

GOING GREEN

Horse Sport Ireland Selects KER Team Member Bluegrass Horse Feeds as Official Feed Consultant



PHOTOGRAPHS | COURTESY OF BLUEGRASS HORSE FEEDS

Captain Geoff Curran won the 2008 rendition of the Tattersalls International CCI*** on the Irish Sport Horse Kilkishen, a testament to the breeding of sport horses in the country.

Continuing a tradition of international sponsorship by Kentucky Equine Research (KER) and its Team Members, Horse Sport Ireland recently appointed Bluegrass Horse Feeds as its official feed consultant.

According to its Web site, Horse Sport Ireland is “responsible for devising and implementing strategies for the development and promotion of an internationally competitive Irish sport horse industry.” While the focus may seem to be on competition, Horse Sport Ireland is actively involved in the advancement of Irish horses for leisure as well as sport.

The agreement between Horse Sport Ireland and Bluegrass Horse Feeds, which will run through the Olympic Games in 2012, reinforces the feed company’s commitment to

the Irish horse community. Bluegrass Horse Feeds’ primary obligation to the national group revolves around its consultation services. The company provides advice to riders, both on an individual basis and through educational forums, with the goal of achieving superior nutrition through improved feeding strategies. KER helps with these efforts.

“As the main KER contact for Bluegrass Horse Feeds, I conduct diet analyses that have been requested of Bluegrass Horse Feeds by Horse Sport Ireland riders and teams, and at least twice a year present talks to various groups as organized by Horse Sport Ireland and Bluegrass Horse Feeds,” said Clarissa Brown-Douglas, an equine nutritionist with KER.

Keen interest in the partnership has already been established. “I participated in two evening

seminars, one in County Kilkenny and County Westmeath, and each seminar consisted of two talks, one on nutrition of the sport horse in training and the second on nutrition for breeding. I was thrilled with the attendance. Significantly more people showed up than had made reservations. I was so encouraged to see a strong interest in proper nutrition from riders and breeders. The

Each year Ireland sends a team to the Dublin Horse Show in hopes of winning the Aga Khan Challenge Trophy, awarded to the victorious international show jumping team.





Above: Michael Quirke, Horse Sport Ireland trainer; Declan Cullen, Bluegrass Horse Feeds; Ginny Elliott, Horse Sport Ireland high performance eventing manager; and Fredi Ellberg, Horse Sport Ireland trainer. Right: Members of the Horse Sport Ireland team compete in various Federation Equestre Internationale competitions. This group of athletes competed in the 2008 Olympic Games.



goal for the seminars is genuine—the education of horsemen to produce healthier, more athletic horses through correct nutrition,” said Brown-Douglas.

Another service available to Horse Sport Ireland is an all-inclusive nutritional evaluation, whereby riders or drivers complete in-depth questionnaires about their horses’ feeding routines. By using MicroSteed, KER’s diet-evaluation software, Bluegrass Horse Feeds provides important information about each horse’s diet—whether it is adequate or requires more or less of certain nutrients. Brown-Douglas pointed out, however, that advice and nutritional evaluations will not just be restricted to the elite riders and their mounts, but will include Pony Clubs, adult riding clubs, and breed societies.

Another important aspect of the newly forged relationship is KER’s willingness to help find appropriate feed and forage for Irish horses when competing in international competitions. KER has significant experience in this, as the company has helped procure feeds, forages, and sometimes bedding for other elite competitions such as the Olympic Games on numerous occasions.

In fact, it was Bluegrass Horse Feeds’ eagerness to help Horse Sport Ireland prior to the Olympic Games in 2008 that served as a catalyst for the current agreement between the two companies. Declan Cullen, a longtime employee of Bluegrass Horse Feeds, approached the organization with a request to help the Irish three-day eventing team by formulating diets that would be suitable for the conditions the horses would face in Hong Kong. Bluegrass Horse Feeds manufactured several of the specialty feeds that were used at the Olympics, which allowed the Irish horses to transition onto the feeds prior to the Games. This was extremely successful, not just in assuring the horses were prepared for the feed available in Asia, but also in creating a strong, credible relationship with Horse Sport Ireland and the Olympic riders.

Much like its American counterpart, the United States Equestrian Federation, Horse Sport Ireland oversees Irish participation in international sport in multiple disciplines: show jumping, three-day eventing, dressage, endurance, driving, and para-equestrian (horsepeople with disabilities). Considerable effort and thought is also given to the country’s breeding industry, as Irish-bred horses have a long history of success in international venues. 