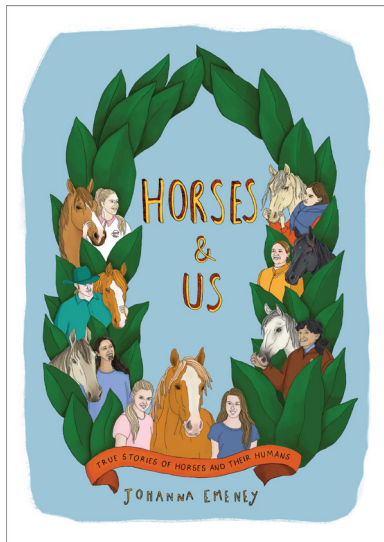




Horses & Us

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!

'A richly layered volume that will appeal not only to horse enthusiasts but also to anyone interested in stories of human-animal relationships, creativity, and care' — Maria Gill, KidsBooksNZ

'Listen up, young horse lovers — this is the book you have been waiting for!' Margaret Mills, *Waiheke Weekender*

'What a pleasure it was to sit with my cup of tea, reading the stories and looking over the photographs, both recent and from years gone by, reminding me of a simpler time in life. While this book is primarily aimed at young readers, I personally found the stories to be nostalgic, emotional, educational and real. It is well worth the read' — Elizabeth Charleston, *New Zealand Equestrian Scene*

'Anyone, both young and old, would enjoy this beautiful book and be inspired and uplifted' — Lyn Potter, *NZ Booklovers*

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 whānau and their horses, 2018

KOROHE HORSE TREKS: JOHN SAMMII, MAKAIJA JADE, WIREMU-JOHN AND WHIRI ELLIS

TRANGI, WAIKATO

In 2018, Sammii and John Ellis left Tamaki Makaurau Auckland with their four children to return to John's whānau in Trangi. They wanted a more rustic lifestyle near whānau and in. The couple left jobs in early childhood education and forestry to start up a trekking business. Now, the whole family is involved in running Korohu Horse Treks, and enjoying being part of the local community.

Tea Koutou
Ki Manakau te wā
Ki Te Arawa te wā
Ki Ngāi Tahu te wā
Ki Ngāi Hine te wā
Ki Kōwhiri te wā
Ki Te Arawa te wā
Ki Te Arawa te wā
Ki Te Arawa te wā
Ki Te Arawa te wā

Makaija getting the ready for a ride, 2018

Makaija: I am the eldest of my brothers and sisters, so I probably remember the most about what it was like, motoring here from Tamaki 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. Now Mum is 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 book possums nesting everywhere. Sometimes a small bird will come up to us when we are taking guests on a trek. They approach our horses and say hello. People are often amazed to see wild possums and their birds grazing by the roadside as they drive up to our place. It's pretty awesome to think that the wild birds have whānau that are the ones who reared the horse generations ago.

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





APR: My riding and Spring's lesson in 2015. Right: Spring helping my wife to get on the horse in 2015. 2015, 2015, 2015, 2015

than mixing with the other kids I'd try to take myself and my pony off to a little space of our own. I can hardly remember being that sad little 12-year-old girl. I've come so far since then.

I was very lucky to have Spring 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 catching a ball that had been thrown to me over his head.

Spring is exactly the same now, all these years later, and I see 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 Spring now that I am an adult, and I often wonder whether he'll be glad of how I've turned out, a bit like an old teacher thinking fondly of the student he helped along.

The gains 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 muscles for supporting my shoulders, back and pelvis). I still have issues with steps and stairs, but I'm not sure the ponies could have helped me with those!




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.



- Why are only Spring's hindquarters and belly shown in the photograph?**
We are 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 Spring's pregnant belly evokes themes of spring and childhood memories.
- 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 in the farm where Spring bred. We built and painted the wall. Relocating Spring 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 fake. I chose this particular shade of green as it was like the colour on the walls of my childhood bedroom.
- How important was lighting in this photograph?**
The mixture of natural light and studio lighting (which is normally achieved in a photograph) results, combined with the quality/ sensitivity of the film, created a sharp, clear image that highlights Spring's pregnant belly.
- She has one foot resting or in motion. What effect did you want from that pose?**
I took a variety of photographs of Spring 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 that simple change creates a sense of anticipated movement, as if Spring is about to walk away. If she was standing perfectly, she would look like a real animal and more like a piece of scenery. This pose helps with the mixture of the natural and the deliberately composed that I'm playing with here.

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 performance 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, Dendropsyria with Showcases, after just over one year together, was incredibly emotional. I was lucky to be able to share the notes of my selection with my previous grandpa just before he passed away. The day of my debut as Paralympian rider would have been Grandpa's ninety-third birthday.

When Showcases and I walked out to the arena, the atmosphere was electric. Showcases just knew that the applause was for him. We both climbed our way through the dressage test, holding our time dancing in the sand. I feel so honoured that Showcases 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 Cadee 1 competitor's horse in later years, and a photo of him meeting a cousin from the Paris Phlyge – a rather frightening-looking red but 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 got to do that with one of my best friends – and I couldn't be more grateful.


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 hūia. You will hear the story of a treasured mare called Lodie, who was a kaikaiti to her whānau, and you'll meet two RDA Riding 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 T. Alan White (right: Makara, 2018, T. Alan White)



Billy back home with his friends, 2018

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 ribbing. It was also ages before he was confident and comfortable enough to lie down to sleep. Horses 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 it was glad when he started to take proper lie-downs again.

When Alex came out to assess Billy after a few weeks, he was delighted with his progress. The selection 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 walk in deep sand, for example, would be permanently off limits – but knowing that he was going to live, and watching him content and trotting soundly around the paddock with his best mates, felt like the most wonderful miracle.

EQUINE GLOSSARY

backhand riding riding with a single starting up (eg in jump-off) cutting corners and finding the shortest route around the rings in order to finish in the fastest time

chape a type of heavy leather outer-panels commonly used by Western riders and farriers

clock a step that fastens a (Western) saddle to the horse's back

colic abdominal pain

condemnation 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 sees horses and riders performing a series of movements from memory to show precision, accuracy and harmony

equine welfare rather than focusing on the horse's performance, this need is for a rider's skills, style and ability, and focuses on the rider's position and control

eventing eventing combines dressage, cross-country and show jumping competitions as a three- or four-event or trial. There are different levels of eventing in New Zealand, with holdovers up to C (or C*) level, which is the second-highest level in the world. Events can be held under national or international (FEI) rules

farrier a specialist in equine hoof care, including trimming and putting on horseshoes

FEI (Fédération Equestre Internationale) the governing body for equestrian sports

gating going through the gates formed of clipping the gates on a lane

gilding male coloured pony or horse

gymkhana equestrian event involving games and races

hack a horse over 142 hands high (riding a horse for fun or to lightly exercise, usually outside the paddock and often on trails or along the roadside)

hand height (hh) measurement of a horse's height: one hand is equal to 4 inches

harness (of a horse/pony) very well-matched and dependable usually to stop a jump

in-hand driving the handler leads the horse or pony around the show ring so the judge can assess its movement, conformation, power and attitude

lead/leader going easily and without difficulty

laminitis inflammation inside the horse's hoof causing pain and lameness

para-dressage/para eventing (PE)/para-eventing dressage since para-riders with impairment have been able to compete against others with similar levels of disability, rider