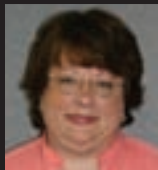




RIDING POINT



By Barb Kastens, Editor

Solving the Puzzle

Our readers often come to us at this time of year, asking our advice about which of the winter markets they should attend. We try to guide them by asking questions about their business, their location and the kind of merchandise they're after. We follow that up with details and contact information about each of the markets that they're interested in. In the end, they usually come to their own conclusions.

One thing we've found is that our readers are perplexed. Your conundrums are understandable, given the series of events that have occurred on the equine trade show scene in just the past couple of years. Shedding some light on the subject has been one of our ongoing goals. To that end, we've put together "Pieces of the Markets Puzzle" this month, beginning on page 9.

Our State of the Market Survey always brings in many written comments from respondents, and last year was no exception. Several that were returned last spring made us realize that our Retailer Profiles, which appear regularly in the pages of Tack 'n Togs, were not presenting a complete picture of the industry to our readers. Comments such as, "We'd like to see some manufacturer profiles" made us aware of your need to know more about the companies that make and distribute the products that you sell in your stores. The story on page 18, a profile of one of the industry's best-known distributors, J.T. International, should begin to satisfy that need. J.T. is an amazing operation, with savvy businessman Jack Sievers at its helm. It continues to grow after more than 30 years in business. It's a safe bet that many of you place orders with this company, whose mission of customer satisfaction has become legendary amongst its buyers.

Associate Editor Kelly Drobac put together a starter list for the ten events that shaped the equestrian trade industry in 2007. This is always one of the hardest decisions we make during the year, with many more news-worthy items than ten vying for our attention. The result is our "Year in Review" that appears on pages 22-23.

This month's Fashion Break focuses on T-shirts, an apparel category that has exploded over the past year or so. At the September Denver Market alone, several new T-shirt manufacturers made their presence known, sending a clear message that this American classic is as popular as ever.

I'll be traveling to a number of the 2008 Winter Markets, and I know I'll see some of you along the way. I'd love to talk about your plans and challenges for the coming year, so stop by our table and say hello! ☺

Barb Kastens

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