

The Trouble with Mold

This is that time of year when almost everyone is ready for show season to start back up again. Performance riders are anxious to get back into the show ring, trainers are ready for a road trip and change of scenery, and academy riders are, well, they're always ready for anything. About the only person who isn't quite ready yet is the poor beleaguered show mom.

To understand why, you first have to realize that for most show moms, the off-season gently lulls them back into a false sense of complacency. They find that they can speak freely in their homes about a variety of topics without being reminded, "Mom, I can't talk about that now—I show next month!" They can take a leisurely shower in the privacy of their own home and not step out to towel off and find their rider standing there with car keys dangling from their hand shouting, "What on earth are you doing? We have to go!" And perhaps the single most exciting thing about the off-season is that by now most show moms have finally gotten all that pesky excess hairspray residue out from under their finger nails and can actually read a magazine without tearing all the pages.

But nothing can bring you back to reality quicker than that annual email from your rider's trainer that reads, "Riders! Suit alterations must be done in no less than two months!" Those words have about as much impact as the time you stuck a wet fork into the toaster to retrieve a burning honey glazed donut that your husband was "just warming up a bit" and your hair stood on end for nearly three weeks. Within seconds of reading this email your blissful reverie has been shattered and you realize you are right back into the harsh realities of being a show mom. Because not only does the email from the trainer imply that show season is just around the corner, it also implies that you actually *know* where your rider's show clothes are.

Now chances are if you are a Martha Stewart type of show mom you probably went out at the end of last season and bought a portable 30-inch storage closet complete with a translucent vinyl cover

(just perfect for decorating!) and casters for easy maneuverability for your rider's show clothes. But let's face facts. If you have not been born with a glue gun in your hand and an insane desire to decorate everything you see, odds are that you have absolutely no idea where your rider's show clothes are at this very moment.

You can always hope that they are hanging in a closet somewhere in your house or at the barn or better yet, at the dry cleaners. But as a seasoned show mom you know better. With sudden clarity you realize that your rider's million



dollar show clothes—along with a few pairs of jeans that have gone missing—are probably what's crumpled up inside that rather large and mysterious plastic bag that has been in the trunk of your car for the last several months. This would also account, you think, for the foul, unidentifiable smell in your car that you blamed on your husband and the dogs. As you head out to the garage and begin self-administering CPR, visions of the last show of the season start to materialize and you remember there was enough rain to make people start pairing off and looking for an Ark. So realistically, what are the chances this garbage bag in your car is just filled with a few wet towels?

As you bravely open the bag and peer in, this indescribable odor fills the air and sends dogs within a fifty-mile radius of your house running for higher ground. It is only then you realize your chances of finding wet towels in the bag are about a million, trillion, zillion to none.

Once you have regained consciousness and realize that what you are actually looking at, deep inside this bag, is the once blue silk day coat that was the envy of all the riders at the barn. Only now it looks like this greenish, blackish, brownish living organism that seems to have taken on a life of its own. Almost instantly you find that you are back in 'show mom mode' and you bound back into the house with your discovery—

holding it at arms length—and announce to your husband with giddy relief that you have found all the show clothes. Your husband, not knowing that anything was even lost, is suddenly overwhelmed by the fumes emanating from the bag and falls to his knees, dropping the rather large sandwich he had just made—which under normal circumstances would have brought dogs from every corner of the house running—and covers his face.

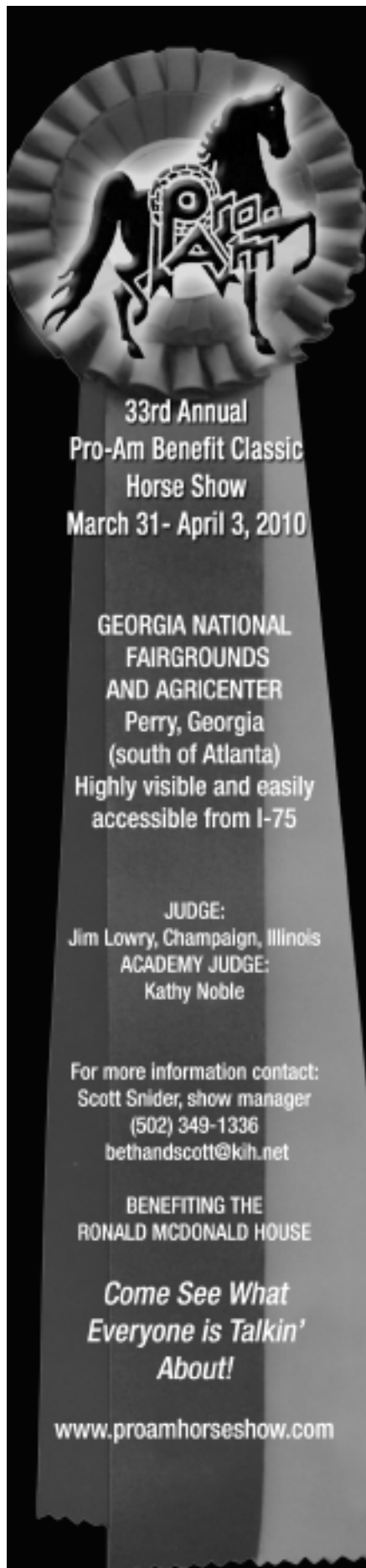
"It's just a little mold," you say, as you step over him and head for the back yard, grabbing his brand new silicone-tipped grilling tongs from the drawer. Ripping the tag off with your teeth you notice they can withstand temperatures up to 500 degrees Fahrenheit. You hear a small, almost inaudible whimper from your husband in protest, as the back door slams shut.

