

Multiple Interests...

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Emma Rowe-Pledger is well known for the successes she has enjoyed in the show ring over the years, and now she has added more strings to her bow, with several wins in dressage and a burgeoning career as a show ring judge. Show Circuit chatted with Emma to ask about her experiences as a rider and a judge and whether the show ring still has her heart.



SHOW/CIRCUIT: *When did you first get into showing? What did you like so much about the discipline?*

Emma Rowe-Pledger: It started seriously after a stint in England training in dressage yards. I had come home and was given the opportunity to ride for Julianne Baynes from Beechcroft Stud, and it really went on from there. I liked the challenge of preparing, presenting and riding a horse or pony to achieve its potential.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: *What would you consider your biggest achievement in the show ring?*

Emma Rowe-Pledger: I have had a lot of fun, but I guess my biggest successes were winning two Horse of the Year titles and a runner up title in 2005. It was just one of those years when everything fell into place. I had Amberleigh Anida (Anamour/Sugar n Spice), who was Hanoverian of the Year and Rising Star Park Hack of the Year. She went on to win many titles including a Royal Supreme, New Zealand Grand National titles, South Island Warmblood titles and is now competitive in dressage. The other horse I had that year, in partnership with Steve Houston, was a saddle hunter called Freestyler. He was a stationbred of unknown lineage and, as far as we know, came from Bluff Station. A fantastic horse, he was runner up Saddle Hunter of the Year to Silverton. He is now in Queenstown with Kristin Darby.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: *You rode for the Bailey family for a while. Did you have a favourite horse on the yard?*

Emma Rowe-Pledger: I rode for the Baileys, a well known showing family in the South Island, for three or four seasons. I rode a few of their horses and ponies in the show ring and in training and they were all a lot of fun. I did like Amberleigh Resemblance, possibly because he was smaller and, as I am only little, he suited me really well. Amberleigh Ascot was entertaining as a youngster, and I remember him dragging me all around Hawke's Bay showgrounds at the Royal one year! He has gone on to be very successful with a number of riders and has been fun to watch.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: *Do you still do any riding for the Baileys?*

Emma Rowe-Pledger: I'm actually about a six hour drive from them, so the distance got hard after a while and we couldn't justify flying backwards and forwards. This gave me the opportunity to crack on with my own horses, so there was a silver lining. I do still have one horse in partnership with them and I also have Amberleigh Anida's dam Sugar n Spice as a broodmare.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: *Do you get time to do any showing these days?*

Emma Rowe-Pledger: I still like going to shows; it is just a matter of finding the time. I do love the big shows and am planning a trip to the North Island this year. I will also compete at the New Zealand Grand National Horse and Pony Championship Show.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: *When did you decide to focus more on dressage? What attracted you to the sport?*

Emma Rowe-Pledger: I was always interested in dressage after having trained in England and Amberleigh Anida was always going to be my dressage horse. I now also have a young horse called Dicavalli Domino (Donatraum/Jaybee Argentina) from Dicavalli Stud in Australia, owned in partnership with Suzanna Martin from Lake Hayes, Queenstown. We have qualified for the World FEI Dressage Challenge and so are looking forward to that. All my horses end up doing dressage as it such good training for them, and I do think the show ring and the dressage arena complement each other.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: *Do you think your experience in the show ring benefited you in any way when you moved into competitive dressage?*

Emma Rowe-Pledger: Definitely. Usually the horses are pretty well prepared to cope with anything and presentation that is perfected in the show ring helps in the dressage arena. In the show ring you are also under pressure to remember workouts on the spot, so learning dressage tests is not so much of a challenge.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: *What horses are you competing this season?*

Emma Rowe-Pledger: I have three to compete under saddle. I have Dicavalli Domino at level 2 dressage, and he may get a show ring start

at the NZ Grand National Show depending on how he is developing. Amberleigh Anida is competing at level 4-5 dressage, and she may also do a showing class at the Grand National Show. I have just sold my Park Hack/Galloway called Amberleigh Remembrance who will do both disciplines, to Julie Wylie-Parkinson in Australia so that will free up my time a little. I will miss him as he is so trainable and competitive. I would like to take my Rockstar weanling out of Sugar n Spice to the breeders' show towards the end of the season.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: *What are your competition goals at the moment?*

Emma Rowe-Pledger: At the moment the focus is on Domino for the World FEI Dressage Challenge, and then we plan to take him up north for the dressage nationals and Horse of the Year. I will continue to train Amberleigh Anida as far as we can go with her, and I would also like to enjoy some shows along the way.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: *Do you train with anyone in particular?*

Emma Rowe-Pledger: Coralie Williams travels Queenstown for a group of riders, so I am very lucky to train with her. She has been coming down now for some years, so it has been very consistent and the results are showing. Of course, who wouldn't want to train in Queenstown... stunning scenery and great Pinot Noir!

SHOW/CIRCUIT: *You're a showing judge now. How long have you been judging?*

Emma Rowe-Pledger: I have been judging for a few years now, but I don't get to do a lot as I am always riding. However, I am making the trip up to Dannevirke for the New Zealand National Horse and Pony Show and am really looking forward to that.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: *Are there any classes that you specialise in or prefer to judge?*

Emma Rowe-Pledger: I enjoy all of the classes. It gives every horse a chance to show what it is best at.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: *Do you think New Zealand has enough up and coming judges?*

Emma Rowe-Pledger: I think there is always room for more judges to come up the ranks but I do think there are a good number of judges coming through; it seems that way down here in the South Island anyway.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: *What do you think it takes to be a good showing judge?*

Emma Rowe-Pledger: An eye for a horse helps! I think it takes someone who is fair and understands what it takes to produce a show hack or pony to perform on the day. You must understand conformation and movement and not be influenced by what goes on outside the ring

SHOW/CIRCUIT: *What do you look for in a champion show horse?*

Emma Rowe-Pledger: It must be elegant, in self carriage, correctly put together, cover the ground and be able to perform without any nonsense. Of course, not all of these things happen at once all of the time, and we have yet to see the perfect horse. In saying that, there are some lovely horses out there which do perform very well and are a pleasure to judge. Having ridden I know how hard it is to have all of these things simultaneously, but when you do, it is such a great feeling.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: *Do you have any tips for people new to the show ring?*

Emma Rowe-Pledger: Ask lots of questions and don't be afraid to approach those who are successful as most are willing to help. Also, don't be put off if your horse doesn't win any ribbons as it simply means that you need to figure out what needs to be done in order to be successful.

SHOW/CIRCUIT: *Apart from riding horses, what other interests do you have?*

Emma Rowe-Pledger: Oh, it is all horses! I have recently started a company called Champion Rugs NZ, which has secured the distribution for Cedar Lodge Rugs in New Zealand. I am really excited because it took me a lot of time to find a product that I was completely happy to represent. I also distribute Equinenz and they have a superb range that features premium sheepskin products for horses. I guess I am the type of person who likes to be busy.