



Photos by Shawn Hamilton



FEEDING THE WORLD



Official Equine Nutritionist of the USET

Horses thrive on routine, yet world-class performance horses are subjected to a kaleidoscopic schedule of frequent travel, unfamiliar stabling, and a variety of training and competition venues. In this whirlwind of change, Kentucky Equine Research Inc. (KER) has developed a way to provide consistency in the feeding programs of these equine athletes. Building on its knowledge of nutrition and its experience as a feed consultant and supplier for two Olympic Games, KER's most recent venture was to supply hay, concentrates, and supplements for horses competing at the World Equestrian Games (WEG). The success of this effort was reflected in the number of medals amassed by KER clients at the WEG.

"As the official equine nutritionist for the United States Equestrian Team (USET), we were very pleased to see the USET athletes finish so well. The dressage and driving teams finished with silver medals, the highest either has ever accomplished. The three-day event team finished with a gold medal for the first time since 1974. The reining team won the inaugural reining competition. USET show jumpers, vaulters, and endurance horses all performed very respectably as well," said KER President Dr. Joe Pagan.

The company also formulates feeds for manufacturers around the globe known as KER Team Members. These companies supplied feed for Australian, Canadian, Indian, and Irish competitors. One such company, Brooks Feed Store in Ontario, supported many riders on Canada's equestrian team. Robert Van Camp, the company president, explained, "About two weeks before our team's horses were to ship to Spain, we were asked if we could help with the feeding program. Of course we were delighted to have the opportunity but were a little concerned about how we would manage to do this within the time frame. We called KER and found out what feeds it would be able to get to Spain for our horses, and then we helped all 20 of our equine athletes switch over to those feeds before they left the country. Managing that transition in such a short period of time wasn't easy, but it worked very well.

All of the horses maintained their weight, and our reining team achieved a silver medal."

The logistics of providing the feeds that fuel equine athletes has traditionally been the purview of each horse's immediate support staff—the owners, trainers, or grooms. According to Mandy Brown, barn manager for Tucker Johnson's champion four-in-hand driving horses, this could mean taking as much feed as possible with the horses when they traveled to Europe for competition and then

using that in decreasing amounts to blend with locally available feeds. Brown explained, "Changing feeds can often mean changing personalities. You know how your horses perform on their usual feed, but things can take a dramatic turn when you have to make substitutions. It is bad enough when you are dealing with one horse, but we have four horses in a team—four horses with distinct personalities—that have to mesh well together. Changing the feeds can dramatically alter the way our horses perform. We try to manage our time to adjust for this, but sometimes it just isn't possible."

KER recognized the need for consistency when it served as the official feed supplier for the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. Pagan and his staff worked diligently with equestrian team leaders from around the world to organize feeds that would support every equine athlete. At the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, KER was again on hand as a consultant. The company built upon its experience in Atlanta and set up a special Web site to communicate with all of

the equestrian federations. The Web site displayed the range and quality of feeds that would be available and explained quarantine restrictions that could affect the importation of feeds and supplements. By the time the horses prepared to compete at the World Games in Jerez, Spain this fall, KER's experience had grown to enable it to arrange for individual competitors to have their own feeds, hays, and supplements ready and waiting for them in training barns throughout Europe and at the Games.

"It was wonderful," Brown explained. "We didn't have to worry about a thing. When we arrived at our training barn

Members of the United States Equestrian Team were just a handful of the many horsemen who benefited from the services of Kentucky Equine Research during the 2002 World Equestrian Games in Jerez, Spain.



Photo by Shawn Hamilton

Kentucky Equine Research Manages Feed Challenges for International Athletes

in Spain two weeks before the Games, our feed and hay were already there. When we shipped into the stabling facility at the Games—same thing. When we ran out of hay, I called Jeremy Edwards at KER, and the hay we needed was there that day.”

Edwards joined KER early in 2002 to manage its global logistics. He had worked with the company during the 2000 Olympics in his position as procurement and logistics manager of the Sydney International Equestrian Center. Edwards’ experience with the Olympics made him a perfect fit for a company expanding its role in the international equestrian community.

Managing the movement of everything equine, from over 300 horses to the stalls they would use, jump standards,

and feed, gave Edwards experience few people could claim. Of all the challenges he faced, he pointed to obtaining the feeds and organizing their delivery to the Olympic venue as one of the most intense. “Australia’s quarantine inspection service has very strict regulations on the importation of feedstuffs. Any type of feed or supplement that was brought into the country had to be approved first and then irradiated, ostensibly to kill any germs or insects. Many professional horse people were concerned about this and decided to try to find similar feeds produced within Australia to use while they were training and competing here. Dr. Pagan and the staff of KER were extremely helpful in providing information. Its Web site was an incredible asset for the teams’ managers,” Edwards stated.

Jumping Through Hoops

Freight Forwarder Makes Feed Transportation Possible

Having the right connections is often a main ingredient in any recipe for success. Kentucky Equine Research (KER) has certainly found this to be true. It has put together a staff of experienced equine professionals and assembled a consortium of international feed manufacturers that are a part of its Team Member program. Together the company and its associates are able to develop and manufacture some of the best equine feeds and supplements in the world. Moving them from country to country, however, requires yet another essential connection—that of a freight-forwarding firm.

KER international shipping expert Jeremy Edwards attributes a large part of KER’s success in Jerez to the company’s association with Eagle Global Logistics, one of the world’s largest freight forwarders. He said, “Having all the feeds at the right places at all the right times would have been impossible without the help of a firm that knows the many different regulations and how to dot all the i’s and cross all the t’s for each country. Eagle was able to do that for us.”

