



EQUITANA: World Equestrian Sports Fair in times of change

The course for the future has been set, with the trade show serving as a catalyst for change in the equestrian industry.

From 6 to 12 March, the banners of **EQUITANA** were raised in front of the Exhibition Centre in Essen. The focus was twofold: addressing the changes and challenges within the equestrian industry, while also promoting exchange and knowledge transfer at every level. A total of **600 exhibiting companies and 109,258 visitors from 56 countries** attended the 28th edition at the Essen Exhibition Centre.

For more than five decades, **EQUITANA** has been committed to actively shaping change within the industry. This is the need of the hour, not only, but especially for equestrian sport. High energy costs, inflation, rising service and labour costs - these factors already pose challenges for stable operators and their customers. Additionally, there is the discussion about the acceptance of equestrian sport in society. Stefan Schwanbeck, Managing Director of equipment supplier USG, says: 'I would like to see the importance of the equestrian industry better recognised by politicians and society, as equestrian sport and its broader impact are vital economic factors in Germany and Europe.' According to the German Equestrian Federation (FN), the turnover of the German equestrian industry is estimated at 6.7 billion euros. The aim of **EQUITANA** is to embody the significance of equestrian sport and effectively convey it to the wider world.

How to achieve both was one of the topics at the first specialist congress powered by AVANT, moderated by Christoph Hess. Insiders and interested parties spent two days discussing the future of the equine industry. The focus was on analysing problems and finding solutions - and it was well received.

The Agria Health World was introduced as a new feature. The popular veterinary educational show, featuring Dr Helmut Ende's exhibits, was expanded to include a digital world. This gave riders a

look inside the horse's body, providing a clear insight into various aspects, such as how training on different surfaces affects the musculoskeletal system. This is animal welfare in action - a central focus for Peter Bornschein, Country Manager Germany of the Swedish insurance company Agria: 'Animal health, horse welfare, and the sustainable training and care of horses are our core priorities. That's why it's a great fit! We have big topics such as the social licence to operate, the acceptance of sport in society. And I think EQUITANA contributes to this because it is a trade fair for the general public.'

Getting young people interested in careers related to horses and, ideally, making valuable connections was the aim of the first Vocational Training Day at EQUITANA. Twenty-five employers and around 600 participants had the opportunity to exchange ideas and network. EQUITANA Exhibition Director Sarah Walter came up with the idea and reflected positively on the success of this debut: 'It's wonderful to see that new formats, such as the Healthcare World and Vocational Training Day, were well received and embraced. The positive feedback encourages us to continue developing new formats.'

Newcomers to the market found a platform through the 'visionable' campaign, a joint project between ekor magazine and EQUITANA.

Comprehensive show and training programme

Bringing together horses and equestrians from all over the world and across all disciplines has always been at the heart of EQUITANA, and this will remain true in the future. The accompanying programme was designed accordingly with the event highlight, the HOP TOP show 'Volaris', as well as the premiere of the family show 'Hoppi Toppi'.

The educational sessions given by numerous prominent representatives of different disciplines also attracted numerous visitors to the EQUITANA arenas - from 'Pat Parelli live' on Western Day to the first dressage matinée with Anja Beran and the training evening with the world's most successful dressage siblings, 'Jessica von Bredow-Werndl and Benjamin Werndl LIVE powered by Aubenhausen Club and Agrobs'. Jessica's team-mates from the Paris gold team, Frederic Wandres and Isabell Werth, also brought a touch of the Olympics to Essen. Along with reserve rider Katharina Hemmer, the entire German Olympic team shared their knowledge at EQUITANA. Also joining were some medal-winning big names, such as Ingrid Klimke, Sandra Auffarth, Anna Siemer, and Christoph Hess. A special moment was provided by the popular stars Kenzie Dysli and Laury Tisseur, who tied the knot during the final Volaris performance. Influencer celebrities such as @anja_fee, @jessedrent, @woelbchen, @derdismero and others inspired the younger visitors at the Webstar Convention.

Knowledge was imparted and a lively exchange took place not only in the large arena in Hall 5, but also on several stages, for example in the 'glass studio' of #doitride and on the new WeHorse stage.

