



Willy Luder

President Of ECAHO

«Rome wasn't built in a day»

This was the last sentence of a memorandum I wrote 14 months ago, shortly after my election for president. And today this statement referring to ECAHO is even truer. Rome suffered earthquakes, fires and pestilence, but its existence was never really threatened. As to ECAHO, I am convinced that our association will come out of the present disturbances (raised by a few) stronger than ever.

The present Executive Committee did start with a lot of energy and motivation and in a short period of time some major pending issues, including two legal threats, have been resolved. Also ECAHO's constitution has been reworked and adapted to present-day conditions and realities. Then the Show Commission was ordered to readjust the BlueBook to the revised constitution and to include some minor reforms and adjustments.

A survey among our Members showed that there were many suggestions on how to modernise our rules and regulations. As a consequence, what was to be a simple revision turned out to be a major overhaul. The BlueBook was tumbled by the Show Commission. Many tried and tested articles were abandoned and well proven rules frivolously thrown overboard. What had been carefully developed over two decades was jeopardised. The project started with big ambitions and the result was a threat for the BlueBook.

What should be the backbone of ECAHO was running the risk of degenerating into a "toothless tiger".

Veterinaries, DC-Members, animal welfare activists together with a majority in the EC started counteracting this tendency. I applied for the admission of one or more DCIC Members to future Show Commission meetings. The DC Instructors Committee was originally convened to create and introduce the Disciplinary Committee syllabus and to train DC-Members on all levels. This group of six members around our grand old lady Ursula Rahm has actively fought for the reintroduction of vital elements of the Blue-Book which are now reflected in the "provisional" 2008 version. Over the last few months, this team has gathered information regarding the viability of our rules and has prepared a substantial number of ideas for improvement. It will present its suggestions to the floor on the occasion of the forthcoming EAHSC-meeting in Moorseele.

Having made this painful experience I take the liberty to ask the question about the right to exist of commissions with 25 members and often changing participants when such a task can elegantly be resolved by a small group of handpicked specialists? Big workgroups have proven to be costly, rather sluggish and not very effective. For a group of over 20 people it becomes very difficult, not to say impossible, to develop rules which are accurate, perfectly executed

and legally verified.

But such a change would call for an amendment of our constitution. At this point in time the soldiers are commanding the commanders inasmuch as the EAHSC is autonomously cancelling old and introducing new rules and procedures for our shows. But well understood - the commander bears the blame for the lost battle. Isn't this an upside down structure? I personally would prefer an EC in command and having sole responsibility for ECAHO's business during the year. Democracy is still warranted as the General Assembly is and remains the highest power of the association and EC, as its name says, only executes the power. Such a contemporary solution would make ECAHO a more efficient and effective organisation, which would fit into today's environment of the Arabian horse in Europe at a reduced cost for each member.

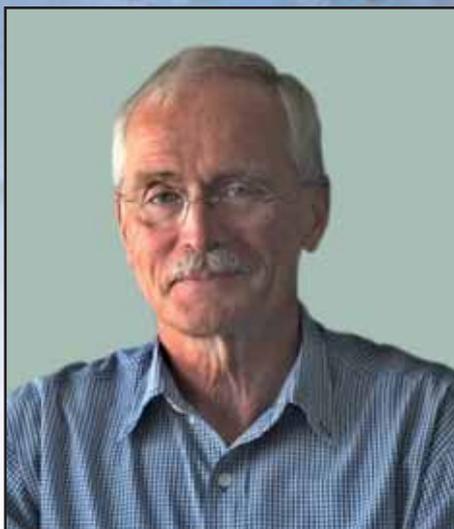
The Executive Committee works well when it gathers. However the group was unfortunately somehow divided by the BlueBook story. I sincerely hope that in the future greatness of mind will prevail in the interest of our members and the respective population of Arabian Horses. Greatness starts when the efforts of each EC member take priority over all personal individual interests. Should somebody be incapable to cope with this minimum requirement, he/she can make available the seat for a successor. I am nevertheless confident that this heterogeneous group of interesting people will grow together and act in concert for the benefit of ECAHO.

ECAHO needs a strong and innovative Executive Committee capable of acting and cope with new challenges and to master emerging threats. The market of the Arabian Horse has become a global business. It is widely accepted that the powerful entrance of big stud farms onto the Arabian Horse scene has strongly stimulated the business here in Europe and elsewhere. A great number of European breeders have benefited from this upswing and are still profiting by this positive trend.

But... there is the flip side of the coin. An increasing number of European breeders can no longer celebrate the victories in A- and Title Shows they used to dominate in previous years. Many of the now winning horses were bred and born in Europe and we should take pride in this fact and continue to breed outstanding horses for the world market. But jealousy goes with glory. The exhibitor whose horse is not winning that day has instantly ready a whole

repertoire of far-fetched explanations, e.g. the judges have been bribed, the sponsor has bought the championship, one of the judges had sold a horse to the owner of the class winner last year, etc.

The Arabian Horse market and the show scene have become global and admittedly less transparent than they used to be years ago. In the meantime every judge has sold a horse to someone. I think everybody has to get accustomed to this fact. The vast majority of our international judges is nonetheless straightforward and honest. Who is contesting that has cut and dried opinions and can never be serene. On the other hand, it is absolutely certain that the pressure on our judges has aggravated in the last years as the prices of certain exceptional horses know no limits. But you can remain assured that EC takes every reported case very, very seriously and, if we deem it necessary, radical steps will be taken.



Just last week I listened to a breeder, whose horse did not win in Aachen. He was convinced that sponsoring is a crime and that horses owned by sponsors necessarily have to win. This is absurd. The fact is however that none of our beautifully catered Title Shows could continue to exist and to act as showcase for our breed. Can you imagine horse racing without sponsorship?

Another important task ahead of us is the review of the judging system. When only 18s, 19s and 20s are used in many Title- and A-Shows while twenty differentiations are possible, we are left with only a few options. I consider it an excess, if a horse which did neither walk nor trot gets 18 in movement and the next participant who showed an outstanding walk and an even better trot must be contented with 19? Such and similar occurrences can make our ranking system a complete farce.

It has meanwhile become generally accepted that Arabian Horses deserve 16 in legs and that for type simply the head and neck points can be copied although the stallion is kicking, cannot move and has the tail carriage of an Icelandic horse. Here action is bitterly needed; we have to re-define the parameters of these criteria.

I am often confronted with questions concerning the honesty and independence of ECAHO Officials. Should persons, who are a factor front and centre in the global Arabian Horse business, continue to serve ECAHO? Does this possibly undermine the credibility of judge panels or ECAHO bodies? Many questions are waiting for an answer. Bear with us, Rome wasn't built in a day either. □