

Dear AQHA Members,

My year as AQHA President has been somewhat of a bumpy ride – but nonetheless, a ride that has not only made me stronger, but the Association as a whole. Besides dealing with numbers that result from a tough economy, I spent time learning the inner workings of a jury trial and computer upgrade systems. Despite all of this, we kept strong as an Association; and I focused on my goal of increasing youth involvement in the Association. I am proud of the progress that has been made to keep the future of our association engaged.



Engaging the Future of the Equine Industry

- Take Me Riding: Aptly named because that's what a child would say to a parent: "Mama, take me riding!" Take Me Riding is an all-breeds effort to introduce youth to the world of horses – our world. Take Me Riding will use games and other interactive horse-related activities to introduce families to the equine industry. I am excited to announce that Take Me Riding will launch in June 2014.
- Online Stable: This new website, which went live in February, offers affordable and inclusive ways to reward youth for their horse activity – regardless of breed, type of involvement or digital device. It's a place where youth can record their horse-related activities. AQHA and a group of advisers comprising the American Youth Horse Council, Certified Horsemanship Association, U.S. Pony Club and extension equine specialists have been working together since early 2012 reviewing research, raising funds and targeting necessary age-appropriate markets to make the horse and horse activities more available, accessible and affordable to today's fast-paced and digital family lifestyle.
- Time to Ride: Time to Ride is an American Horse Council marketing alliance campaign targeting women 35-45 and their children as the market to increase horse involvement. Time to Ride is a web-based platform built to assist and engage non-horse owning females and reward them for participating and sharing their equine experiences through social media.

Even though increasing youth involvement was near and dear to my heart, we also had many other things going on throughout the year.

Leveling

Leveling expands the former two-tiered competition format of green and open for horses, and Novice and open for exhibitors, into four levels:

- Rookie
- Level 1, formerly Novice for exhibitors and Green for horses
- Level 2, a new level formerly known as Intermediate for exhibitors and Progressive for horses
- Level 3, the top level for our exhibitors and horses

By using an objective handicapping system to place exhibitors and horses in levels, we provide more opportunities for exhibitors and horses of all skill levels to compete against their peers.

Cloning

A Texas U.S. District Court entered a judgment against AQHA in the cloning lawsuit, which AQHA has appealed. We look forward to presenting our case to the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in 2014.

Database Upgrade

AQHA contracted with one of the leading international IT companies to reprogram our database. The purpose of this initiative is to bring the Association's technology infrastructure into the 21st century. After many months of mapping and programming by the contracted IT company and subsequent testing by AQHA staff, the decision was made to go live with the working product. Despite near 24/7 efforts by both parties, the new database was not at an acceptable level of performance or stability – it was simply not ready. As a result, AQHA chose to temporarily revert to the previous system while the new system undergoes additional programming and testing to bring it to the level of service we expect.

AQHA Proud

This year, the AQHA Proud campaign was launched to reunite members and stand together behind this horse we all love. We know it is important for members, owners and the Association to stand behind the pride we have for this great horse. With this thought in mind, the AQHA Proud marketing campaign has taken off faster than any other effort AQHA has ever had. I am excited to see what the future holds for our great association.

Even though my ride in 2013 was sometimes bumpy, it has been a great one; and I am and will always be AQHA Proud. I have enjoyed serving as your 2013 AQHA president and on the AQHA Executive Committee. I will continue to support the American Quarter Horse industry and look forward to the future of our organization.

Johne Dobbs
AQHA President