Business Week
13 Aug - 17 Aug

Tension over FMD lessens

17 Aug 2007

Farmers in the UK are not alone in feeling relief that, so far, the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease that the authorities confirmed in Surrey at the start of August has been contained.

On hearing the news, outdoor industry representatives were afraid that walkers, trekkers, cyclists, climbers and other participants in outdoor activities might, once again, lose access to the countryside.

There is anecdotal evidence of farmers closing off some roads and paths, even substantial distances away from the part of England where the outbreak occurred, but the situation is returning to normal and the chances of confrontations between farmers and outdoor enthusiasts are diminishing.

The general secretary of the European Outdoor Group, Mark Held, has told sportstextiles.com that data from the last outbreak of FMD in the UK in 2001, showed clearly that the cost to the country in losing tourism and trade from outdoor enthusiasts was greater than that incurred in farming.

He also said that measures such as refusing walkers access to country paths did not work; the disease spread anyway.

He said the industry would take steps to encourage the government to take these lessons on board before introducing any “knee-jerk, ‘close the countryside down’ actions”.

“The Government should give serious consideration to the ‘vaccinate inwards, cull outwards’ approach that has been successful in other countries,” he added.

Glamourous sun-protection brand seeks international partners

17 Aug 2007

A specialist beachwear brand, Aquadonna, is preparing to make its range more widely available across the world.

Living in Australia, “the skin-cancer capital of the world” designer Jill Cook, founder of Aquadonna, accepts completely the importance of protection against ultraviolet radiation from the rays of the sun.

But one day 18 months ago she decided that women were getting a raw deal in the protection stakes and that she was going to do something about it.

She says: “I was lying on my back in the sea at one of Sydney’s gorgeous beaches. I was slathered in sunscreen and wearing an oversized-shirt to protect myself from the harsh Australian sun. It was not a good look.

“Then I thought that if sun-protection tops were available for the boys on the boards and young children, then stylish versions ought to be available for women. So I went to sewing classes and made myself a top that everyone began to comment on. I decided to make a few more and that’s how Aquadonna began.”

The range has been available in Australia for a year now, with most sales coming from online enquiries and word of mouth, although a magazine advertising campaign has also helped.

Customers have been very complimentary, praising the look, feel and functionality of the tops while walking, sitting on the beach and taking part in water-sports.

Ms Cook uses Italian-sourced Lycra that is scientifically processed for high performance and is certified to meet UV protection factor 50 + by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency.

She has begun to receive enquiries from individual customers in Asia, North America and Europe and, as a result, she believes the time is now right for her to take Aquadonna international. As well as continuing to expand online sales, she would like to build relationships with distributors and major customers who have what she calls “complementary products”.

She points out that skin cancer is now the most common form of cancer in humans, and that more than half of all new cancers are of this type. Overexposure to ultraviolet light is the greatest risk factor for skin cancer.

She also says Caucasian people with with fair skin have four times the risk of developing melanoma as those with olive skin, and that redheads and blondes have as much as a four-fold increased risk of developing melanoma.

Ms Cook claims no company except hers is producing “a really good-looking” sun protection top for women. “There is one big brand that makes tops for women but they have a small Mandarin collar and are short-sleeved, and therefore don’t provide great sun protection,” she adds.

She knows of another brand that has tried to pitch a sexy top to the younger market, a stance she criticises because it could encourage young women to take less care of their skin than they should. She adds: “Sadly, gorgeous girls think they will be young forever and don’t worry about damaging their skin. It’s a big mistake.”

She says her prime motivation is to design, produce and distribute high-quality sports leisurewear that makes women look and feel good when active, while offering them the necessary levels of protection.

She is working on new styles, but the range available already runs from sizes eight to 18 and comes in baby pink, red, chocolate, light blue, royal blue and pink. Prices start at about US$65.

Event dates change

16 Aug 2007

The organisers of Asia Outdoor, held in Nanjing for the first time last year, have revised future dates of the event at the request of industry representatives and retailers.

This year's exhibition will go ahead as planned from August 23–26, but from 2008 until 2010, the dates will change.

The organisers have explained that the industry wanted the dates of the Nanjing event to be closer to those of European Outdoor in Friedrichshafen, and the Outdoor Retailer show in Salt Lake City.

The new dates for Asia Outdoor are as follows:

2008 - August 7–10
2009 - July 30–August 2
2010 - July 29–August 1.

China tops growth for outdoor

16 Aug 2007

With domestic sales growing at between 30% and 40% annually, China is the outdoor industry's fastest-growing market, according to the organisers of Asia Outdoor.

China manufactures more than 60% of branded outdoor products on the market, most of which go for export. But with a huge population, growing wealth and 5,000 mountains over 6,000 metres high, the appeal of the great outdoors is making an impression on China now.

