

# Supermodels of the Show Ring

Jennifer Boyes talks to two well known studs about how the quality of NZ Riding Pony stock compares to the rest of the world and what the future holds for riding pony breeding here.

There is no doubt that the riding pony classes are some of the most hotly contested on many show schedules. They always attract a crowd, whether they are immaculately turned out youngstock in the breeding classes or are showing off their paces under saddle.

New Zealand started breeding ridden show ponies slightly later than the UK and Australia. However, standards have come along in leaps and bounds since those early days, with many Kiwi breeders now believing that the quality of New Zealand bred ponies is on a par with our international counterparts.

Kathy Hogan, Glennis Stormont and Barry Bovill, the individuals behind the renowned Brookfields Stud, are breeders who believe the quality of New Zealand riding ponies is on an upwards spiral. The stud was formed when Kathy's daughter Nichole gave up riding ponies at 17. Kathy, Glennis and Barry established the stud with the aim of breeding large ponies, believing that the animals competing at the time did not encompass enough true pony quality.

'We have some great riding pony stallions in this country, including some impressive imported lines,' explains Kathy. 'For example, Ascot Royal Emblem, imported by Glennis Stormont, Brookfields, and Alan Windle, Nala Stud, has been a huge success, leaving some truly sensational foals. This includes the grey riding pony mare, Brookfields Panache, third placed Pony of the Year over 138cm and not exceeding 148cm at the most recent Horse of the Year Show.'

'During another trip to the UK, Glennis also arranged for frozen semen from legendary sire, Rotherwood Peter Pan, to be imported. The successful ridden pony Brookfields Pic-Pocket was one of the results, as was one of our top broodmares Brookfields Dream-a-Long. A number of other mares have been bred to him here with outstanding results.'

The stud founders are also quick to point out that, despite the high profile of some of the stallions, it is important to remember the significant part the mare plays.

'We have always believed that to breed good ponies you must have a suitable mare base, and a number of studs, ourselves included, have imported some premium mares to the benefit of the New Zealand gene pool,' says Barry. 'It has been proven by notable breeders around the world that in most cases a stallion, no matter how outstanding his bloodlines and correct his conformation, cannot improve stock unless the mares are of good quality.'

Unfortunately, despite the high standard of animals being bred here, there is still a tendency to import ridden ponies from Australia, rather than investing in a home-grown pony.

'The number of people prepared - or indeed able - to educate a pony for the ridden ring is sadly lacking in this country so, until the locally bred ponies are really up and going under saddle, people tend to shy away from them,' explains Glennis. 'It would be great if more breeders could break in and educate their stock but it is a time-consuming and costly process. We have been lucky in that we have



BROOKFIELDS DREAMMAKER ridden by Emma Trillo

Photo: www.takethemoment.co.nz

had some lovely riders who have competed very successfully on our homebred ponies, and these ponies have continued to go well for their new owners when sold.'

*Glamour, beauty and elegance are all words synonymous with show ponies.* Kathy Hogan

Sarah Cameron, who co-founded KS Show Horses with sister Kimberley Cameron and parents Neville and Shirley Cameron, is currently touring studs and prestigious horse shows around the UK, giving her a valuable insight into how things are done overseas.

Sarah is still fairly new to the breeding game but has firm views on the qualities a top riding pony should possess. Mixing with the best of the best in the UK, including Elizabeth Mansfield of the famed Rotherwood Stud, has only served to confirm her ideals. 'The perfect riding pony should be gorgeous and sane,' smiles Sarah. 'For the show ring they need to have that X-factor or sparkle, so often need to be a little 'hot'... or maybe 'warm' would be a better description, as they should still be quiet and safe enough for a child rider. The exception would be ponies bred for the lead rein or first ridden classes, where the most important trait is a quiet, kind temperament.'

'As far as physical characteristics go, I like big eyes and tiny ears with a gorgeous front and good hindquarters,' adds Sarah. 'The pony needs to be forward moving and correct. I'm a fan of the big moving ponies that cover a lot of ground and look like they could go out and perform a dressage test, rather than the low moving 'daisy cutter' action.'

Sarah has recently imported semen from British riding pony stallion, Kilvington Scoundrel and the exquisite Section B stallion, Lemonshill Top Note. She would like to see more new British riding pony blood introduced here, but recognises that costs can make this prohibitive. 'Lots of British studs won't quarantine or freeze semen for export. It is also hard for studs to import ponies from the UK because it's a lot of money, and if you bring a stallion back, you simply won't get as much in stud fees as it would have done in England,' explains Sarah.

'Purchasing from Australia is better for shipping and the dollar conversion. You can pick up a nice colt for a reasonable amount of money. There are also a lot of British bloodlines coming in to Australia so you can benefit from what other studs have imported, without the extortionate costs. For example, there is a lovely new 13.2hh bay Cusop Dimension colt called Turberry Tom Kitten, based at Whitmere Stud in Australia. It's those kinds of fresh bloodlines that could really add value to New Zealand breeding programmes.'

Sarah would also like to see more breeders making use of the in-hand show ring to market their stock to both mare owners and people wanting to purchase a potential superstar for the ridden classes.

'There isn't as much interest in the in-hand riding pony ring here as there is overseas. It's a shame as the show ring really is the breeder's shop window,' observes Sarah. 'Taking your breeding stock out and presenting them to the best of your ability shows potential purchasers that top notch ponies are being bred in this country. I really think that's the one area that we could improve upon.'

'As far as overall standards go, I think Kiwi riding pony breeders are doing an awesome job. For such a small country, we have access to some really magnificent breeding animals. You only have to look at the results exported animals are achieving in Australia to see that we are producing some great ponies.'

*I do believe that the New Zealand riding pony scene will continue to become more competitive as long as we keep pushing the boundaries, sharing our knowledge and focusing on quality over quantity. I'm excited to be a part of it!* Sarah Cameron



Sarah Cameron pictured here with KS TOUCH OF MAGIC as a 2 year old.

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