



Past President greetings

Nicoletta Miraglia (Italy)

mandate 2008 - 2014

Dear friends, colleagues, researchers,

at the end of my mandate I just would like to write some personal thoughts and comments concerning the “history” of the Horse Commission and the big steps realized since now.

I attended EAAP since 1980 and I had the honor to be at the presentations of some of the most important researches ever had in Europe and not only. Studies on Genetic (eg: Horse BLUP Animal Model, Genomic) and Nutrition (eg: new feeding systems in

horses). Many of the “top” researches and experimentations were presented the first time at the horse commission meetings.

This was realized thanks to the job of the Presidents that came before me and of the board members, but also thanks to innovative suggestions coming from many young researchers that attended the conference.

In this way the horse commission improved considerably year *per* year the quality of the submitted papers and it was also necessary to create some working groups inside the commission to manage in the best way the most important hot topics.

So far in 1998 the Interstallion Working Group was instituted because of the strong motivations of the researches on horse genetic linked to the necessity to have solid systems to determine the breeding value testing procedures and genetic evaluation methods of warmblood breeding horse organizations, to recommend improvements of national genetic evaluation systems and to study methods of comparing genetic evaluations across countries.

In 2000 it was constituted the Nutrition Working Group, originally linked to the necessity to have common nutrition feeding systems to evaluate the nutrient requirements of equines. Now the Equine Nutrition working group promotes European competitiveness in equine nutrition science with the aim to combine nutrition science with other equine sciences to extend the knowledge. EWEN (European Workshop on Equine Nutrition) congresses represent the brand of the working group. The EWEN conferences are bi-annual meetings of three days with specific topic chosen by the scientific committee of the WG. A big effort was done to publish the proceedings in the scientific Wageningen Series. This year the EWEN joins the 7th edition.

More recently, during my mandate and in relation to the new demand of scientific contributions in different fields of research, three working groups were instituted: socio-economy, equine science education and therapeutic riding.

These new activities were strongly sustained not only by the Horse Commission President, but also by the vice-presidents and the secretaries (coming out from different countries and different field of research). In fact, the Horse Commission board is constituted by many experienced researchers following the criteria: field of research, country, age, sex....

The members of the board contributed every year in the activity of the Commission, especially in defining a high quality scientific program together with other activities to be held during the conference or not. *Interdisciplinary* was the “light motif” of the scientific programs in all these years. The members of the Horse Commission board attended every year the EAAP conference and did a lot of “voluntary” and often very hard job during all the year. I do thank in a special way all these members:

Vice presidents:

- Steven Janssens (Belgium; genetic, secretary, now President of the Interstallion WG)
- Dorota Lewczuk (Poland; genetic)

- Markku Saastamoinen (Finland; nutrition, president of the Nutrition WG)
- Dominique Burger (Switzerland; vet. practitioner; member of the vet équipe of the Suisse horses at the Olympics)
- Eric Palmer, Industry representative (France, reproduction-cloning)

Secretaries:

- Anna-Lena Holgerssons (Sweden), 1st secretary; equine education, web, ...
- Martine Hausberger (France), behavior

Some special thanks are destined to Anna-Lena, that helped me and all the Horse Commission “machine” in the best way possible

Thank you, Anna-Lena!

The members of this board, with the exception of Markku Saastamoinen, will be totally renewed between 2014 and 2015.

This kind of structure (and of very special persons) gave to the Horse C. the possibility to organize attractive programs of the Annual Meeting using the schemes suggested by the EAAP:

- Hot topic sessions
- 1 session coming from the Working Groups operating inside the Horse Commission (often 1 day session)
- 1 session proposed by the local organizers
- Sessions coming from the free communications proposals

In synthesis, during these years we made strong efforts to obtain:

- high quality sessions
- relevant and active working groups
- informative website, Horse Network
- always an intern award for best presentation by a young scientist and for best poster within the commission
- always a reward to a scientist of high importance for the commission (Bertrand Langlois, Imre Bodo, William Martin-Rosset, Jan Philipsson)

And finally,

I want to thank all the colleagues that have demonstrated a big interest in the activity of the horse commission, as demonstrated by the last elections.

I let to the incoming board a commission in “good condition”, but with many sectors to be improved; the most important is the maintenance and the development of the horse website.

Special attention need the young researchers and their participation at the EAAP meetings and at the Horse Commission Satellites. The horse website will be the good way to get sponsorship to sustain young researchers.

I'm available in helping the new President in the updating of the Horse Web (www.horse-network.org). This is why I suggested the constitution of a special task force constituted by researches from different field of researches to take care of the horse website and to update it by contacting researchers interested in give their contributions. The most interesting material could be put on the EAAP newsletter to get supplemental diffusion.

I do thank also those colleagues that, with their critical comments helped me and all the board to do better and better. I can affirm that also the most questionable debates gave me the possibility to reflect and to learn by my mistakes during this long period.

But my last words are destined to the EAAP and in a special way

to the EAAP Presidents that I had the possibility to appreciate during my mandate: Jim Flanagan, Kris Sejrsen, Philippe Chemineau;

to the chairs of the scientific council: Duni Gabina, Cled Thomas, Geoff Pollot;

to the Presidents of the Study Commissions;

and last but not least, to the members of the General Secretariat in Rome, Andrea, Valerie, Eleonora, Giulio, some of them helped me since the beginning of my mandate, giving me some important advising (*thank you, Valerie!*) and that accepted my "annoying visits" to the bureau to try to implement the horse website.

Thank you to everybody from the bottom of my heart

Nicoletta

Aims of the Horse Commission

- A **scene** for presentation and exchange of scientific ideas
- A place for **networking**
- An area where **young scientists** can be introduced

- Bridge the **knowledge gap** =
Dissemination and transfer of knowledge and technology

Weaknesses (or gaps ?) in horse research

The horse sector and the horse research community is less successful to attract/acquire EU-funding (compared to cattle, poultry etc.)

Research resources might be underused

Difficulty to identify research needs and to communicate these to policy makers (EU)

=> we need more discussion with the sector!

Why is horse research and the horse sector important

Future items for horse research

- **exploitation of marginal lands,**
 - safeguard of landscape
- improving of breeding technologies of equine autochthonous populations

- **genetics and genomics**
 - revolution of breeding ?
- But expensive, cooperation between studbooks, ...

- **nutrition**

- **biotechnologies of reproduction**

- **socio-economic research in horses ...**
 - integration of horse in society
 - horse welfare
- emerging diseases
- climate change ...