In the first half of this decade, the number of retail outlets specialising in clothing, footwear and equipment in this space grew from around 700 in 2001 to 2,125 last year.

Domestic sales were €10 million six years ago but had reached €120 million in 2006. Observers predict this figure could reach €450 million by 2010.

Open competition for golf suppliers

16 Aug 2007

Suppliers of golf hardware, clothing, shoes and accessories have until September 25 to enter a new competition.

The organisers of the Golf Europe exhibition, in Munich from October 7–9, have decided to include for the first time a contest to find the best product in each category.

Entries must be for products intended for launch onto the market for the 2008 golf season.

A panel of judges, consisting of sports retailers, media and independent experts, will decide on the winners, who will receive their awards at a special ceremony at the end of the first day of the show.

More information is available from Ingrid Megl at this address: ingrid.megl@messe-muenchen.de

Adidas supplier jobs boost

16 Aug 2007

Andrha Pradesh state minister for Women’s Development and Child Welfare, N. Rajyalakshmi, has revealed that there will be a massive increase in jobs at an adidas supplier factory in the village of Mambattu.

Mrs Rajyalakshmi said the Apache factory in the village, which employs 3,000 workers at the moment, would grow to employ 31,000 people within four years.

Singapore-owned Apache is an important supplier of footwear to the brand.

Golfers go synthetic

15 Aug 2007

Fibre manufacturer Optimer has claimed that a new generation of golfers is moving away from traditional cotton clothing in preference of synthetic material.

The company points to three new deals it has done with big-name golf apparel brands as proof. Cutter & Buck, Oakley and Fidra all recently released Optimer’s Dri-release blend of 85-90% synthetic and 10-15% natural fibres in their ranges of golf clothing. In Fidra’ case, it has also opted for the company’s FreshGuard odour-control treatment.

On announcing these developments, Optimer's head of marketing, Karen Deniz, said: "Younger golfers seem to be causing a sea-change in golfwear, abandoning cotton in favour of synthetic fibres. They are established fans of moisture-wicking features they've come to know in their athletic wear and they're also interested in lighter weight products."

Berghaus sponsors climbers

15 Aug 2007

Outdoor brand Berghaus has added climbers Andy Kirkpatrick and Leah Crane to the group of athletes it sponsors, bringing the total to nine.

Andy Kirkpatrick specialises in extreme big wall climbing and winter expeditions, while Leah Crane is the UK's number-one female boulderer.

Government promises to control Chinese imports

15 Aug 2007

Finance minister, Miguel Peirano, has promised textile producers in Argentina that his government will control imports from China. He said monitoring imports from the Asian country would be a central factor in his efforts to monitor the Argentinian economy.

"The government will not allow threats or damages to Argentinian industry," he explained. "That means controlling imports from China has to be a central part of my mission."

Exhibitor and visitor bookings up at PGA event

15 Aug 2007

The organisers of the PGA Fall Expo, which will take place in Las Vegas from September 10-12, have announced that advance bookings show an increase on those of previous years.

Pre-registration numbers are up by 44% with five weeks' booking time still to go and the event team says attendance on site could exceed 4,000.

At the same time, exhibitor numbers are 14% higher than last year.

Big drop is 'good result'

15 Aug 2007

Montreal-based Priva, a manufacturer of waterproof textile products, has reported a 42.7% drop in sales for the quarter, compared to the second quarter of 2006. The company said the result was a direct consequence of having sold its US operation at the start of this year.

President and chief executive, David Horowitz, said on making the announcement: "We have improved our performance, especially compared with the first quarter of 2007. We achieved an increase of 2% in gross margin and a decrease of 25% in selling and administrative expenses. We believe that the improvements will continue."

Arcadia rejects 'sweatshop' claims results

15 Aug 2007

The chairman of fashion retail group Arcadia, Philip Green, has dismissed allegations in a Sunday newspaper that workers manufacturing clothes for his Topshop chain were enduing 'sweatshop conditions'.

The factories at the centre of the controversy are in Mauritius. Mr Green today produced evidence of audits and letters of reassurance he has had local management that their workers receive fair pay. He said he had investigated the allegations personally since reading about them on Sunday, August 12.

Cádiz bucks the football-shirt trend

14 Aug 2007

Having just missed out on promotion to the top division in Spain last season, Cádiz CF is about to embark on what it hopes will be a more successful campaign.

This time around, the club hopes to improve its players' performance by incorporating performance textiles into the kit they will wear in training and during matches.

A contract with Elche-based footwear and sportswear manufacturer Kelme to supply the club's canary yellow shirts expired at the end of last season. But instead of searching for a new money-spinning deal with one of the major brands, the way all football clubs try to do now, Cádiz decided to design its own kit and launch its own brand.

The brand-name is 1910, the year the club was formed and the first shirt to come out under it is something special. It is made from fabric that has advanced moisture-management capabilities, anti-microbial treatment and UV protection built in.

