

## West Coast's Premier Winter Show Offers Improvements

**Arena footing, spectator seating and dust control among changes.**

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The West Coast's Indio horse show was originally part of the Riverside County Fair. It then moved to the Empire Polo Grounds and came under the auspices of HITS (Horse Shows in the Sun). Though part of a marathon horse show that continues for weeks, the famed AA-circuit event was still fondly known as "Indio." Faced with a need for more space, HITS transferred the Indio show to a newer venue in the nearby town of Thermal. That didn't go over as well as anticipated, and exhibitors complained.

Fortunately, as soon as the 2007 HITS Thermal ended, work began on improvements for 2008. Several public forums allowed for input, and exhibitors certainly shared their concerns about inconsistent footing, the misery of dust storms, a dearth of shade and the lack of a covered arena for World Cup qualifying events in show jumping. Fortunately, multiple improvements have been made or are in the process of taking shape.

"The changes we've implemented, and the anticipated results for Thermal in 2008, exemplifies how the process of empowering and encouraging riders and trainers to voice their needs and desires generates a positive outcome for the exhibitors and the sport, as well as the horse show," said Tom Struzzieri, CEO of HITS and Thermal show manager. "We are committed to ensuring not only that the 2008 circuit is a success, but that all future circuits at Thermal are regarded as the best in the country, if not the world."

Some 500 shade trees have been planted to nix that barren desert look. Shaded seating areas have been added alongside every competition arena. A dust treatment has been applied to the roadways throughout the venue. Most importantly, the footing in the arenas, especially the jumper arenas, has been improved. Hopefully the 2008 edition of the Thermal hunter/jumper show will be better received than its predecessor.