



## **Dr Rhys Evans**

Associate Professor,  
Norwegian University College  
of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Research

Dear friends,

as a Vice President of the Horse Commission I welcome you to the Horse Web.

As you will know, the status of horses in Europe is one of renaissance after serious decline and, like any new social phenomenon, this renaissance brings with it new formations, new questions and new opportunities. Members of the Horse Commission have documented the regular moderate annual increase in ridership and horse numbers in Europe in the last decade and a half and that increase is accompanied by some important new factors. These include the growth of ridership in peri-urban areas, the increased gendering of the sector (over 70% female ridership across many European nations), and the rise of the popularity of horse riding in the face of increasing urbanization. Other issues addressed by our members include the use of horses in sustainable management of landscapes, issues of horse welfare, and, of course, innovations in veterinary science and ethology. Across the Horse Commission we deal with contemporary issues, using our scientific expertise to address new issues which are constantly arising from these new formations of the horse industry and sector.

I am a Human Geographer by training and have special competence in Interdisciplinary Studies. This is clearly an important aspect of the study of human-horse relations and I am pleased to say that in this, the Horse Commission of the EAAP, with its Socio Economic Working Group, Interstallion WG, Nutrition WG and Reproduction WG constitutes an innovative approach to understanding the health, uses and the potential of horses in European society in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. I am sure that as we update the HorseWeb site you will find evidence of this in the presentations and links on it.

If you are a researcher in this wide field, I also welcome you to join us, both by becoming a member of the EAAP (which is free to those in Europe) and by coming to our annual conferences, where you will meet a warm welcome from some of the most innovative scientists in the field.