
BREEDERS' UPDATE



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BREEDERS' UPDATE

June 2, 2021

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE CHANGE OF BIRTHDAYS

Catherine McDonald

On May 27th, 2021, a Special General Meeting of all clubs and kindred bodies of Harness Racing New Zealand unanimously approved the decision to change a standardbred horses' birthday from August 1st to January 1st each year.

Why have we changed the birthday for a Standardbred horse?

Harness Racing Australia changed the birthdate of their standardbred horses to be January 1 in the next but one calendar year in which it was foaled two years ago. This was done because it would:

- Ensure more horses raced as 2YOs due to the scientific evidence that they have a longer racing career if they do so
- Improve animal welfare by changing the major races to later in the calendar year therefore horses older and stronger. Horses would also be better educated by then
- Improve wagering on key races as they would have fuller fields.

The impacts of the Australian change to January 1st were:

- A longer breeding season as mares still being bred throughout January
- For the first time in 12 years an increase in the number of horses being bred
- Fuller fields in the major races
- A significant increase of wagering on the Vic Bred and Breeders Crown races
- An increase in fillies racing
- An increase in 2YO racing.

There has been universal support for the change in Australia across all states now that they have seen the benefits.

The impact of the Australian change on New Zealand horses has been:

- Horses that would turn a year older on August 1st e.g. 2YO to a 3YO could still go to Australia and race as a 2YO over there until the end of December
- Owners are sending their horses over to Australia for these age group races and the majority were unlikely to return to New Zealand racing therefore depleting our numbers

- A higher market for our age group horses for the Australian market.

The benefits of New Zealand moving to January 1 birth-date are:

- We would align with the Australian horse birthdate and other harness jurisdictions around the world
- There is no longer a disincentive to breed beyond January 1st
- There could be an increase in breeding numbers
- Stronger 2YO racing from an animal welfare point of view
- A 2YO racing season extends from a 4 ½ month window to 11 months thereby a better return on investment for the owners
- Fuller age group racing towards the end of the calendar year
- Improved wagering on age group events
- Help keep our horse population in New Zealand

The impacts of New Zealand moving to January 1 birth-date are:

- An initial one-off extension to the current season to make it 5 months longer i.e August through December
- No impact on budget as racing season and funding stay the same
- A complete revamp of our programme of Group racing including but not limited to the Sires Stakes races and Harness Jewels.

When do horses get older?

In reviewing the change of birthdate for the horse, the rules have been designed to ensure horses born in the same breeding season turn a year older on the same day. So, for example, if you had an early January foal it would age on the same day as a December foal.

Example:

<i>Date horse born</i>	<i>Date horse becomes 1YO</i>
January 2020	January 2021
November 2020	January 2022
January 2021	January 2022
November 2021	January 2023

Why has the Racing Season not changed?

The Racing Season of 1 August through 31 July is embedded into the Racing Act 2020 and therefore requires a legislation change by Parliament. This is unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future due to other government priorities, however for our sport it was deemed necessary to make the birthday changes now for the reasons outlined above.

What happens to the breeding season?

The breeding season will not change i.e in the Spring through to Summer. The good news is that if your mare is not in foal by early December you could still try again and not be disadvantaged by having a late foal turn 1YO when it is in fact only 6 or 7 months old. E.g foals January 10th would have turned 1 on August 1st but now it will turn 1YO on January 1st the following year, so will be much nearer to its true age of 12 months.

What happens to our current 2 and 3YOs?

Every horse regardless of age will stay their current age until January 1st 2022, i.e. if already a 2YO they will be a 2YO through until January 1st, 2022. No horse will age on August 1st this year.

What will our racing programme look like?

The change in a horses birthday presents an opportunity to reshape not only the pattern of racing but a chance to re-evaluate our approach to marketing to the benefit of all sectors of our sport.

We have a team of 9 people from diverse backgrounds involved in drawing up a proposed programme for the following year. This work has been going for several weeks now in anticipation of the decision to change the birthday. This programme covers age group racing, group, feature and listed races as well as the general rating races throughout the year. It is getting close to the stage when we will bring in clubs, sponsors, trainers, owners and breeders and other sport participants, to review and give their feedback. We anticipate this process will be cyclical until we get a programme we are all comfortable with. We are looking at finalising the programme in by the end of October this year and will publish the year long programme for everyone to work with.

