

Introduction

National Riding Week (NRW) is a national awareness initiative run by the British equestrian industry, with the aim of encouraging new and lapsed riders to take up the sport and of generating interest in equestrianism, in all its forms.

Objective

The campaign's specific objectives were to achieve extensive national and local TV, radio and press coverage and to involve at least 50% of all qualified riding schools in NRW promotional activities.

In addition, Mistral was required to work within a very tight total fees and costs budget of £80K for a campaign spanning six months.

Strategy

Mistral devised a comprehensive campaign comprising media relations and promotions, event management, celebrity endorsement and direct mail, around a set of key messages: riding is fun, affordable and a sport for all, regardless of age or access to the countryside. Each day of the week was also given a theme, to act as a media hook, such as safety, welfare and training, culminating in 'Take a Friend Riding Weekend'.

NRW was launched at a press conference at Knightsbridge Barracks, attended by HRH The Princess Royal (NRW's president) and celebrities including show jumper Graham Fletcher and TV personality Noel Edmonds, himself a keen rider. Mistral also secured quotes from several equestrian and show business personalities, endorsing NRW and equestrianism.

A total of 24 press releases and articles were issued and placed in national and regional media between December and May.

Comprehensive information packs were prepared and distributed to the 500 members of the press and general public who contacted the NRW information line, and to participating riding schools and equestrian retailers. These included a full listing of over 300 events taking place around the country, compiled by Mistral.

Mistral negotiated NRW-named races at seven meetings taking place during the Week, at no cost to NRW.

The highlight of the campaign was a series of events held at the Windsor International Horse Trials, which took place during the Week. Mistral organised and manned an NRW trade stand at the four-day show, along with parades, demonstrations, course walks and lectures, covering every aspect of equestrianism, all of which were NRW-branded.

Results

Despite competition from a number of other awareness campaigns during the same month, Mistral achieved a total of over 800 mentions of NRW in local and national print media. National TV and radio coverage included airtime on Country File and Newsround; a wide cross-section of local TV and radio stations also covered NRW as news items, featuring activities at local riding schools.

In a comprehensive telephone survey conducted shortly after the Week, Mistral was able to conclude that over a third of participating riding schools received up to ten enquiries for lessons as a result of NRW, many of these generating repeat bookings. Local press coverage was found to be the most significant source of enquiries. Nearly 90% of schools surveyed said they would participate again.

