

1998 Hans Sigrist Stipend

The Hans Sigrist Foundation played a pivotal role in both my university and research careers, in that it allowed me to continue researching the immunopathogenesis and genetics of allergic diseases of the horse at a time when I might otherwise have had to leave science. Although the research projects I was undertaking were funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation and the Federal Office for Education and Science, my own position was not financially supported from 1999 onwards. This was due to the closing of the Division of Immunogenetics at the Institute of Animal Breeding, after the retirement of my mentor, Prof. Dr. S. Lazary. It was therefore very important to me when I was awarded a Hans Sigrist scholarship at the end of 1998, which allowed me to complete my habilitation, «Beteiligung von Immunglobulin E an der Pathogenese allergischer Krankheiten beim Pferd», and to receive the *venia docendi* in Veterinary Immunology in 2002. In our research projects, we investigated the involvement of immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies and IgE-mediated allergic reactions in two diseases of the horse, insect bite hypersensitivity (an allergic skin reaction to bites of midges and black flies), and recurrent air-



Eliane Marti

way obstruction (a hypersensitivity reaction to stable dust with some similarities to human asthma). We demonstrated that various factors influence a horse's ability to produce high or low levels of IgE antibodies against certain mould antigens, and that one of these genetic factors is the equine major histocompatibility complex. I am very grateful that the Hans Sigrist Foundation supported me until the end of 2001 and wish to thank them for their backing. It allowed me to stay at the University of Berne and be appointed to a newly created position in Clinical Veterinary Immunology. Currently, my main research focus is still on the pathogenesis of allergic diseases in the horse, but I am also collaborating on research projects into allergic diseases in dogs. I am thus very grateful to the Hans Sigrist Foundation to have enabled me to carry on with work that fascinated me.

Contact address:

PD Dr. Eliane Marti, Klinik für Nutztiere und Pferde, Länggassstrasse 124, 3012 Bern,
E-mail: eliane.marti@itz.unibe.ch