What happens from August 1st to December 31st this year with programming?

We will be designing a race programme from January 1st through to December 31st to cover the age of the horse. Initially there is a transition period from August 1 2021 to December 31st 2021. In looking at this transition period we believe it will impact about 5 races (not race days, just races) otherwise it is business as usual for these months.

If you require further clarification contact

Catherine McDonald

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Muscle Mountain does what no trotter has for nearly two years, run past the champion Sundees Son in a Feature Trot!

CULLEN BREEDING NAILS GROUP ONE AMONG MANY OTHER FIRSTS

Brad Reid

Ian Dobson has had more than his fair share of success when it comes to premier race meetings at Addington Raceway.

It started in the 90's with the Smooth Fella mare, Jam Cover Girl, named after the business that allowed Dobson to get heavily involved in his passion for harness racing.

What transpired was a golden run for more than two decades through the deeds of the great Christian Cullen, his champion daughter, Mainland Banner and son in Gotta Go Cullen.

For a man who has seen it all, you get the sense his current run of golden results means as much to him as those twenty years ago and they are also providing him with many firsts in the sport as well.

On a cold winter's night six weeks ago at Addington, Dobson won his first Group One race as a breeder, and it just so happened to be with a trotter.

"It was just fabulous," said Dobson.

"I've won a lot of races as you would know, but the way he won running down the best trotter in the country was something that is pretty hard to put in words.

"Being Ben's first Group One as well made for a special night. I don't have too many late ones now at my age but it's fair to say we had a late night after that," exclaimed Dobson.

Anyone who saw Dobson that night understood what it meant to him with tears visible on his rosy cheeks.

It had been a while between drinks with Little Rascal being his most recent Group performer, but you have to go back as far as Joyfuljoy winning the Three-Year-Old Diamond in 2009 to find his last Group One win as an owner.

His involvement might not be what it once was, but it's hardly like his investment in the sport has ceased.

If anything, it shows how hard it is to not only get to the top in this sport as breeder and owner, but to stay there requires all sorts of good fortune not often accounted for in balance sheets.

Some of that good fortune came early last year when he received a phone call from the champion horseman, Mark Purdon. Dobson had owned a pacer with Purdon before that never made it to the races. Ian had made it clear to Mark that if there was ever an opportunity to be involved with a nice pacer again to keep him in mind.

"Mark had bought the horse for a Victorian owner that had a sudden change of heart after Akuta was purchased from the sales.

"He called me and said he had a yearling that he really





Winners are grinners! Dobson all smiles after breeding his first ever Group One winner, Muscle Mountain.

liked and would I like to be involved.

"I looked into the pedigree and liked what I saw. A Bettor's Delight out of a Christian Cullen mare.

"That's the great thing about Cullen," said Dobson.

"His daughters are fantastic broodmares. Even the unraced ones are worth persevering with because they put X factor into their foals.

Dobson wound up taking a three-quarter share in the pacer named Akuta and only a few days out from the penultimate feature card of the season, it appears to be another one of Dobson's many astute business decisions.

The son of Bettor's Delight out of the unraced Christian Cullen mare Adore To Our Dreams had a fair bit of hype about him even before his first public appearance at the trials.

Bred by Paul and Pauline Renwick, Akuta hails from a strong maternal family going back to the likes of his fifth dam, Viva Reine (1962 Fallacy – Egyptian Queen).

She left some smart performers in Corfu (Nardins Byrd), Raemeses (Noodlum) and Graikos (Jersey Hanover) the later running second to Lord Module in the 1979 Pan Am Mile, the first race where the whole field broke 2 minutes for the mile in New Zealand.

Starting a bit closer up, the family from Akuta's third dam Emily Franco include:

- Eden Franco 2012 by Christian Cullen - 1:54.1 \$192,757
- Franco Edward 2015 by American Ideal - 1:54.2 \$221,468
- FrancoEmirate 2006 by Christian Cullen - 1:53.8 \$332,830
- Artemis Belle 2007 by Artiscape - 1:56.1 \$359,599
- Eagle Rox 2009 by Bettors Delight - 1:55.2 \$225,656
- Rishi 2013 by Bettors Delight - 1:50.2 \$242,952

- Little Rascal 2011 by Panspacificflight - 1:50.2 \$356,863
- Franco Enforce 1993 by OK Bye - 1:50.3US \$593,738

Winning on debut in the Group Three Kindergarten Stakes at Wyndham he only did what he had too after leading up in a 1:59.5 mile rate leaving some pundits a little underwhelmed.

