

We Gather Together

THIS MONTH, we present our annual salute to markets and trade shows in the equine trade industry, both in the United States and abroad.

It's been an interesting year for markets. The former Stanley KOP market faced down a challenge from another organization after Stanley officials announced that the show would relocate from Pennsylvania to Atlantic City.

There were some tense moments, but the final decision to pull plans for a new market—for now—was truly in the best interest of the industry as a whole.



The first Atlantic City market in February should be quite an adventure. After five years of being crammed into the Fort Washington Expo Center, the spacious and open Atlantic City Convention Center should be a vast improvement.

The Stanley Market and the Western-English Sales Association's Denver Market are the two industry behemoths. Denver continues to grow and set records.

WESA president Dennis Walkingshaw and I chatted at the fall market about the reasons for the booming interest in Denver. There didn't seem to be one thing he

could point to, but his organization is extremely pleased that it's happening.

Many of the participating companies are stepping up to the plate, as well. This year, the folks at Rocky Brands are planning to give away a Ford pickup filled with boot products to one lucky retailer. Now that would be worth the trip to the market by itself, not to mention the fashion show, the friendships and the four floors packed with merchandise.

We've also chosen to put special emphasis in this edition and in the coming months on the two major overseas markets in our industry. Both SPOGA in Germany and the British Equestrian Trade Association International Trade Fair in the United Kingdom are fantastic events.

It's eye-opening to see how many countries have companies that manufacture spectacular products for horses and riders. Getting to know retailers from other countries also gives you a renewed feeling of thankfulness for how easy it really is to be in business in the United States.

Believe me, if you think the red tape is bad where you live, I'll introduce you to retailers in the United Kingdom and all across Europe who can best you in a red tape contest without trying too hard.

Despite the differences, there are probably more similarities between manufacturers and retailers in the United States and abroad. No matter where you go, high-quality, reasonably priced items sell, and taking good care of customers is a universal key to business success.

While SPOGA and BETA are unique experiences, they're incredible learning experiences, regardless of whether you're a retailer looking for unique gear and apparel or a manufacturer looking for a new and blossoming market for your company's products.

We hope to see you at one of the markets planned for 2006! ☺

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