



From left: Showtym Commodore, Ngahiwi Showtym Premier and Showtym Victori.

# IT'S SHOWTYM

## Vicki Wilson's team of horses multi-task!

This season Vicki Wilson has demonstrated that her team of show jumpers and hunters can shine just as brightly in the show ring as they do over fences. In this article, Vicki explains the secret to their versatility, her hopes for the future as a professional show jumping rider and outlines a very busy Horse of the Year Show.



Showtym Commodore

Unless you have been hiding under a rock recently, you will know that talented young show jumping and show hunter rider and trainer Vicki Wilson has been on fire this past year. True to form, she has continued to claim prize after prize this season, whether it's in a five year old series class, a grand prix show jumping event or riding for a prestigious show hunter title.

This season Vicki even crossed that invisible, and often insurmountable, line that divides jumpers and showies, to prove that her horses are just as capable of great things in the show ring as in the jumping arena. Most weekends Vicki competes at show jumping events throughout the country, but at the end of last year her team of show jumpers got an extreme makeover and for once were judged on their conformation and movement rather than on their jumping ability.

Swapping her GPA and flat seat saddles for make-up and false tails, Vicki had a phenomenal weekend at the highly competitive Whangarei A&P in December, showing across the disciplines with a number of her top horses.

Although it was her horses' debut outing in the show ring it soon became clear that Vicki's jumpers have the temperament, conformation and quality to allow them to turn their hoof to any discipline. These all-important basics, combined with extensive preparation and hours of schooling, produced winning results at the show, which regularly attracts some of the top show riders in the country. Over the three days Vicki took out seven sashes including Champion Sport Horse (Showtym

Victori), Reserve Champion Saddle Hunter (Showtym Commodore), Reserve Champion Paced and Mannered (Showtym Commodore), Reserve Champion Versatile Sport Horse (Showtym Victori), Champion Hunter (Ngahiwi Showtym Premier), Reserve Champion Hunter (Showtym Commodore), the Mini Grand Prix (Showtym Eclipse) and the Horse High Jump (Showtym Girl).

So how did a show jumping rider come to know some of the best kept secrets of the show ring? What many people don't realise is that Vicki grew up competing on the showing circuit, and over the years collected numerous championships and rider classes on her show ponies, saddle hunters and hunters.

*It's been six years since she began show jumping, but she hasn't forgotten the ringcraft required to catch the judge's eye or to bring out the best in her horses.*

"My current jumpers are all so easy and adaptable that we thought it would be fun to spend a weekend in the showing ring for old times sake..." smiles Vicki. "There is no great secret behind their versatility. The main reason they are able to excel in so many different disciplines is the flatwork training we put in at home."

"We do plenty of transitions and dressage movements, from flying changes to leg yielding. It's obviously beneficial for jumping, but also means they are just as willing and able to perform in a showing, show hunter or dressage environment."

As well as being multi-talented, the horses on her team are also very rideable and can be trusted to compete at the shows under other riders, without any issues whatsoever. Only hours before winning the Whangarei A&P High Jump at an eye-watering 1.70m, Showtym Girl could have been found chilling out with Vicki's working student, 16 years old Reece Priestly, in the 1m classes. Likewise, younger sister Amanda enjoys borrowing Vicki's horses for the Junior and Young Rider series.

In her younger days her ponies were equally flexible, and Vicki spent years competing in every equestrian discipline. From showing, eventing and hunting through to show hunter, pony club games and grand prix show jumping, Vicki has succeeded in everything to which she has turned her focus. Ultimately it was the adrenalin and excitement of show jumping that stole her heart and has become her passion... The discipline allows her to keep a big team, which suits her down to the ground but above all else, the deciding factor for Vicki was the unbiased nature of the sport.

