

Only Steamed Hay for Four-time Olympic Dressage Rider Ashley Holzer

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“Really?” wondered four-time Olympic dressage rider Ashley Holzer when a friend recommended high-temperature steamed hay. “What benefit can come from cooking hay?” The suggestion came last summer in response to unexplained troubles with Havana 145, a 12-year-old Hanoverian mare who leads Ashley’s string of 2020 Olympic prospects. “We were having a very stressful summer, travelling a lot in Europe and she was just not her best. Something was up. Her appetite was not great and her coat was dull.”

The friend recommended adding Haygain Steamed Hay to Havana’s diet. High temperature steaming removes 98% of respirable particles found in even top-quality hay. Better breathing, digestion and appetite, and reduced allergy symptoms, are among its benefit. Ashley’s friend went beyond the recommendation by arranging to get a steamer delivered as a “wonderful surprise,” explains the Grand Prix star. Her first four Olympics, including team bronze in 1988, were representing her native Canada. Ashley became a U.S. citizen in 2017 and is targeting her string of Grand Prix mounts for what would be her first international championship for the red, white and blue: the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo. If she makes the team, she’d be the first U.S. dressage rider to represent two countries in the Olympics.

Competing for the Dutta Corp’s U.S. Nations Cup™ The Netherlands team this weekend with Havana is a significant waypoint on that journey.

Steamed hay is helping propel Ashley’s unique pursuit. “It’s been a game changer,” she asserts. “Havana loves her hay, she’s eating well and she’s not having the allergic skin symptoms. She is shiny, well-muscled.”

“It smells so good I want to eat it myself,” she laughs. “And the rest of the horses in the barn scream for it when we start steaming. It’s a fabulous machine that I can’t say enough good things about.”

Ashley also raves about the company’s ComfortStall Sealed Orthopedic Flooring since installing it at her home stable in Wellington, Florida. Her own health concerns initiated a search for ideal flooring for her horses. “If I sleep on my own mattress, I’m fine. But if I sleep on a bad mattress, I have insomnia and my back kills me. It made me think about how much money we spend on our horses, including deep shavings, but we don’t think about what they are sleeping on and how that impacts how they feel in the morning.”

The middle layer of ComfortStall’s three-layer system is orthopedic foam that provides an ideal mix of support and cushion. One of Ashley’s top horses, the 10-year-old Dutch Warmblood, Mango



Eastwood, got hock sores from his previous traditional rubber stall mats, “no matter how many shavings we used.” Those have “literally disappeared,” Ashley reports. “And he comes out every day raring to go!”

Incorporating steamed hay and ComfortStall are part of a horse care formula that has taken Ashley and her horses to the top in international dressage competition for 20 years and counting. “We try to go that extra mile.” Here’s hoping those extra miles lead to Tokyo!