

## Product News

# EuroFelt Footing: A home run at HITS!

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If there is one thing that is the hallmark of HITS horse shows nationwide, it is the consistent excellence of its footing. The HITS Saugerties Spring Horse Show Series has borne that out as the rings have ridden well through sun and rain the past two weeks. HITS recently completed a conversion to EuroFelt in all of its ten showing and six warm-up rings at Saugerties and the effort won high praise from Olympic athlete McLain Ward. "The footing at the Saugerties show grounds is the best in the country; those of us heading to the World Championships in Aachen in August will make HITS Saugerties our last stop on the way to Europe," Ward said last week. Ward was one of four Olympic Team Gold Medalists at the 2004 Athens Olympic Games.

The HITS formula for footings success is deceptively simple. "We build a 6-10 well-compacted base of stone dust, topped with about two inches of sand to which we add a carefully designed mixture of rubber and EuroFelt," noted HITS, Inc. President, Tom Struzzieri. "The secret, however, to our nationwide success is that we custom design the final footing mixture to match the exact microclimate of each of our show grounds," he said. This fine tuning to local weather conditions including temperature, rainfall and sunlight is what separates HITS rings from its imitators. "We couldn't have achieved our level of footings success without our close working relationship with Wayne Gregory and his company, Footings Unlimited," Struzzieri added.

"HITS was the first U.S. company to adopt European Footings products and expertise and then adapt them to the wide variety of U.S. horse showing conditions," said Gregory. "A perfect example was HITS use of EuroFelt as the specific synthetic fabric additive of choice," he said. EuroFelt is a shredded synthetic that is added to the top dressing of sand and functions to knit the footing together. The specific final mixture of EuroFelt, sand and in some cases rubber additives must be custom tuned to the local environmental conditions at each show site. "Textile-type additives have been used for years in Europe, but their performance has met with only mixed reviews by U.S. riders when used here in America," Gregory said, "because many of these fibers were suitable only to European sand and weather conditions."

"In addition to environmental conditions at the show site, the other major concern is the specific equestrian use that the show ring is being designed for," Gregory added. "It is a question of analyzing the required combination of concussion reduction and footing stability," he said. "EuroFelt's unique ability to provide concussion reduction while binding the riding surface together in a stable footing is what has gained rider acclaim nationwide," Gregory concluded.

The HITS Saugerties show jumping season continues through June 11 and then resumes in mid-July. In addition to the regular HITS A-rated Hunter/Jumper seven-week season, HITS Saugerties will host two USEF-recognized special competitions: the National Junior Hunter Finals, July 24-26 and the Maclay Region 2 Finals (Equitation) on Labor Day, September 4. In addition, the Marshall & Sterling League Finals will be held at the Saugerties site September 14-17.

"Every single one of these competitions will be held on EuroFelt footing," Struzzieri added proudly, "because that's what we have!" Struzzieri noted that the company is not resting on its EuroFelt laurels. "We are thoroughly investigating the next generation of synthetic footings, particularly polymer-coated sand. We will use the same region-specific approach to the integration of polymers into our program. When we are sure it will work and work perfectly and last for years, then and only then will we go forward with a polymer-enhanced footing system. We don't want to put in a trendy ring that fails under local weather conditions," he said. "The cookie-cutter approach doesn't work for us."