

Horses & Us

True stories of horses and their humans

JOHANNA EMENEY



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WARM-HEARTED STORIES ABOUT THE HORSE-HUMAN CONNECTION

The bond between human and horse is so special. *Horses & Us* brings together 23 true stories from across Aotearoa New Zealand which show the incredible things that are achieved when humans and horses come together.

With illustrations by award-winning artists as well as poems, artworks and photographs, *Horses & Us* is a big-hearted, moving and engaging celebration of the animals we love and the people who love them.

Aimed at young readers, it will delight grown-ups too!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Johanna Emeny has a background in teaching and writing poetry. *Sylvia and the Birds*, her previous book for young readers, created with Sarah Laing, was shortlisted for the 2023 New Zealand Book Awards for Children and Young Adults. She lives in Coatesville, north of Auckland, with her husband, David, and their cats, goats, sheep and ponies.

SALES POINTS

- The second book from a highly talented author
- Bursting with heart-warming stories that will find a wide audience
- High quality production

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The Korohu Horse Treks and their horses, 2019/20

KOROHE HORSE TREKS: JOHN, SAMMI, MAKIA, JADE, WIREMU-JOHN AND WHIRI ELLIS

by
TERRANCE WAIKATO

In 2018, Sammi and John Ellis left Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland with their four children to return to John's whānau in Tāmaki. They wanted a more sustainable lifestyle near whānau and not. The couple left jobs in early childhood education and forestry to start up a trekking business. Now, the whole family is involved in training Korohu Horse Treks, and enjoying being part of the local community.

Teikā korohu
Ko Makiahu te mātahi
Ko Whiri te mātahi
Ko Tei te mātahi
Ko Tei te mātahi
Ko Tei te mātahi
Ko Tei te mātahi
Ko Tei te mātahi
Ko Tei te mātahi
Ko Tei te mātahi



John getting the ready for a ride, 2019/20

Makiahu I am the eldest of my brothers and sisters, so I probably remember the most about what it was like, moving here from Tāmaki Makaurau. One thing that's really clear in my memory is not being able to ride. Because Dad was born here, he grew up on horseback, but none of us city tamariki did – and neither did Mum, she had to learn everything to do with horses like the rest of us, and it was harder for her, being an adult.

Kids pick things up more easily, our brains are better at making new connections. Dad just put us all on board and got us going. He knew we would be able to do it if we gained confidence from spending time in the saddle. Mum was a great rider, too. She goes on long treks with us, and she can even keep up when we bigger kids go fast.

It's beautiful here. There are bush ponies running everywhere. Sometimes a small herd will come up to us when we are taking guests on a trek. They'll approach our horses and say hello. People are often amazed to see wild horses and their foals grazing by the roadside as they drive up to our place. It's pretty awesome to think that the wild hāhā have whāwhā to the ones who named the horse generations ago.

When we left Tāmaki Makaurau, I felt like we were leaving our home, but once we moved here it was clear that this



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APR: My riding with Spitz's horses in 2019. Right: Spitz helping my wife, her horses in 2019, 2019/20

than mixing with the other kids I'd try to take myself and my pony off to a little space of my own. I can hardly remember being that and little 1-year-old girl. I've come so far since then.

I was very lucky to have Spitz as my first RDA pony. He is now in his late twenties, but back then he had only just retired from being a kid's pony – and before that a Grand Prix show jumper. He was so reliable and kind. I would put all my trust in him as he helped me to do exercises like sitting backwards while he was led forward, or cantering a ball that had been thrown to me over his head.

Spitz is exactly the same now, all these years later, and I saw his rider's face light up every time she approaches the mounting block, just as mine used to. It is so special being able to go back and visit Spitz now that I am an adult, and I often wonder whether he is proud of how I've turned out, a bit like an old teacher thinking fondly of the student he helped along.

The grant I made from my time at the RDA are a much straighter posture, improved grip strength and use of my hands, and a lot more stability in my core (stronger abdominals, lower back and pelvis). I still have issues with steps and stairs, but I'm not sure the ponies could have helped me with those!



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ART



Spring from the series for ever by Geoffrey Heath

Geoffrey Heath is an Auckland artist. His photographs play with the line between reality and art. His images often reflect aspects of his life and act as memory triggers for the viewer.

The title of this piece is Spring, which is also the name of the pregnant mare in the photograph. Geoffrey met her while visiting a friend's farm. When he was young, Geoffrey and his sister enjoyed riding and being with horses, so it is not surprising that they feature in his art.

I think it's a good idea to try to approach an artwork with questions. Here are some that I came up with for Geoffrey Heath.

- 1. Why are only Spitz's hindquarters and belly shown in the photograph?**
We were used to viewing objects, including people and animals, in their entirety. Cropping focuses your attention on the subject and creates a sense of mystery. Here, the focus on Spitz's pregnant belly evokes themes of spring and childhood memories.
- 2. Why is the mare inside, on a concrete floor, against a green backdrop?**
My friend and I created a temporary outdoor studio in a disused milking shed on the farm where Spitz lived. We built and painted the wall. Relocating Spitz from the paddock to a minimalist, artificial-looking setting offered an alternative view of a familiar subject. The backdrop suggests the outdoors and the greenery found in her natural environment, but it makes the viewer look again as it is clearly false. I chose this particular shade of green as it was like the colour on the walls of my childhood bedroom.
- 3. How important was lighting in this photograph?**
The nature of natural light and studio lighting (which is normally only used in a photographically) combined with the quality/ sensitivity of the film, created a sharp, clear image that highlights Spitz's pregnant belly.
- 4. She has one foot resting or in motion. What effect did you want from that pose?**
I took a variety of photographs of Spitz side-on and standing with her legs straight, but something didn't feel and look quite right to me, so I suggested to the horse's owner that we adjust her hind leg to the pose you see. I'm glad I did, as this simple change creates a sense of anticipated movement, as if Spitz is about to walk away. If she was standing perfectly, she would look less like a real animal and more like a piece of machinery. This pose helps with the mixture of the natural and the deliberately composed that I'm playing with here.