Eagle was founded in 1984 to provide ground, air, and sea transport for heavy freight. Today its 8000 professionals in almost 400 global offices arrange the movement of goods and solve the logistical problems that might arise when those goods are transported between countries.

John Klesch, the director of international business development for Eagle, explained, “Our company deals with customs and regulatory agencies all the time, so we were prepared to help KER move the feeds the athletes would need. However, it definitely helped that KER had people who were

quick to answer the questions that came up about ingredients in some of the feeds. Customs can be problematic anywhere. It was nice to be able to solve those problems quickly. Jeremy Edwards’ experience at the Olympics helped us tremendously. He was able to provide us with advance documentation in plenty of time, alert us to some of the issues we might have to face, and follow through with answers when we needed them.”

Speed is essential in moving many commodities, but in the case of the World Equestrian Games (WEG), timing was even more crucial as the commodity had a definite arrival date. Klesch said, “We knew when the horses would arrive, and the feeds had to be there before them. The WEG weren’t going to stop because a load of feed didn’t come through. The feed absolutely had to be at its destination on time. That meant there was very little room for problems.”

The language barrier was another problem Eagle was able to solve for KER. While Spain’s quarantine restrictions were less exacting than Australia’s, there were some supplements that were questioned and the queries came in Spanish. Edwards credited the Eagle representatives on hand in Spain for being able to translate the requests quickly and efficiently. “Eagle’s offices throughout the world all have employees who speak English as well as the language of the host country. In Spain they helped by translating immediate questions and also by making certain that all of our documentation was prepared correctly. That really helped to make our job easier.”

KER Team Members used the Web site to coordinate feed formulations with Team Members in Australia, and the KER nutritionists in both Australia and the United States developed transition feeds for North American horses prior to shipping to Australia. Van Camp said, "Coordinating the feeds for these athletes was quite an exciting thing for us

Australian three-day event rider Olivia Bunn feels much the same way. She and her horse GV Top Of The Line placed seventh in Jerez. Bunn said, "KER was instrumental in the success and performance of my horse both at the Rolex Three-Day Event and the World Championships. Emma Roberts, who works in the Melbourne office of KER,

At the WEG, experienced staff and the coordinated efforts of Team Members throughout the world combined to provide international competitors with the best service yet.

to do. We worked to produce feeds that were as similar as possible to what would be available in Australia, and then formulated feeds that would help the horses change over from their current diets to the new diets. We feel that our work really helped quite a few horses."

At the WEG, experienced staff and the coordinated efforts of Team Members throughout the world combined to provide international competitors with the best service yet. United States endurance rider Kathy Brunjes said, "KER made sure our horses had their grain, hay, and supplements. It certainly relieved us of the huge task of coordinating all that feed. Every bit of the special feeds arrived in 100% condition, and we riders certainly appreciated having the KER products to use during our stay in Spain. Being a die-hard user of Endura-Max, Myo-Guard, Equi-Jewel, and Neigh-Lox, I, for one, was glad to have KER's support."

John Williams, a member of the United States three-day event team, echoed the sentiment. "Having the feeds already at the training facility and at the venue during the competition was wonderful. It meant that there was one less detail for us to worry about. My wife and I work together to care for our horses. It can be very time-consuming, hard work. This made our jobs easier," he explained.

Another rider who has benefited tremendously from KER's involvement with international competitions has been Olympic and WEG gold medalist David O'Connor, who was a USET rider in Atlanta, Sydney, and Jerez. He and his wife Karen, a member of two medal-winning Olympic teams, have horses that are poster children for KER feeds and supplements. "We first began working with Joe Pagan and Kathleen Crandell in 1995 prior to the Olympic Games in Atlanta, and we have been feeding KER-formulated feeds for even longer. We began using some of the KER supplements like Summer Games Electrolytes in 1996, and we feel they have made a tremendous difference. Team O'Connor could not have achieved all it has without the support it has received from KER and (Team Member) Pennfield Feeds," said David O'Connor.

designed my horse's diet originally. She then altered it for the different parts of the world we have traveled, trying to keep the diet as consistent as possible the whole time. KER has representatives all over the world, and they have all been so helpful and mindful of the importance of having the correct feed. Prior to travelling to England before the WEG, we altered my horse's feed while still at home to ensure there would not be a problem."

The worldwide network of feed manufacturers assembled by KER provides more than just consistent feeds and supplements. Each Team Member has the ear of KER nutritionists as well. A three-day event horse at the Sydney Games suffered two bouts of tying-up while training in Australia prior to the Games. Pagan devised a feeding program that incorporated local feeds that helped to solve the horse's problem.

That level of involvement and cooperation has been an asset for many professional horsemen such as Imtiaz Anees, a three-day event rider from India. He said, "I cannot praise KER and its Team Members highly enough. Every question I have ever asked them has been answered. I feel that I have access to a tremendous amount of information from them and, of course, my horse benefits greatly. At the WEG my horse had an incredibly easy time adjusting to his new surroundings, thanks largely to the fact that the feed that he normally eats while training in the United States was ready and waiting for him when we arrived. He ate and drank on the very first day. That does not always happen. In fact, at the Asian Championships held in Bangkok in 1998, my horse did not have his normal foods and did not eat or drink well at all. He had to be pulled from the competition, and I had to ride a reserve horse."

KER representatives are already looking forward to participating in the 2004 Olympic Games to be held in Athens, Greece. Edwards explained, "KER has built a reputation for being able to formulate some of the best equine feeds in the world. At Jerez, we proved we could handle the movement of those feeds to competition venues. We hope to build on those successes by being a part of the Athens Olympics." 