



Barb Kastens
Editor

That Special Season

As you receive this issue, you're probably preparing in a number of ways to welcome holiday shoppers into your store. Extra help has likely been hired, despite the forecasts for lackluster sales. Maybe you've revamped your displays or put up seasonal decorations. You may have even put some special services in place such as a gift registry or a wrapping station.

There's more than just holiday bustle going on at this time of year, though. The close of the year is a great time to reflect on the past, and turn an optimistic eye toward the future. This December issue of Tack 'n Togs continues the tradition of giving you the opportunity to do just that. The Winter Markets Preview that you'll find on page 6 takes a look at the busy and promising trade show season that's coming up in the first part of 2009. Take a look at where the major shows are happening these days, and the extras that each one offers. Year in Review on page 30 provides a look back at ten happenings that helped shape the equine trade industry in 2008.



We're honored to have professional bull rider Justin McBride on our cover this month. In October, Tack 'n Togs staff members, myself included, were the guests of principal PBR sponsor Rocky Brands at the show in Columbus, Ohio. The folks at Rocky got us front row seats, right in front of the chutes where 2,000-lb. bulls topped with riders a tenth their size came thundering out, sometimes a little too close for comfort. Justin was kind enough to provide us with some photo ops after the show. When asked whose hat he was wearing (as in who manufactured the hat,) he replied, "What do you mean, whose hat am I wearing? It's MY hat!" Once the question was rephrased, he revealed that it was indeed a Stetson. Read what Stetson maker Hatco and other leaders in the industry have to say in the Felt Hat Trends Analysis, beginning on page 12. Images and descriptions of the latest styles can also be found there.

Our product sector focus this month is about creating a pet department in your store. We interviewed retailers whose main product mix is equine, but who have also found success selling pet products on a smaller scale. Whether you already have a pet department in your store or not, you will find some interesting and helpful tidbits on page 20. These products are also excellent add-ons for holiday shoppers who are looking for the perfect gift for the horse owner...and pet owner...in their lives. Happy selling!

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