The show programme reflected the diversity of the equestrian world. At the same time, all participants had one common denominator: the horse. This is the constant that remains at the core of EQUITANA despite all the changes. As North Rhine-Westphalia's Minister of Agriculture Silke Gorißen said at the opening of the trade show: 'Equestrian sport is a living cultural asset and intangible cultural heritage, but for us, tradition does not mean standing still! Classical equestrian teaching continues to develop for the benefit of the horse and the rider. This is also the focus of EQUITANA 2025, which is a showcase for innovation and a knowledge forum. Animal welfare, innovation and economic prospects: This is what EQUITANA brings together, demonstrating that responsibility and value creation in the equestrian industry can go hand in hand.'

Conclusion of the exhibitors

No hall illustrated the economic significance of the equestrian sector as clearly as Hall 3, where

you could purchase capital goods ranging from wheelbarrows to turnkey equestrian centres. The verdict of the exhibitors here was largely positive. Stella Böckmann from the vehicle company Böckmann Fahrzeugwerke: 'EQUITANA was a complete success this year. We had high-quality discussions with customers and made good deals.' For her, it is the trade show experience that contributes to this: 'We see a trend where people want to see things in person, touch them, and not everything has to be online.' Moreover, Hall 3 at EQUITANA not only offered the opportunity to examine almost 100 transporters and trailers in detail across a total area of 16,000 square meters, but also to receive expert advice. Stella Böckmann is convinced: 'I still believe that trade fairs play a crucial role, especially for capital goods like ours. While you can certainly research them online beforehand, you really need to experience all the different options and possibilities in person.' Lennard Schoppen, national sales manager at Rampelmann & Spliethoff, has observed that direct contact between suppliers and customers is key: 'Customers attach great importance to good, expert advice,' he says. And this clientele is international, as Gitte Dewald, representative of Katina Reitsport, has noticed: 'We receive emails from abroad, with customers placing orders in advance and then picking them up here – Swiss, Australians, and people from all over the world.' Just like the exhibitors. The Irish company Aloga, a manufacturer of high-quality equestrian equipment, was at EQUITANA for the first time this year. Grace Allen summarises: 'We had a great week! It's incredible to see so many people in so many halls. Our most important realisation is that there is a huge market in Germany. This was our first time here and it showed us how much potential there is.'

Heading for EQUITANA 2027 in Essen

EQUITANA wants to harness the potential of equestrian sport in the future. 'Our aim is to further develop the trade fair in a future-orientated way and to give trend and future topics a centre stage. At the same time, we want to further strengthen the offer and the experience factor for visitors - formats such as Health World, Webstar Convention, Fashion Star, Forum and Vocational Training Day show that we are on the right track,' says Michael Köhler, Managing Director of the organiser, RX Germany. The training and show programme and, last but not least, the 'live horse experience' will also remain a central pillar of EQUITANA.

One of the new features for visitors this year was the requirement to register for tickets in person in advance. 'In conjunction with the theme days and special formats, the ticket concept was well received by visitors,' says Michael Köhler. 'However, the concept also presented some organisational challenges, which we will work to resolve before the next EQUITANA.'

The upcoming EQUITANA in two years' time will be under the direction of Sarah Walter. Since September 2023, she had already been managing the event together with Christina Uetz in a dual leadership role and was responsible for the exhibition area as Exhibition Director. Christina Uetz is leaving EQUITANA after almost three decades as Event Director to pursue new professional challenges. 'Tina's exceptional commitment to equestrian sport leaves a strong foundation for the further development of the trade fair in the coming years. I would like to thank Tina Uetz for her outstanding work and wish her all the best for her future career,' said Michael Köhler.

For Prof Martin Richenhagen, it was the first EQUITANA in his new role as President of the German Equestrian Federation (FN), the trade fair's partner and conceptual sponsor. 'EQUITANA has once again shown how strongly the passion for equestrian sport connects people worldwide,' said Richenhagen. 'It is not only a place of knowledge, but also of innovation and inspiration. Together, we can shape the future of equestrian sports and ensure that this fascinating sport continues to build bridges between cultures, generations and disciplines.'

The next EQUITANA will take place from 18-24 March 2027 in Essen.