He was then beaten on his merits a week later in the Welcome Stakes (far from disgraced mind you) which led many to believe that the hype train was more smoke than substance.

"He's had a few niggles along the way, but he had a month off after that run and we got on top of his issues with the freshen up," said Dobson.

Akuta second-rated a full field of yearling sales graduates in the NZB Harness Millions final for two-year-old colts and geldings, turning the tables on his stablemate Cosmic Major.

"Akuta is something else," said Dobson.

"I think we will see that on Jewels Day at Cambridge from his good draw. He really is something quite special and will prove that on Sunday," he said.

He heads to the Jewels at Cambridge as the shortest of the shorties paying a staggering \$1.25 to win the Hardwood Breeding Two-Year-Old Emerald.

I say staggering with a grain of salt because you could argue that he should and will start shorter on the day, with his Sires Stakes Final massacre fresh in the minds of all.

"I was talking to Natalie after the race and she told me she stopped driving him at the 400m mark and that he just took over himself.





Dobson, Purdon and the Cullen Racing Team celebrate winning the Group One Sires Stakes Final

"To run away from them after drawing 11, never seeing the pegs and sitting parked was a pretty big statement to make," he said.

The Group One win 10 days ago provided another couple of firsts for Dobson.

He had never won the two-year-old Sires Stakes final before with Cullen having gone amiss as a juvenile prior to getting the opportunity.

He had also never won back-to-back races with Muscle Mountain winning the Open Class trot on the same card a race earlier, meaning Dobson was able to enjoy the hospitality from the Breckon Winning Owners Bar for a good hour or so!

Sunday at the Jewels will provide Dobson with another opportunity for a first.

Two Group One winners in a day?

Akuta's handy draw should prove very hard to bowl, so too Muscle Mountain having fared better than his main rival, Bolt For Brilliance.

Muscle Mountain showed when winning the Fred Shaw Memorial in April that he has a bit of gate speed if called upon, and with a stable mate inside him, also likely to land handy, he should have some options with any luck.

For a while it seemed, the man we call 'Dobbie' was having zero luck with his foray into the trotters after securing the mother of Muscle Mountain whom he bought as a yearling for \$48,000 at the 2014 National Yearling Sale in Christchurch.

"I had raced a trotter before in the early 2000's with Gold N Gold who did quite well in Australia and beat Lyell Creek at his final start," he said.

"I didn't have any intention of buying a trotter that year but loved her family and pedigree and bought her

largely on that basis," he said.

Paramount Faith (Pegasus Spur – Paramount Star) had excellent manners and fluent gait but lacked any real speed to push on with as a juvenile, leaving Dobson with what he believes was any easy decision.

"I thought with her breeding and lovely manners she had to be sent to stud. I guess the best decision I ever made with that mare was sending her to the best stallion in the world, Muscle Hill.

The second-best decision he ever made with the mare was sticking to his guns and not selling the resulting colt by the world champion sire Muscle Hill for less than his reserve of \$40,000.

At the 2018 sale of trotters, Ultimate Stride was the sales topper fetching \$160,000.

There were 10 yearlings by Muscle Hill which no doubt diluted the market for them, however \$40,000 was the highest price paid which speaks more to the lack of opportunities for young trotters than it does the foresight of buyers.

Cracker Hill, Vacation Hill, Midnight Dash, Chloe Rose, Bolt For Brilliance and Muscle Mountain all came from that sale in 2018. They have all paid for themselves some time ago!!!!

In North America and Europe the offspring of Muscle Hill only need four legs and a tail to reach six figures in the ring with the stallions popularity limiting his availability Down Under in recent seasons.

To think Muscle Hill was available at \$12,000 here is mind boggling given what Dobson had to pay to secure a service to him in the spring.

"Paramount Faith is back in foal to him, but it is going to cost me a small fortune to make it happen mind you."





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Dobson should already have a full-brother to Muscle Mountain had it not been for a paddock accident.