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Billy back home with his friends, 2019/20

I could tell he needed the small steps to freedom that Alex had put in place, because he still struggled with some things, such as riding. It was also again before he was confident and comfortable enough to lie down to sleep. Horse experience their REM (rapid eye movement) sleep lying down, usually for about 30 minutes per day. This is when dreaming occurs. REM sleep is good for the immune system and regulating emotions, so I was glad when he started to take proper lie-down naps again.

When Alex came out to assess Billy after a few weeks, he was delighted with his progress. The infection had gone, and all that was left was damage to the joint caused by the operations. That would need time to heal, and some physiotherapy.

Billy and I would no longer be able to do all of the things we'd done before – jumping and walks in deep sand, for example, would be permanently off limits – but knowing that he was going to live, and watching him contenting and trotting soundly around the paddock with his herd mates, felt like the most wonderful miracle.

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you put on the bridle. If you forget, he will put his head up so high that you can't reach until a yummy snack is produced. Secondly, he is not a morning person. He must have his breakfast and do his stretches before you ask anything strenuous of him. Failure to take notes of his preferences for an easy start is a mistake you don't make twice, especially if you want to enjoy a relaxed and pleasant riding experience. He is a very funny guy, and his face shows every emotion. Making it to the arena, the Paralympics with Showcase, after just over one year together, was incredibly emotional. I was lucky to be able to share the sense of my achievement with my precious grandpa just before he passed away. The day of my debut as Paralympian rider would have been Grandpa's ninety-third birthday.

When Showcase and I walked out to the arena, the atmosphere was electric. Showcase just knew that the applause was for him. We both smiled our way through the dressage test, reliving our time dancing in the sand. I feel so honoured that Showcase and I get to show the world how relaxed and happy our New Zealand horses are.

Not only did he perform dressage in a very calm way, but he was also chosen to be a companion to an Australian Grade 1 competitor's horse in later tests, and a photo of him receiving a raffle from the Paris Paralympic – a rather frightening-looking red hat on legs that was the Games mascot – was projected onto the side of a building at Versailles. So, although we didn't come away with any medals, the Paralympics was definitely a win for us, and an unforgettable experience.

It must be most people's dream to one day represent their country. I get to do that – with one of my best friends – and I couldn't be more grateful.



Right: Showcase, 2019/20
Spitz, 2019/20
Spitz, 2019/20
Spitz, 2019/20
Spitz, 2019/20
Spitz, 2019/20
Spitz, 2019/20
Spitz, 2019/20
Spitz, 2019/20
Spitz, 2019/20

Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, thought that there was something about the rhythm of a horse's walk that was healing for the rider. Now, we know this to be true. There is scientific evidence of the mental and physical benefits from humans interacting with horses – on the ground or in the saddle – and this is confirmed by the popularity and success of equine therapy programmes all over the world.

Humans can help horses, too, and not just through veterinary medicine. From the gentle starting of colts and fillies to the treatment of anxiety and stress with massage and vibration, we can make life happier and more comfortable for our equine companions.

In this chapter, you will read about a young horse trainer who uses Maori music and medicine to relax tense hāhā. You will hear the story of a treasured mare called Lodie, who was a kaitiaki to her whānau, and you'll meet two RDA Riders for the Disabled Association horses who helped a girl through her bumpy teenage years. We also visit a riding school dedicated to children with special needs and learn about educating young or troubled horses from a horsemanship expert.

This chapter is illustrated by artist Tāia Hāhā (right: Hāhā, 2019/20)

EQUINE GLOSSARY

backlash riding without a saddle
carrying up (up in jump-off) riding across and landing the descent curve around the jump, in order to finish in the fastest time
chase a state of anxiety (either owner's or rider's) caused by Whānau, ideas and feelings
clock a strap that fastens a (Western) saddle to the horse's back
colic abdominal pain
conformation how a horse is put together, in body proportions and structure
cross country one of the three phases of eventing, featuring a course with natural-looking obstacles such as logs, banks and ditches
dressage a form of training and competition riding that moves horses and riders performing a series of movements from memory to show elegance, accuracy and harmony
equine award rather than focusing on the horse's performance, this award is for a rider's skill, style and ability, and focuses on the rider's position and control
eventing featuring combined dressage, cross-country and show jumping competitions on a dress- or cross-country or both. There are three levels of eventing: New Zealand, which means up to 100 (100m) level, which is the second-highest level in the world. Events can be held under national or international (FEI) rules
haunch (of a horse/pony) very well-muscled and dependable hindquarters to step a jump
head down the handler leads the horse or pony around the show ring so the judge can assess its movement, conformation, power and attitude
headstall going easily and without difficulty
happily information inside the horse's head coming from and moving
para-dressage/para-eventing (PEP) para-eventing dressage cross-country, which with requirements have been able to compete against others with similar levels of disability

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