

Industry Divided on East Coast

Unless you're a newcomer to the equine trade industry, you're probably aware of the parting of ways between former American Equestrian Trade Association (AETA) show producer Jim Herbert and the AETA organization itself. Their differences have resulted in two predominantly English trade shows in the East. The first is held twice annually in Richmond, Va. by Herbert, who six months ago renamed his show the International Equine Business Alliance (IEBA). The second is the new AETA International Trade Fair, which was held in Orlando, Fla. this past February, and is scheduled to be moved to Baltimore, Md. as of August 2008, where it will be presented twice a year thereafter. Kent Hopper of Hopper Expositions is now the producer of the AETA show.

The split has spawned a lot more than just two shows, however. Many vendors, unable to predict which show the buyers would support, opted to exhibit at both shows, at least for the time being, until a clear leader could be distinguished. Most buyers, on the other hand, decided against going to either show, resulting in less than stellar retailer attendance.

IEBA reported drawing 300 stores with 575 buyers to

its event. While business seminars were conducted several times a day, many of the other extras that AETA had provided at the first Richmond show in January 2007, such as twice-daily fashion shows and a future perfect store demonstration, were noticeably absent. Exhibitor numbers were down by about a third from a year ago.

At a town hall meeting Sunday morning, Herbert spoke about how he had provided what people told him they wanted, including health insurance, shipping discounts and lower credit card processing fees. He also reported a net profit of approximately \$1,500. He then opened the floor to questions and comments. Some exhibitors expressed concern over low attendance and lack of promotion for the show. Others advised vendors to continue to back the show, citing the excellent location and facilities in Richmond and the surrounding area. The meeting adjourned on a somewhat unresolved note. Despite a call for exhibitors to commit to the next IEBA show, 40 contracts were turned in, according to Herbert.

For more information about the next IEBA Expo Aug. 8-10, visit www.iebaexpo.com.

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