roz Shepherd and Ainur blitz their first Intro at Cleobury Mortimer  
*Photo by courtesy of E S photography*

Ayazgul on her way to a First Premium at the Solihull BEF Grading  
*Photo by courtesy of Wildlife Northwest Photography*



*Cover photos: Front: Han Dynasty Chinese rock carving  
Back: Susi Sadler with her half-bred Teke, Rudi*



Yòu àrè clòsèr thàn à bròthèr tò mè  
*From the "Oguznama" epic*