

Viva la Trade Association

We spent an enjoyable couple of days in Austin, Texas, this past month, attending the Western-English Trade Association's (WETA) All Industry Conference. You can find coverage of the event inside this edition and on our Web site.

In addition to it being a great opportunity to learn, the conference is also a fantastic way to network with others in the equine trade industry.



I've always been a huge fan of trade associations. When I began my career in newspaper journalism, I immediately became active in the trade associations that were available for that industry.

I was young and often considered a rebel by the elder statesmen that ran these organizations. I learned a lot about how to facilitate change, rather than break down the walls. I also learned that there are always going to be the naysayers and the critics.

In the past few months, another trade association—the American Equestrian Trade Association (AETA)—has begun forming. The primary goal of this organization is to produce an English trade show, similar to the one sponsored by the British Equestrian Trade Association in Birmingham, England.

The formal sign-up of members for AETA has begun, and Tack 'n Togs was among the first to respond. We welcome any group that has a goal of making the equine trade industry better. An interview with the organization's new administrator, Jeremy W. Law, can be found in our Industry In Focus section on page 6 of this edition.

We have offered AETA the same coverage and participation level that we have offered to WETA over the years.


It will be interesting to watch what evolves during the next year where trade associations are concerned.

WETA was formed with the idea of bringing the industry together with one voice—Western and English, manufacturer and retailer. I think anyone involved will admit it's been tough these past couple of years.

The organizers of AETA will likely discover the same thing WETA has—organizing and financing a trade association is a monumental task. It's worth the effort, but there are times when you truly wonder whether you're not just spinning your wheels.

My ultimate goal, and I know it's the goal of many others, is that the two organizations eventually merge in a grand show of unity. The things that unite them are far greater than the things that divide them. The ultimate goal is the same ... the success and prosperity of the equine trade industry.

The other positive is that those who have been telling WETA that the organization doesn't represent their interests have effectively lost that excuse for not getting involved.

Certainly one or the other of the trade associations is worth your support. Maybe both. 

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