

The American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) honored a council of family ranchers dedicated to improving equine welfare through research, education, and innovative marketing with the 2009 Lavin Cup, its award for outstanding equine welfare initiatives.

The North American Equine Ranching Information Council (NAERIC), a non-profit association comprised of 64 family ranchers in Canada and North Dakota, will be presented with the Lavin Cup at the President's Luncheon on December 8, 2009, during the AAEP's 55th Annual Convention.

Established in 1995, NAERIC member ranchers manage broodmares that produce quality horses of several breeds as well as provide pregnant mares' urine (PMU). Estrogens extracted from PMU are used to produce hormone therapies for menopausal women.

NAERIC ranchers have organized programs and marketing campaigns to ensure quality breeding and promote advanced animal husbandry techniques that include at least twice-a-year veterinary herd health reviews as well as third party veterinary oversight. The association is heavily involved in serving its members and the public as an agribusiness resource, providing the latest information on ranch management, equine care, and breeding practices.

"Our approach from inception has been to rely on science-based horse management, continuous improvements and working with equine veterinarians for education, recommendations and oversight that ensure the health and welfare of the horses we manage," said Greg Little, president of NAERIC. "Our family ranchers are proud to be horse breeders that contribute to women's health care and especially appreciative of the recognition by the American Association of Equine Practitioners for our equine welfare initiatives."

NAERIC manages an Equine Placement Fund to place mares no longer utilized for PMU production in productive markets. Since 2003, the fund has been instrumental in placing more than 26,000 broodmares throughout the United States and Canada.

NAERIC also supports equine research, including the Equine Health Research Fund at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine.

The Lavin Cup is named for AAEP Past President Gary Lavin. Past recipients of the Lavin Cup include Hanover Shoe Farms, Finger Lakes Thoroughbred Adoption Program, the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation, Inc., and the American Quarter Horse Association.

The American Association of Equine Practitioners, headquartered in Lexington, Ky., was founded in 1954 as a non-profit organization dedicated to the health and welfare of the horse. Currently, the AAEP reaches more than 5 million horse owners through its nearly 10,000 members worldwide and is actively involved in ethics issues, practice management, research, and continuing education in the equine veterinary profession and horse industry.