

# What's Ahead for 2006

By Paul Wahl, Editor

English manufacturers have probably enacted more changes in their lines in the past two years than in the 98 years preceding them.

With the demise of Millers EEG four years ago, the English sector of the equine trade industry burst wide open. For years, Millers had a stranglehold on the English sector—and for good reason. They sold excellent products, offered at a fair price.

The explosion of companies manufacturing all things English in the ensuing years has meant abundant choices for retailers.

Will the introduction of new colors, new fabrics and new products continue unabated in 2006, or will it be more of a settled year? We asked some of the top minds in the English products sector to gaze into their crystal ball and give us their best predictions.

## That Competitive Edge

From professional competitors to recreational riders, technical performance products are in high demand. Serious English riders will continue to seek out the most advanced functionality in their footwear, apparel and equipment to gain a competitive edge.

At Ariat, we think less about trends and more about market evolution. We know that English riders tend to be “early adopters” of new technology and will continue to seek out new product innovations that benefit their horse and themselves.

Retailers can profit from this trend by keeping their merchandising assortments up-to-date, and using every opportunity to tell the technical story behind a product.

Ariat is introducing its next generation of footwear—Ariat Cobalt™ XR. We have been working on this new technology for more than three years, and set out to create the most advanced stability and comfort technology in any footwear designed for any sport.

At horse shows, we are seeing strong demand for accessories that allow traditionally conservative English riders to express their individuality. Our new

line of Ariat belts include both English and Western styles, and English retailers have enjoyed terrific sell-through of both English and Western belts over the past three months, as riders incorporate small Western fashion details into their wardrobe.

Retailers can profit from the trend towards technical innovation and meet consumer's appetite for advanced product functionality by becoming a “go-to” destination for new products, employing creative in-store merchandising and maintaining a solid commitment to continual training on product features and benefits.

We predict that English equestrian retailers around the world are sure to see strong traffic and profitable sales in 2006.

**Beth Cross, Founder and CEO  
Ariat International**

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It's been said that change in the realm of English apparel is glacial in its scope. It's becoming increasingly more difficult to say that with certainty.

Ariat will introduce the latest version of its Cobalt technology this spring.



Tack 'n Togs Merchandising