You begin this undertaking by emptying the entire contents of the garbage bag onto your perfectly manicured lawn. Almost instantly you notice the grass starting to die.

Undaunted by this you start to spread everything out with your silicone-tipped grilling tongs that appear to be melting. Two day coats, one suit, three tailored shirts and vests along with several pairs of jeans that you immediately decide are not worthy of saving and you toss them aside not realizing they landed on your wicker deck furniture which immediately starts to decompose.

After putting on a pair of swimming goggles and tying a raincoat around your nose and mouth you begin to brush all visible signs of mold off the clothing with a stiff broom. As you watch more grass begin to die and the bristles of the broom start to disintegrate, a slight breeze picks up and suddenly every feral cat within a two state region begins to howl. Your neighbors, desperate to make the smell go away collect over 18 bottles of vinegar on your behalf and instruct you, from a distance, to pour all of it onto the contaminated areas and let them dry completely in the sun. Do this for six straight days they say, and the smell will be gone.

On day three when the torrential rains come and you see your mold infested show clothes floating in the mud that is now your back yard, do not be discouraged. Simply head back out to the grocery store and buy every bottle of vinegar you can find and start the whole process over again once the rain stops.



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One Month Later

9,680 gallons of vinegar later you finally complete your six straight days of baking your mold infested show clothes in the sun. However, after a thorough inspection by both you and your rider you can still smell something other than vinegar. Not to worry though, with a little more than a week to go before the first show of the season, there is still one more step you can take.

Begin by mixing equal parts of warm water, baking soda and any leftover vinegar that you might have and put this into your husband's Cam Spray Professional 2000 Pressure Washer and spray, at maximum force, all tainted areas three times a day for the next five days. Avoid whatever grass is still alive, if possible.

At the end of five days, whatever articles of clothing are still in one piece, take them to the dry cleaners for a final cleaning. Since your first show is in two days pay the \$500 rush charges to ensure you will have your show clothes in time.

Day of the Show

When you finally get settled into your seat at the arena you make the most of the 325 classes that are prior to your rider's by picking at all the hairspray that has built up again on your hands. You smile to yourself at the thought of spending close to \$3,000 on vinegar and baking soda over the last several weeks but rationalize that it was far less than buying a new suit. When your rider's class is finally called, you sit taller in your seat. As she rides by, you start to cheer her on and then you smell it—that distinct, pungent aroma of mold with just a touch of vinegar. There is an audible gasp from all the other show moms around you. Without skipping a beat you join right in and look around with a confused look on your face wondering just what that horrible smell is. Fortunately your cell phone is stuck to your left hand so you can immediately start texting your tailor to start pulling fabric swatches. Because at the end of the day, that's really what show moms do best.

Note: The views expressed by the author are her reflections and hers alone and should not ever be taken as constructive advice on cleaning show clothes or anything else for that matter as she clearly doesn't know what she is doing. Everyone knows you start with the baking soda first, then the vinegar. The publishers of Saddle & Bridle Magazine do not necessarily share the same views as the author but are secretly envious of her husband's silicon-tipped grilling tongs. It is their sincere hope that the reader takes the tongue in cheek musings of a nervous show mom with the humor in which it was intended. You can email the author at Patti@ADistudio.com.

Biggins Stable offers Summer Camp

Biggins Stable, located in Simpsonville, Ky., will be hosting their annual summer riding camp in June. The camp is designed for kids 18 years of age and under. Beginners through advanced are more than welcome. The dates are June 21–26, 2010. There is an option for day or overnight camp and a non-refundable \$100 deposit required upon registration.

Besides the intensive riding instruction of Biggins Summer Camp, the camp is a great atmosphere for learning and having fun. The camp features: all meals, lodging, swimming, trail riding, bareback riding, educational activities (including a field trip), crafts, a daily one-hour lesson, workouts, lunge lessons, the care of one horse, a grooming contest, and a fun show. Educational activities also include a session with farrier and veterinarian, harnessing and driving horses, tail-sets, tail braiding, parts of the horse, equipment, tack cleaning, and a speaker on judging.

Evening activities for overnight campers include a trail ride, barbecue with a special guest speaker, and junior judging at the Shelby County Fair Horse Show, where kids can see a real horse show and place the horses as best they can. Friday we have a big barbecue and swimming. We invite the parents and families for awards night.

Come join us in June if you're looking for a fun experience and an opportunity to learn new training and riding techniques or just to polish up your show skills. Please call (502) 722-5068 for more information.

"This is my favorite week of the year," said Renee Biggins, "I love having all the overnight campers stay at the house with my family. Please join us. It is sure to be an experience of a lifetime and a way to form lifelong friends."