"We lost a full brother as a late yearling after he was found caught up in a fence which was just horrible.

"She then lost two foals by Trixton in consecutive years which I guess happens with livestock, but I'm not getting any younger and the breeding caper was looking like I might have pulled the wrong reign," he said.

Dobson now has a Tactical Landing filly out of Paramount Faith, the first live foal since Muscle Mountain whom he is looking forward to seeing develop.

"I am proud of what I have achieved in this sport and I'm going to enjoy for as long as I can," he said philosophically.

I'd be lying if I said I didn't want to see Bolt spoil the party, but few would begrudge Dobbie his flowers given all he has contributed and invested to a sport we all love.

BRECKONS SECURE THEIR FIRST OAKS WITH BETTOR TWIST

Brad Reid

The 72nd running of the The Breeders New Zealand Oaks two Fridays ago lived up to its billing of being the premier race for three-year-old pacing fillies in the Southern Hemisphere.

The race that has been won by some of our greatest female performers added another to its annals with champion filly Bettor's Twist etching her name into the record books.

Such is her dominance of this crop of three-year-old girls, Bettor's Twist started at microscopic odds of \$1.10.

That's the shortest price paid for an Oaks winner in its history.

Adore Me paid \$1.20 in 2013. You have to go back to Armalight and Hilarious Guest to find another winner sub \$1.50 and before that Bonnie Frost in 1969.

It took nothing away from the spectacle and although the result was never in doubt, those in attendance and watching at home were blessed with a home stretch duel between Bettor Twist and her archrival La Rosa.

La Rosa set up the second fastest time in race history by burning from barrier 8 to cross the field and lead up, only being run down by three quarters of a length - a testament to the calibre of fillies Bettor Twist so effortlessly puts away.

La Rosa was massive, but Bettor Twist was sublime.

It was summed up well by the filly's trainer, Hayden Cullen, post-race.

"La Rosa really made a race of it and our filly had to be good tonight," Cullen said.
"And she showed how good she is."

"She has always gone well over the shorter distances but I thought 2600m would suit her right down to the ground."

"She really stuck to her guns the whole way and we got the job done."

To have bred both the mother and the winner and to race her with some good friends made the occasion all the sweeter for the Breckon's with Karen admitting it was worth the wait.

"It was the first time we had ever won the Oaks which made it very exciting," she said.

"To share the experience with our good friends was so wonderful. The syndicates have been the best thing we have ever done and to race a filly with such a great bunch of people makes it a lot of fun," she said.

The syndicate who race this filly includes Phil & Glenys Kennard, HRNZ CEO Gary Woodham and his wife Keryn, and also Gary Williams, father of well-known comedian, Guy Williams.

"Gary has been in our syndicates from the beginning, and he has been such a great supporter of harness racing, he just absolutely loves it," she said.

The quality of this year's crop of fillies was not lost on Karen either with the matriarch of Breckon Farms taking a pause to make the point that we are all getting to enjoy a great bunch of fillies.

"La Rosa, what a great great filly she is. We would probably be talking about her in the same breath as a champion had it not been for Bettor Twist," she said.

"I do have to say, this year of three-year-old fillies, they are all outstanding and are a wonderful bunch of horses with some real depth to them as a group.

"It's the best for quite a while when you look at the likes of The Honey Queen, Lifes A Beach and Off N Gone, they are all great and you would love to own them in their own right," she said.

At the end of the day however there can only be one winner and Karen knows a good thing when she sees one.

"Natalie is just blown away with how good she is," she said.

It's hard to believe this was the first New Zealand Oaks





The Breckon Farms Top 10 Syndicate celebrate winning 'The Breeders' New Zealand Oaks for 2021

winner for Ken and Karen Breckon given the lineage of champion fillies they have raced in their colours.

Partyon was fourth in their farm colours in 2017 and Elle Mac had to bow to Shez All Rock in 2018.

In winning the race, Bettor Twist went one better than her mother Twist And Twirl who had to bow to Cheer The Lady in the 2012 edition.

"Twist And Twirl is lovely, she is such a lovely mare and she had a wonderful race career as well.

"Unfortunately, last season we lost a Bettor's Delight colt out of her who died at birth and it's so heartbreaking watching a mare deal with the loss of one of her foals. It's terrible and was so sad."