New signing Yago said on presenting the new new kit that he found it remarkably comfortable and pointed out that this was its most important quality. He said: "We have to wear it to work in every day, for training and for

matches, and I'd say it's ideal for that purpose."

Lack of 'compelling footwear' hits Hibbett

14 Aug 2007

Alabama-based sporting goods retailer Hibbett Sports has cut its earnings expectations for the second quarter.

Chairman and chief executive, Mickey Newsome, said the company had made the readjustment following a "continued sales downtrend" in urban stores, weakness in sales of merchandise licensed by sports stars and what he called "the lack of compelling footwear product to energise our consumer".

Hibbett did achieve stronger results in branded apparel and accessories during the quarter.

Apparel still number one for counterfeiters

14 Aug 2007

French customs officials at the port of Nice have confirmed that clothes are still the main product-type they have to confiscate from counterfeiters.

Last month, the authorities at the port destroyed 15,000 imitation items they had seized. These included many pairs of shorts and sportshoes with adidas and Nike among the brands most frequently imitated.

Outdoor specialist opens second outlet in Dublin

14 Aug 2007

Ireland's biggest outdoor retailer, 53 Degrees North, has opened a second store in Dublin.

The new outlet, at the Blanchardstown shopping centre, will now become the company's flagship store.

Features include a 12-metre sculpted crashing wave with surfing mannequins, a six-metre high sculpted mountain with glass backdrop, and a wall made from reclaimed logs.

One of the owners, Alan McFarlane, said at the opening: "We set ourselves the challenge of designing the most innovative outdoor store in Europe and our end-result is a unique store that embodies the energy and spirit of the outdoors."

Major brands such as Nike and The North Face have 'store-within-the-store' spaces at the Blanchardstown site.

Coloured cotton experiment works

14 Aug 2007

Attempts to grow coloured organic cotton in Brazil's Paraíba state appear to have been successful and the product will now be made into clothes by local environmentally conscious artisans under the brand name Natural Fashion.

A farmer named Renato Gadelha planted the cotton on 40 hectares of his land in the village of Bonsucesso. The crop, which has come in green and ruby red, as well as white, has commanded a 30% higher price at market than traditional fabric.

Mr Gadelha intends to plant a second crop, this time over 100 hectares, and is encouraging his neighbours to do the same, even though cotton will require irrigation in the second part of the year. He believes demand for fabric that has had no chemical treatment and requires no dyeing will be high as consumers become more enthusiastic about natural products.

Gold medal hopefuls turn to silver

13 Aug 2007

Spain's national basketball team, favourites to take gold at the Europe Championships next month, for which they are also the hosts, will wear kit with antimicrobial functionality.

The current world champions will wear vests and shorts manufactured in Spain using Bioactive fabric from German fabric supplier Trevira.

By applying a silver additive to the raw fibre material, Trevira claims the Spanish team's kit will have "a permanent antimicrobial effect".

The company has told sportstextiles.com that demand from textile manufacturers for antimicrobial products is definitely on the increase.

New swimwear collection

13 Aug 2007

Swiss sports and leisurewear brand Belowzero has launched its summer 2008 swimwear and streetwear catalogue.

For streetwear, there are cargo pants, T-shirts and women's tops with "a touch of elastane" to improve fit, with a colour palette dominated by brown, turquoise, purple and golden yellow.

One of the highlights of the swimwear range is a

reversible bikini, offering women the chance to swap between stripes and a floral pattern.

Sock therapy

13 Aug 2007

Specialist sock producer Knit-Rite is teaming up with foot-health website Walk2BFit.com to make its SmartKnit line of hosiery products available to users.

The SmartKnit range includes seamless socks specifically for people who have diabetes, athletic socks, and a collection of trouser-socks and tights for people who spend long periods of time on their feet. All the products have moisture- and bacteria-management qualities.

Mark Smith, president of Knit-Rite, said on announcing the tie-up: “Our research and development teams are on a perpetual quest to develop products that support healthier living for our customers.”

Walk2BFit.com was launched in 2004 by Maribeth Bunch, who found during her own quest to lose weight and become healthier that health professionals and exercise regimes paid too little attention to healthy feet.

Cool show for Cognis

13 Aug 2007

The Care Chemicals division of Cognis used the Outdoor Retail show in Salt Lake City to present the company’s new Skintex Supercool technology.

The idea consists of treating fabrics with microcapsules that make the wearer’s skin feel cooler. The capsules contain tiny amounts of natural source ingredients such as menthol and myritol, as well as emollients and synthetic coolants. Friction and heat from the body releases the contents.

Nike declares dividend

13 Aug 2007

The Nike board of directors has declared that a quarterly dividend of 18.5 cents will be payable on October 1 on every share of class A and class B common stock.