



**The Fell Pony Society**

**North East Area Group**

Registered Charity, Number 1104945

### **Happy New Year!**

I would like to wish everyone a very happy and healthy 2021 and I sincerely hope that you and your families have found ways of coping in these extraordinary times. When the government announced a national lockdown in March 2020 most of us had very little understanding of what was going on or how it would impact on our lives. As I write this newsletter we are in our third national lockdown to halt the spread of the virus and protect the NHS but it doesn't feel anything like the first one as there is a lot of traffic on the roads and people out walking everywhere. The daily case numbers are alarming and the number of deaths has gone through the roof. Once again we have to stay at home and play a waiting game to receive one of the approved vaccines which appears to be the only way out of this mayhem. Thank goodness for our Fell ponies to help us unwind from the daily stresses and to appreciate how lucky we are to live in the North East of England.

Trying to plan events for 2021 is almost impossible under the current circumstances. Our annual Sunday Lunch Event at Hardwick Hall is not possible this February which is such a shame when we were just beginning to enjoy a larger gathering of Fell friends. Our performance points award rosettes and special trophies will not be awarded in 2021. I would like the 2020 trophy winners to look after the trophies for this year and return them to me by December 2021. If equine events are allowed to return to some form of normality then we will do the performance points awards at the end of this year but I will update you all on this later in the year. Please keep a diary of any events that you do take part in.

We are hoping to hold a virtual dressage competition, with a schedule available mid/late February and a closing date towards the end of March. This is very flexible and will be timed around the government allowing equine facilities to be opened up for general use. Anneli Davison is currently preparing a schedule and I will send it out when appropriate. We all need something to work towards as the nights get lighter and the spring weather improves.

Also we are planning to hold another Native Pony Dressage Training Day at East Durham College – Houghall Campus. This has been provisionally booked for Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2021. All classes will be open to registered pure bred mountain and moorland ponies. Classes at Introductory, Preliminary and Novice levels. A schedule will be available as soon as we know if this is going to be allowed to take place. A change of date may be necessary so look out for details during March.

Hairy Pony Camp at Linnel Wood, Hexham is being planned in its normal format for the weekend of Friday 30<sup>th</sup> April – Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> May. This may be changed to two one day training days if overnight stays are not allowed. If the governments vaccination plan has not been completed this may be rescheduled for later in the year. This is a joint Fell & Highland pony camp organised by the Highland Pony Enthusiasts Club & North East FPS Group. Email [hpecnortheast@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:hpecnortheast@hotmail.co.uk) or telephone Chris on 07787124413 for more information nearer the time. My crystal ball is still very hazy for the end of April 2021.

The annual Native Pony Festival held at Crescent Farm, Throckley, Newcastle NE15 9RE is being planned for Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2021. There will be In-hand classes for all native breeds. Ridden and WHP classes. A schedule will be available early April. This event was postponed until September in 2020 and lots of restrictions were in place to safeguard the exhibitors etc so I'm sure we will need to jump through the same hoops this year if the show is allowed to take place.

Our plans do not go beyond May 2021 as we need to see how the year is going to unfold. Other events including a pleasure ride or a beach ride may be possible by the autumn. The main message at the moment is to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.

In 2022 the Fell Pony Society will celebrate its centenary so lots of events are being planned to take place in Cumbria during the week following the Breed Show which will be on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2022. I would like the North East FPS Group to be involved in those celebrations and have a day to include a stud visit, pleasure ride, BBQ or picnic etc. If you have any specific ideas, then please let us know. I believe this is the light at the end of the tunnel that we are all waiting for!

Please take care of yourselves and keep safe. Better times are just around the corner.

Eileen Walker