The attention for the Breckon's now turns to the Harness Jewels which happen to be taking place on their back-door step in Cambridge.

Bettor Twist has barrier 8 to overcome in the Three-Year-Old Diamond and with La Rosa drawn the pole. It is sure to be another epic battle.

Breckon Farms have three more runners in their farm colours with Ellaria Sand in the Two Year Old Ruby, A Bettor You in the Two Year Old Diamond and Regal Attire in the Three Year Old Ruby, all realistic chances if things went there way.

They will be joined by:

Cosmic Major: Two-Year-Old Emerald, Pace N Pride & Hot And Treacherous: Three Year Old Emerald, American Pride: Four-Year-Old Ruby

Put on the spot, Karen aced her Millionaire Hot Seat moment nailing all of them without a hitch, showing just how engaged she is with every aspect of the farm and it's progeny.

"We've had a great year this year, it's been fantastic," she said.

BREEDING SEASON BECKONS; A REVIEW & PREVIEW

Brad Reid

In doing another edition of the Register of Standardbred Stallions it is always exciting to go through some of the data and statistics available and reflecting on who may or may not be available at stud.

It is looking incredibly likely that New Zealand breeders in the pacing sector will get their first looks at Tall Dark Stranger (frozen) and possibly Bettor's Wish who may be a shuttle candidate for the spring.

Breeders and pacing fans should be no strangers to the success of either with Tall Dark Stranger being the world champion son of Bettor's Delight, the winner of 19 races from 22 starts including both the two- and three-year-old Breeders Crown finals.

He is out of a champion in her own right, Precocious Beauty who was the 2013 Dan Patch Two-Year-Old of the year and a half-sister to Sportswriter. He also shares the same third dam as Downbytheseaside which all things being equal probably represents the best stallion pedigree ever to hit the market by a son of Bettor's Delight.

If whispers are true, his pricing point will place him in the upper echelon of sires and probably will price himself out of the market to anyone but commercial breeders. He stands at Hanover Shoe Farms and don't be surprised to see him at a similar fee here on debut.

Regardless, it presents an opportunity for genetics that are not to be sniffed at and I can see him being well patronised off his credentials.



Tall Dark Stranger winning the \$1 million Pepsi North America Cup

The Three Diamonds family is one of North America's elite and it was hardly surprising he became a monster on the track with this family also producing the likes of another sire in Life Sign. Cross his maternal family with the champion Bettor's Delight and you're playing with kerosine and matches!

It is yet to be put in concrete, but I understand his expatriate New Zealand owner Chris Ryder is very keen to send the stallion Down Under and something is a brewing.

We know about the announcement of Ultimate Sniper being added to the ranks, and then there is the curious case of Lazarus and what opportunity he will be afforded and where that might be remains tight lipped, but I wouldn't mind picking he might find himself in slightly more familiar surroundings.

In a case of true serendipity, Laz has found the stallions ranks much easier going in North America and has had none of the issues that have plagued him in NSW which left him serving only 8 mares this season.

It would be a travesty to not see this horse get the opportunity he deserves to stamp the New Zealand studbook with the same impact he had on our racetracks. He was hands-down best since Cullen and did things we won't see for a while yet.

It was great to see Raging Bull get his biggest ever book last season with 48 mares and has probably found his niche in the Deep South at Macca Lodge.

Breeders did not miss with the clever pricing points and discounts offered by Wai Eyre Farm in a Covid affected year and Sky Major benefitted from that in spades serving a book of 89 mares, the same as his own sire, Art Major which is quite remarkable.

In a competitive stallion environment, it is great to see two major studs combine for success with Always B Miki (201) and Captain Crunch (171), together serving a quarter of the pacing mares in New Zealand (1478). The Miki's look like they are perfectly suited to New Zealand racing and have a bit of ticker about them to go with

some natural speed. Having three Jewels' starters from his first crop is testament to that and they look like they will all be better three-year-olds.

With Vincent waiting in the wings with his debut crop for early next year, it is an exciting time for both Alabar and Nevele R.

Personally, I can't wait to see what the first crop of Downbytheseaside do here early next year and thankfully we will see his debut North American crop before then. Having been watching a lot of the 2's in Training videos by the top North American horsemen, it is clear that he is on the radar big time and has some nice stock in the right barns.

