

CAVALOR INTERVIEW WITH PETER BOLLEN

By Khaled Assem

IN MARKING ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY, CAVALOR FEED, SUPPLEMENTS AND CARE PRODUCTS CELEBRATES ADVANCES IN EQUINE HEALTH AND LONGEVITY, MUCH OF WHICH IT ASCRIBES TO SCIENTIFIC IMPROVEMENTS IN EQUINE NUTRITION. IN 1989, WHEN THE BELGIUM-BASED COMPANY WAS FOUNDED AS THE BRAINCHILD OF YOUNG AGRICULTURAL ENGINEER PETER BOLLEN, CAVALOR BASED ITS FORMULATIONS ON WHAT IN THOSE DAYS WAS AN INNOVATIVE WAY TO FEED HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT HORSES – LOW PROTEIN AND HIGHER GOOD FATS. BOLLEN HAS BEEN A LIFETIME FRIEND SINCE 1989 WHEN WE MET AT THE STUDENT CHAMPIONSHIPS IN THE USA AND WE MAINTAINED OUR CONTACT SINCE THEN, EACH IN HIS OWN FIELD. HERE IS AN HT INTERVIEW WITH HIM IN WHICH HE GIVES HIS VIEWS ON HIS COMPANY, ITS ACHIEVEMENTS, AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS.



Peter Bollen in a Trotter's race!



Bollen riding Cavalor Violet at CSI Herselt

When did your passion for horses start?

I started riding when I was 10 years old. At 12, I started working in a stable, cleaning boxes, and grooming the horses during competitions as to be able to pay for my riding. At 14, I competed in my first ever event, and at 16, I bought my first horse. At University, I was taking care of more than 10 horses on daily basis – also cleaning their boxes and cleaning them.

When did the idea of starting a business around horses come about?

Upon completing University, I was soliciting for a job as a nutritionist. I wanted to start at Vitamex where the owner Pieter Antoon Seghers and the CEO Patrick Keereman were horse lovers. During our first conversation, we developed a concept, “Why don’t we start a line for horses?” And so I did. I started from scratch and developed all products by myself. For several years, I developed products, built stands, packaged products, printed labels and personally delivered the product to customers.

Tell us about the landmarks of your career, from the start with equine vitamins to the founding of Cavalor which is internationally recognised?

Already at University I was very interested in Nutraceuticals, functional feeds and vitamins as to have the ability to combine my passion for horses with my main interest: nutraceuticals, functional feeds and vitamins in Cavalor. After 15 Years working for Vitamex, they gave me the opportunity to do a management buy-out, and to found, together with Lieselot Hamerlinck, ‘Nutriquine’, the owner of the brand Cavalor today.

Tell us about the challenges you face as the founder of Cavalor?

Every year there are new companies that come and sell horse supplements and care products, with very strong marketing, often very low prices, but products that do not work at all as after a few years, they disappear from the market. These companies kill the market and take the trust away from

customers. For this reason, Cavalor is putting so much effort into scientific research so that we have products that really work and that are based on serious research. Regulations for horse supplements and horse feed are changing very often. Consequently, we have to change our labels and packaging very often. The more international Cavalor becomes (today we sell in more than 50 countries), the more complicated the registrations become.


Tell us about the rewards you gained from Cavalor?

I travel all over the world to visit many happy Cavalor customers. Most serious customers involved in equestrian sport know the brand Cavalor. What makes me happy is when a product I have developed exceeds my expectations. Many equestrian champions are using Cavalor feed, feed supplements and care products on a daily basis.

Tell us about your family, if your children are involved with horses, or whether any of them would be interested in following your footsteps?

I have three children and they ride. Nomy,18, my eldest daughter, competes from time to time as she is a model with little time on her hands. Thibaut, 15, competes with ponies on International level. Malin,11.5, has completed her first international Pony Competition last weekend and achieved great results. My son and youngest daughter show interest in working for Cavalor in the future, but of course as they are young, this can change in a few years! My wife also competes, but is now coaching the kids and goes with them to shows.

What are your dreams and plans for the future of Cavalor?

To become a serious equine nutrition player in North America, where we have since last year a new horse feed production facility; to make Cavalor feed, supplements and care products available all over the world; to develop many innovative and great products, making a longer and better life for our horses, and to support many young riders and help them to become champions in the future. 

All photos by Peter Van Den Bulck



At Jumping Antwerp



With the family