



HEARD ABOUT



By Paul Wahl, Editor

## Making Hay in May

**O**ur May edition is one of my favorites. It always renews my trust in the people who make up the equine trade industry.

The Best of the Best Industry Awards Program exposes us to some of the top retailers, manufacturers and reps in the industry. These people let us come into their lives and pick their brains, all for your benefit.

When we put out our call for nominations in January, it's kind of like Forrest Gump's "box of chocolates"—we never know what we're gonna get. But as nominations come in, there's usually one or two who stand out so far above the others that the decision for our judges is clear.

It's a highlight of my year to get out and spend time with these folks. This year, I worked on stories for both of the top retailers and came home with a year's worth of enthusiasm (not to mention some awesome Mexican food!) I know Barb Kastens, my assistant editor, had the same experience, as did our freelance contributor Teresa Avery.

One theme that runs through all of those chosen this year: Each of the companies and individuals involved has a strong desire to do things the right way, to be successful but also to make an impact in their communities.

The second thrill for me is getting that big fat box full of reader surveys, through which we are able to provide insight into the industry. I believe it's the eight most important pages we publish during the course of a year.

The top concern for retailers this year was unchanged from last year—the cost of shipping. Over the past year, we've asked hundreds of retailers and manufacturers how to solve that problem and so far, there aren't many good answers. The cost is what the carriers say it is. It's kind of like the weather, everyone talks about it but no one seems to be able to do much about it.

We have seen a growing trend in which retailers are purchasing from vendors close to home and picking up the goods themselves. You could argue that the time and gas spent doing that probably would equal what you'd pay in freight, but it's working for some.

Some of the results of the survey will surprise, others will leave you nodding your head and saying "I could have told you that without a survey."

Thanks to everyone who completed the surveys and returned them this year. A great deal of thought went into each and every response. Special thanks to those who attached notes or wrote in the margins to tell us of their own concerns we had not addressed in the survey. That is always helpful. 🐾

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