

## News Archives 2010

### Jan 2010

**Stuart** - Well I don't think it is an understatement to say that the past few weeks have been life changing. Some of you may already be aware that the lives of Jane, myself and our horses are about to undergo some significant changes, we are about to become totally mobile.

For the past couple of years we have travelled extensively around the Eastern States of Australia delivering seminars and clinics. This has been great, but it has meant significant periods where our home has been empty and arrangements have had to be made to look after our horses (and dogs). Sadly the last of our dogs died about 18 months ago, but this loss coupled with a few more factors, mainly in the northern hemisphere (including my family) started us thinking about this new lifestyle. Our plan is to spend roughly October to May every year in Australia and New Zealand, the other months in England, Europe and perhaps the USA and Canada. Our work always stops from July to September due to the funding arrangements of most organisations who are our primary sponsors, so it makes sense to use this time productively and try to expand our business and to research any other significant developments around the world. To that extent we will be attending the ISES (International Society for Equitation Science) conference in Sweden in August and have a couple of visits lined up to places in Germany and France that are currently doing some interesting things regarding horse welfare and management, we will keep you posted.

What all this means it that we have had to significantly reduce our belongings (furniture, bits and pieces, stored c\*\*p, you know what I mean!!), if we cant take it with us it has to be sold. Just have a look around your house, garage, stable and you know how difficult it all it was. We sold most of the big stuff, but we will be having a huge garage sale at a friends place in Logan Village at the end of January (inc. lots of horse stuff and a horse truck!!). Email us if you live in the area and would like to come.

All this took place in the weeks leading up to Christmas, moving from Cooroy, Qld on 23rd Dec. Christmas with the in-laws (always entertaining) followed by a week at the Woodford Folk festival. It was our first time, but highly recommended, so much to see and do and so many new foods to try (mixed blessing really). Then our new lifestyle really started....

At the moment we are house-sitting on 5 acres near Byron Bay for a friend, not a bad way to start. We will be here until April before heading off to Canberra and Victoria. Due to the move and the festive season, we have loads of work to catch up on particularly regarding this web site.

**Jane** - What about the horses I hear you ask, well Julie my Friesian cross has been loaned to a friend for a while and my other two mares (both Clydy crosses are with us in Byron Bay now and will be going to another friend in March. We are really looking forward to travelling and reporting back to you. In particular as one of my main areas of interest is how we keep horses - horse management - we will be seeking out information on sustainable and alternative horse management systems from around the world. There is a lot of focus (quite rightly) on training methods and what is good and bad. But that is only a small part of a horse's day- what about the other 23 hours a day? It is time for rethinking old ideas about how we keep horses. After all the way we keep horses developed in a very different world to the world we live in now. Of course traditional ways of doings things are sometimes the best but in many cases they certainly are not. Many methods of horse management that we use today were developed for and have evolved from a specific purpose, i.e. the military or Victorian Britain. As responsible horse owners we need to re-assess the way our horses are managed and to ensure that we are managing them in the best possible manner. We must re examine some of the things we take for granted and ask ourselves questions about why and how we do what we do. Stick with us and we will give you much food for thought.

### February 2010

**Jane** - We have put several new articles on the site this month (or links to articles on other sites) for you to read (see the new additions box above). One of them is an article about riding position and seat improvement (written by myself) that was published in Hoofbeats magazine in January 2010. Hoofbeats have kindly allowed me to reproduce the article [here](#). There is also an article called [understanding a hay or pasture test](#) by Carol Layton of Balanced Equine Nutrition. This is very useful if you are planning to or have had tests done.

There are two horse welfare articles, one called [Dying by Inches](#) by CuChullaine O'Reilly and the other called [Australia - The world's greatest horse-loving nation?](#) by Jane Duckworth. Both are very thought provoking and I hope you get a chance to read them. The article by Jane Duckworth concentrates on issues in Australia and the article by CuCullaine O'Reilly concentrates on issues in the USA (make sure you read right to the end for the discussion at the end). Both articles are equally relevant to all horse owners everywhere. Both countries and indeed many if not all of the 'developed' nations have very similar problems ('undeveloped' nations obviously have issues too but they tend to be for different reasons).

I feel that there is a genuine rise in awareness of equine welfare. But along with this (or maybe this is the reason for the rise in awareness) there is a reported rise in the amount of cases that welfare authorities and organisations are seeing. Why would this be when we are living in an evolving society that is becoming more and more concerned with previously unheard of concepts such as 'animal rights'? No doubt the rise in horse ownership has a lot to do with the increase in welfare cases. In the past not many people owned horses for recreation (recreation was not even a concept for many of our ancestors - even just a couple of generations back). Horse ownership is steadily on the increase and has been for the past 40 years. Now we have a society where it is much easier for many people to be able to 'live their dream' and own horses purely for recreation - for everything from owning horses as pets to owning horses for the purpose of competition.

Many horse owners are not aware of the wider issues of horse welfare and unwittingly add to the problems. Unfortunately it is also increasingly easy for many well intentioned, but not well informed people to collect horses in an effort to 'save' them from their current situation. Or even worse to breed horses because they have some ill conceived notion that what they are breeding will be sought after in the horse industry. Often for a number of reasons which only they and a few other people of similar thinking can fathom. Unfortunately many of the welfare cases involve just such places - would be 'rescue centres' or 'studs' which were only ever the whim of (animal) collectors. When times get hard it is the animals who suffer. It must be said however that there are many responsible individuals and organisations who are doing the right thing and without these reputable people many more horses would be suffering. For anyone

considering breeding horses or who has a tendency to take on too many unwanted or neglected horses please think carefully about both your own circumstances and the wider ramifications.

Humans being humans tend to think they know best and often a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Many horse owners are not willing to spend time learning about what horses really need to be healthy horses and instead rely on information from misinformed sources (such as inexperienced friends) or sources that have an agenda (such as they want your money). Another factor, one which CuChullaine O'Reilly in her article, alludes to is the skewed romanticism and emotive attachments some people have regarding horses. This perception can have a negative impact on the way horses are managed.

In Australia the issue of Brumbies is very emotive. I applaud the welfare groups that attempt to home these animals but I am worried about the fact that *some* groups advocate breeding Brumbies to preserve their bloodlines. Surely the hundreds of thousands of them living wild are doing that for themselves? Surely there are better ways to promote them and gain peoples interest in them than by promoting Brumby stallions for breeding? Why not concentrate on the ones that need help rather than breeding yet more?

Unfortunately horse welfare is a complex and multi-faceted issue, one that over time I will attempt to help to unravel for both myself and for you. It will be a long and difficult journey for all horse owners, but we owe it to ourselves and horses worldwide to begin to take steps to ensure our relationship with horses is truly beneficial to *both* humans and equines. Until next time - take care - Jane and Stuart