

CONNEMARA PONY BREEDERS' SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR 1998-1999

In reviewing the year now behind us I believe that the Society, the Committee and you the members, can feel proud that your Society and your ponies have officially been recognised as being of a standard acceptable throughout the world.

Official receipt of "approved" status came to us in October 1998. Yes! it has taken a lot of Committee time, effort and in some areas, with what some will say, neglect of or diffidence to home issues. In answer to this criticism let me say that without this approval rating the Australian Connemara Pony Society would, in the future, have been left out of what is now emerging as an exciting, far reaching, in depth survey and inquiry into the Connemara Pony, world wide. The result of which could well see a resurgence of Bloodlines now almost extinct and a world wide breeding programme set up and monitored.

This has come about through the International Societies of the Connemara Pony, and the Irish Society, sitting down and looking to the future. The CPBSA has input into this activity. It is an ongoing activity which we are going to hear a lot more of.

Work is now underway, funded by the Irish Government, to establish a database of all Connemaras world wide. A world wide breeding programme will result from this with special attention being given to the Colour lines of the Stallion Base and lines which are in danger of being lost. Considerable work has already been done, and is still progressing on the BEC issue, and in this area we could see some interesting action in the future. Also embedded in the work of the ICCPS and the CPBS is a program of genetic evaluation of important traits of all ponies and the estimation of genotype probabilities.

The CPBSA will obviously be a part of this world wide programme and we have already received information and requests re our database, electronic message machinery etc to enable the work to begin.

Be assured that the CPBSA is well in advance of many of the E.C. Countries and the USA in our Inspection, Classification and Registration/Stud Book procedures. We are far in front in retention of and adherence to, the principles and objectives for breeding the Connemara as laid down by the CPBS.

On the home front, the Stud Book, I am pleased to say, is now a reality. No one is more disappointed than I am with the delays which we have experienced, first from the CPBS and the ICCPS in finalising the Rules under which our ponies can be accepted world wide, and then from the many glitches which would suddenly appear as the material was fed into the computer programme.

Vicky and Bob Plummer have worked hard and long hours (far beyond what Vicky receives remuneration for) to re-write, correct, proof read etc. material and they are to be congratulated by all members for their dedication and attention to this important document. I believe that the first Computerised Stud Book will be able to be presented to the CPBS in Clifden on August 20 1999. Thank you for being patient, lets hope that it is up to expectations.

The Committee was strengthened at the last AGM with Christa Jones, Jayne Wilson and Sue Lundy joining the ranks and bringing with them new ideas, experience and enthusiasm. We particularly welcomed Sue Lundy from NSW. This State has gone into the doldrums in the past decade and with Sue's enthusiasm, not to mention her Irish Heritage, she will make a great difference in that State.

Committee set itself a number of Objectives and Strategies to run for the next 3 years. These objectives centre on promotion and publicity of the Connemara Pony in Australia.

A new brochure is now available, along with a newly released set of Gift Cards featuring our beautiful ponies. The National Logo can be obtained from the Secretary in a "stick on" form for letter heads, envelopes or what ever. The Committee Meeting in Perth will see a host of other ideas and procedures being discussed, examined and possibly put into effect - all part of this Committees' objectives for the term of the Committee.

Committee has given considerable assistance to one of our members who has prepared a TAFE College project on "Marketing the Connemara Pony". Some good ideas have emerged and these too will form part of the Perth Agenda.

AI has been used by Australian Breeders this year for the first time. It is significant that both the ICCPS and the CPBS are now enthusiastic about this form of conception. I unashamedly make the comment that it has been as a result of action by the CPBSA.

The Classification programme will be reviewed at Perth as a result of an "approved" status. We need to ensure that the principles and objectives of the CPBS are being adhered to and understood. There may even be an emergence of a varying system as a result of the ICCPS Meeting in Clifden this year. Should this happen I believe that our system as designed could well be the template for any change that may occur. I believe that our system certainly won't change.

It can be argued that the system of Inspection and Classification is subjective not objective. I couldn't agree more - however any human decision must of necessity be that way. What we have to endeavour to achieve is an objective decision being the outcome of this subjective assessment. Training, discussion etc can achieve this, the CPBS and the ICCPS are now interested in the production of a Video for training and information of Inspectors. This matter will again be pushed hard at Clifden this year. As a final comment on Inspection and Classification even the CPBS has a problem with the system.

Committee is in the process of reviewing the Pony of the Year Award to take on the system of an Order of Merit, similar to the English and Queensland programmes. It will finalise an Information Booklet for members, and other initiatives that will bring members closer to the Society and keep them better informed.

One important fact which members should be aware of is that there has been a jump in membership of 29.1% in the past 12 months. New, younger and mature members with younger ponies and some more staid ones, are joining us and this is an excellent sign for the future - we must maintain this impetus.

A number of our ponies have been performing well from Queensland to Tasmania and across to West Australia. The fact that these ponies have made the pages of Local and State Newspapers speaks well for their abilities and in a number of differing fields. Also for the attention and training given by their owners, these ponies and their owners are to be congratulated for their work in showing the Community at large just what a versatile pony we have. It is surprising the phone calls that have been received, particularly from mature aged people, asking for pony availability after reading of the actions of our ponies. Another reason for our membership increase also.

This impetus and increase in enthusiasm must not be allowed to falter. The initiatives are there, the Committee needs your ideas, written and verbal, and above all the united support and enthusiasm from members and Action Groups.

The CPBSA is now entering an era akin to that which began the Society. There is a renewed enthusiasm by a younger, differing group. They need to be cultivated as does the mature group who are looking for the pleasure the pony can give.

I appeal to all members to enter into the spirit of this revival, give of your ideas, and support so that we can all show the Community at large and the Equestrian World in particular what a grand and delightful pony the Connemara Pony is.

In closing this report I wish to thank the Committee for its efforts of the past year, they have had some very difficult matters to think about, resolve and put into action. They have given me great support in this field.

Vicky Plummer is to be congratulated on her sterling effort to bring the Stud Book to fruition and for maintaining the Secretariat at a high level of performance. I am sure that you will all join me in thanking Vicky - her efforts in a difficult year are unsurpassed.