

Sunday, 23 December 2012

Animal racing underway at Al Dhafra Festival in UAE



Animal racing, including greyhound and Saker falcon racing, is taking place in the desert of the United Arab Emirates over the Al Dhafra Festival this year. The annual festival runs from Dec 15 to 29 in the city of Zayed, and events include camel beauty pageants, traditional camel racing, greyhound racing and Saker falcon racing. Nearly 200 purebred Arabian Greyhounds are taking part in this year's festival, divided into ten groups. The champion's owner will be awarded 50,000 Dirhams (about 13,610 US dollars). Being attracted to fake antelope ahead, Arabian Greyhounds dash to their prey, running through the 2,000-meter race. Spectators watch the whole race from moving vehicles that follow along at the edge of track. Saker falcons are starved for the day ahead of the competition, and will rush to catch prey after its owner simply points at it. It only takes 8 to 12 seconds for a Saker falcon to take off and land on the prey 400 meters away. Arabs love these races as hunting in the UAE is not permitted. Ahmad Al Mazruay, the spokesman of the committee for the Al Dhafra Festival, said that the competition is meant to protect the pure breed of these animals, and as it is their culture and tradition they must preserve it to let the next generation know how their family lived before them.