



Above: Western-themed throws from Country Mills in Pennsylvania are featured prominently in Eurohorse's storefront location Rheden, Holland.

Fancy leather tooling is spurned—perhaps a bit of border tooling only. No gaudy silver conchos.

“Nothing kitschy,” Lalesse added.

In the coming years, Velthuis would like to work on developing her own saddle trees and continue to find ways to improve customer service, such as expanding the company's Web site.

“What I find important is that you have your quality. Your quality should be good and your after sales should be great,” Velthuis said. “Every time the customers know we are coming they know you are keeping your appointments. When they call, you come back and solve problems. That's very important.”

Because of the remoteness of their retail location, Eurohorse sometimes finds suppliers aren't as customer-conscious as they are.

“There are 6,000 miles of water between us and it's sometimes difficult to make it clear we have a problem,” Lalesse said. “In the United States, when you don't solve it, okay, the customer goes to another dealer. You can't really do that here.”

While the Dutch are generally patient people, their patience does wear thin.

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“Customers will wait a few months, but not indefinitely,” Lalesse said. “An appointment is an appointment, a deal is a deal.”

Eurohorse is also expanding its branding through support for a leading amateur Western rider, Aline de Jong.

“I want to make a statement for Western riding here in the Netherlands,” Velthuis said. “To show that if you are an amateur and you work hard for your horse and to participate, it is possible to get someone who sees it and is interested in bringing you further.”

Eurohorse supplies de Jong with clothing and other equipment, and she in turn serves as a model for the company's Web site.

Velthuis said it's not unusual for customers of her mobile unit to walk up and request a piece of clothing

they've just seen de Jong wearing in competition.

Velthuis and Lalesse would also like to see American manufacturers spend more time and money marketing their products to consumers in Europe.

“Europe is a growing market, and they need to advertise to drive interest in their products and make them more recognizable,” Lalesse said.

Although Western is growing in popularity, English riding is still a large part of the equine scene in Holland. Velthuis says even some of the top trainers of reining horses in her country probably are more influenced by English training than anything else.

In true Dutch fashion, the two are finding a way to exist together side by side. 