Interview with Alison Mau

TV presenter and journalist, Alison Mau is one of New Zealand's best known horse lovers. This month, she tells Show Circuit where her passion for equestrianism came from and just how much riding she manages to squeeze into her schedule these days.

SHOW**CIRCUIT**: *When did you first start riding? Did you have a pony when you were growing up?*

Alison Mau: I was pony-obsessed from about the age of four and convinced my entire family to have riding lessons together when I was six years old. I still have the photos of my mum and dad on their school horses! My parents couldn't afford to buy a pony, but by the time I reached 13 the nagging got too much for them, so they asked some friends who managed a cattle station near Darwin in the Northern Territory to send one of their cattle ponies down to Melbourne for me. 'Fred' was a 13.2hh bundle of complete mischief… He nearly succeeded in killing me many times, but taught a lot of kids to ride in the end.

SHOW**CIRCUIT**: *Did you compete when you were younger? What was your favourite discipline?*

Alison Mau: I only competed at pony club level as a kid. There just wasn't the money for the flash gear needed for proper shows. My favourite discipline was the cross-country at one or three day events.

SHOW**CIRCUIT**: *Do you own a horse now?*

Alison Mau: I have had my current horse, Grand Conde (Tom) for nine years now. He's just a whisper under 18hh and is a very handsome, chestnut Hanoverian/TB cross gelding. We have competed in dressage competition sporadically over the years in and around Auckland, which I have always really enjoyed. He's quite old now, but for such a big old guy he's a complete baby! He shies at everything and has to be coaxed along with constant encouragement. I love him to bits though and would never part with him.

SHOW**CIRCUIT**:*You must be busy with both work and family. Do you get much chance to ride nowadays?*

Alison Mau:: Not enough! I'm so busy with 'Fair Go' and other commitments that it's dwindled down to once a week at the moment, but I would prefer to ride at least three times a week. Fortunately, Tom is ridden by my lovely dressage coach, Samantha Winn, when I'm busy. She does a great job with him and keeps him ticking over for me.

SHOW**CIRCUIT**: *What do you love most about horses and riding?*

Alison Mau: Horses are simply magnificent animals. I love being around them, full stop. I often feel more comfortable in the saddle than walking down the street, and it gets me out in the fresh air no matter what the weather. It's also a great way to keep fit.

SHOW**CIRCUIT**: *Do you have a favourite place to ride in New Zealand?*

Alison Mau: Woodhill Forest is an amazing ride; and I had a fantastic hill trek at Grassmere in Canterbury a few summers back.

SHOW**CIRCUIT**: *Which discipline do you most enjoy watching?*

Alison Mau: I love watching Olympic level dressage, especially the musical freestyles. Watching the top horses and riders compete for gold at that international level is amazing. They are so technically accurate and beautiful to watch.

SHOW**CIRCUIT**: *Are there any New Zealand riders that you think are doing especially well at the moment? Any in particular that you have enjoyed following over the years?*

Alison Mau: There's a hugely talented group of young dressage riders coming up through the ranks. I wouldn't want to single anyone out, but I think the sport will be in very good shape for years to come.

SHOW**CIRCUIT**: *Finally, it's a well known fact that the horse loving gene runs in families! Have your children shown any signs that they might want to ride?*

Alison Mau: My daughter Paris (12) is a lovely little rider – nice straight back and a great natural seat. She's not obsessed like I was, but she enjoys riding very much when she gets the chance.

WAIRAU COVERS

Curved Neck Covers

Give your horses mane a chance to survive winter!!!

*Different Weights of Canvas and Linings for varied climates.
*Leather Fittings
* Anti Rub Mane Strips
*Guaranteed Workmanship
* Made to measure available

www.wairaucovers.co.nz

OR

Contact us for a Catalogue and samples.

83 Main St
Blenheim

Ph/Fax 03 578 0908
wairau.covers@xtra.co.nz

'We Cover New Zealand'