80% of the pacing services last year were by stallions priced below \$10,000. While there were only three above that threshold, it looks likely to change this year and with the shambolic HRA stallion levy still in limbo its effect on things like the timing of the Stallion Register are yet to be known, however the first week of August in your letterbox is what we are aiming for.

The other elephant in the room is the fact that only 52% of all pacing mares served were by stallions standing in New Zealand.

The advent of state sponsored breeding initiatives in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland is putting immense pressure on studs to find commercial sense in standing stallions on these shores.

In the 2016 season prior to Vicbred really ramping up its first win and breeder bonus scheme, 75% of the pacing mares served in New Zealand were by stallions that stood here in the flesh.

Ironically commercial breeders here stand to gain somewhat by breeding to the likes of a Lather Up, American Ideal and Always B Miki given their progeny are Vicbred eligible which opens up the Australian market at the sales.

The challenges it presents the New Zealand industry, in both the short and long term, is what it means for semen



quality and mare conceptions if more and more of our semen has to cross an ocean before it arrives.

Without a first win bonus or breeder bonus being attached to our own aspirational race series like the Sires Stakes, will it be viable and sustainable for the studs to stand stallions on our shores with off shore schemes giving them plenty of incentive not too.

Trotting mares served continues to flourish in both countries, particularly in Victoria where the presence of Yabby Dam and Aldebaran Farms has steered the breed on a trajectory towards bloodlines that are internationally recognised.

Despite a small decline in trotting mares in New Zealand, the 599 mares served by trotting stallions represents almost a third of the services (30.4%) which is the highest mark in the history of our stud book.

The genetics on offer are world class with breeders in both countries spoilt for choice.

This is reflected in the fact that although the split between the gaits is two thirds to a third, the number of pacing stallions was identical to the trotting stallions on offer with 33 a piece.

While there has been a smorgasbord on offer, the biggest challenge for trotting breeders has been the lack of fresh stallion options available.

It hasn't been viable for the studs, even in a period of growth, to invest in bringing fresh options Down Under due to the size of the broodmare population they are competing for against the fixed costs of transport, stud costs and marketing.

In the last eight breeding seasons only nine trotting stallions have served more than 50 mares which goes a long way to explaining the reason why.

It would take some serious cajones to bring down a stallion given the breeding numbers and limited investment in trotting stakes, costs and opportunities for trotting.

For all the noise in the last decade about the dominance of Bettor's Delight and the numbers he has served, his coverings have never represented more than 15% of the pacing mares in any given season.

Compare that with Majestic Son in the 2013/14 season who served 161 mares which was exactly a quarter of the stud book! We didn't hear a lot about that? Nor much about how dire the lack of fresh semen options was becoming.

The number of frozen semen serves for pacing mares never gotten any higher than 13.4% in 2013/14 whereas the trotters has climbed as high as 54% in 2016/17.

What frozen semen has done for the trotting breed can't be understated.

Love You was the catalyst for opening our eyes to the best of European bloodlines, while Muscle Hill has shown us that even from crops as small as 20 that the cream can and will rise to the top.

The likes of Father Patrick and the impending availability of Bold Eagle this season will see that the best global bloodlines will continue to be available, but there are caveats with breeding to frozen that make the increasing availability of fresh options a real win/win for the stud book.

In the words of Bob Dylan, the times they are a changing. Last year was the least amount of frozen semen used in six years for the trotting sector with over 70% of mares bred coming from fresh and chilled options.

Woodlands Stud have played a considerable role in improving that figure with their shuttling of What The Hill.

Regardless of what the market was telling them, investing in a shuttle trotting stallion was a considerable risk that has paid dividends with the stallion being well received by both breeders and buyers as evident at this year's sales.

Volstead was just starting to get a foothold with reasonable books in two seasons at stud in Victoria however he has fallen victim to the daft HRA Stallion Levy and won't get an opportunity to build on that momentum.

After not shuttling down under in 19/20, Creatine extended his Down Under sojourn this season by domiciling at Nevele R Stud and he looks to have a bright future.

Superfast Stuart has quietly chipped away in the background and has a bevy of solid performers, so too Imperial Count.

The growing presence of local bloodlines is encouraging but the path to success is undeniably a tough one. One Ova Da Moon has already left a Group winner from his first crop of two but has taken seven breeding seasons to crack the 20 mare barrier.