*"You win or you lose," she explains. "It comes down to your performance; the best combination on the day takes home the title. I like that; it's very black and white."*

Vicki's extensive experience in the competition arena, combined with years of instructing has enabled her to develop her own effective training methods that bring out the best in both horse and rider. One of her proudest moments to date has been coaching and watching younger sister Amanda win the 2010 Pony of the Year title on her six-year-old pinto Showtym Viking. At the end of Amanda's last season in the pony ring, Vicki even encouraged her to measure Viking up to 148.5cm and register him as a hack, believing he could be competitive against the larger horses. This was a huge call but one she has never regretted. Viking and Amanda have more than proved their worth



against the big boys and have been consistently winning and placing in the seven year old and young rider series this season.

Vicki's faith in the tiny superstar is testament to her belief that winners can be found in all shapes and sizes. This is more than evident in her current team.

"My long time campaigner Showtym Girl is only 155cm but has a bigger heart, stronger will and more determination than anything else I've sat on," explains Vicki. "She's an absolute jumping machine and has won countless young riders, grand prix and high jump classes."

"At the other end of the scale is Wurlitzer (above) who stands at 177cm, as well as our latest addition Showtym Commodore (owned by Aliasha Deans) who is a Clydesdale x English Riding Pony. He's a true gentle giant. He does anything and everything, and is equally at home winning in show jumping, show hunter or showing classes. I'm aiming to ride him in each of those disciplines at the upcoming Horse of the Year Show."

Along with Showtym Commodore, Vicki is taking a string of other horses along to the Horse of the Year Show this year. Although well known for winning the Nationwide Cup (awarded for the most show jumping points at the Horse of the Year Show) more times than any other rider in New Zealand, 2011 will be Vicki's most diverse show yet. She has high hopes for her young show hunter horses and, while it may not be her primary discipline, she knows what the judges are seeking in a winner.



Showtym Commodore

Vicki has only seriously targeted two horses in show hunter over the past years but has secured some of the country's most important titles, including the hotly contested Show Hunter Horse of the Year which she won on Des Lowe's good mare Moll Flanders in 2009 and then the National Show Hunter title on Showtym Diva in 2010.

As well as hoping to take out some major show jumping and show hunter titles, Vicki is also planning to make time at Horse of the Year to compete Showtym Commodore in the saddle hunter and working hunter classes and Ngahiwi Showtym Premier in working hunter.

*"While I anticipate a busy show and will be dashing between the rings, I have a strong and incredibly competent support base and know I can trust them to have the horses prepared and beautifully presented for their respective classes. I'm very lucky," she says. "Horse of the Year has always been a very successful show for us so I'm really looking forward to seeing what we can achieve this time around."*

Vicki clearly still loves the thrill of the competition arena but is quick to point out that she gets more enjoyment from producing quality sport horses. Over the years she has gained a solid client base and is often asked to start young horses and ponies. Her unique and effective approach is both respected and sought after nationwide. She has travelled to the South Island to run clinics and start youngsters, but competing full time denies her sufficient time to satisfy client demand. As a result, young riders from around the country and as far afield as Tahiti, travel to her home base in Whangarei to attend the show jumping holiday camps she hosts.

Like every professional rider Vicki has international dreams and is excited about what the future holds. When she was 19 years old, Vicki spent the winter competing in Europe and came home with some impressive wins. She has no doubt that the experience she gained both overseas and in the four years since has increased her competitive edge and, while she is in no rush, she would love to return to Europe to compete again.

"I had the time of my life there," shares Vicki. "I would love to go back, and it is definitely on the cards. It'd be fantastic to be out there competing against those top riders and horses on the international circuit, around those technically challenging courses."

*One thing the past few years has shown is that Vicki will achieve whatever she sets her mind to - no ifs, buts or maybes. She shows just as much passion and perfection when she's competing in a Grand Prix show jumping class as she does when she's fighting for a show hunter title, performing a workout in a saddle hunter class or flying over a high jump.*

With that level of skill and commitment, there is little doubt that she is the right sort of rider to carry the silver fern on the tough international show jumping circuit.



Showtym Victori