Royal Aspirations has made a good fist of his humble beginnings however he and the likes of Marcoola and Speeding Spur, two of our best performers of the last decade are in an uphill battle to compete against the sexier options on the table.

Trotting breeders have been unafraid to put their money where their mouth is and spend on the best genetics available.

This year there were 110 services by stallions with a fee of \$10,000 or more. Last year that figure was 17 and has never been higher then 35 when Muscle Hill semen was available in 2017 for just \$12,000.

Last year that figure was 17 and has never been higher then 35 when Muscle Hill semen was available in 2017 for just \$12,000.



BREEDING SEASON STATS

Aggregate	20/21	19/20	18/19	17/18	16/17	15/16	14/15	13/14
Individual Mares Served	1969	2193	2333	2359	2584	2544	2698	2887
% change prior season	-10.21%	-6.00%	-1.10%	-8.71%	1.57%	-5.71%	-6.55%	
Stallions	68	78	75	75	66	57	52	43
PACING	20/21	19/20	18/19	17/18	16/17	15/16	14/15	13/14
Individual Pacing Mares Served								
% change prior season								
Services - table below	1478	1678	1797	1924	2051	1919	1888	1866
% change prior season	-11.92%	-6.62%	-6.60%	-6.19%	6.88%	1.64%	1.18%	
# Chilled NZ Stallions	16	20	23	21	22	20	14	11
# Chilled NZ Stallions Serves	772	834	1046	1222	1514	1369	1258	1430
% chilled NZ stallions Serves	52%	50%	58%	63.5%	73.8%	71.3%	66%	76.6%
#Chilled Aussie Stallions	11	13	9	13	6	6	7	6
# Chilled Aussie Serves	552	654	608	513	337	355	419	187
% chilled Australia Stallions Serves	37%	39%	34%	26.5%	16.4%	18.4%	22%	10%
# Frozen Semen Stallions	8	8	8	8	8	7	8	5
#Frozen Serves	154	190	143	189	200	195	211	249
% frozen semen	11%	11%	8%	10%	9.8%	11.3%	12%	13.4%
Stallions Used	35	42	40	42	36	33	29	26
Individual Services: some mares are served by 2 or more stallions								
A Rocknroll Dance	x	31	89	233	131	80	161	x
Always B Miki	201	169	94	98	x	x	x	x
American Ideal	42	20	42	91	108	148	125	141
Art Major	89	148	156	146	166	189	174	94
Artsplace	x	2	x	1	x	2	5	7
Auckland Reactor	x	7	29	76	95	112	156	212
Betterthancheddar	x	31	34	42	29	57	70	102
Betting Line	38	31	14	41	x	x	x	x
Bettor Dream	2	5	4	1	x	x	x	x
Bettor's Creek	x	1	13	9	4	2	5	4
Bettor's Delight	171	164	142	193	299	289	301	249
Buy Kiwi Made	7	12	14	2	2	2	x	1
Captaintreachorous	51	52	72	46	45	x	x	x
Captain Crunch	179	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Changeover	x	x	x	x	23	38	142	142
Courage Under Fire	1	7	11	16	1	x	22	19
Downbytheseaside	70	94	89	x	x	x	x	x
Falcon Seelster	x	x	3	10	8	23	43	55
Fear The Dragon	27	57	x	x	x	x	x	x
Franco Ledger	2	10	11	22	x	x	x	x
Gold Ace	10	28	35	54	42	45	x	x
Grinfromeartoear	x	x	3	6	7	12	10	34
Heston Blue Chip	x	x	x	7	x	x	x	x
He's Watching	x	48	85	102	81	101	x	x
Highview Tommy	x	9	21	35	15	18	21	x
Johnny Rock	17	19	15	12	18	x	x	x
Lather Up	56	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Lazarus	8	76	x	x	x	x	x	x
Locharburn	6	12	x	x	x	x	x	x
Luck Be Withyou	x	1	x	x	x	x	x	x
Mel Mara	x	1	x	x	x	x	x	x
Mach Three	x	x	x	4	90	121	130	160
Natives Royal Affair	6	2	1	1	3	2	3	2
Net Ten EOM	5	13	25	18	17	24	32	x
Panspacificflight	8	2	6	11	34	30	23	28
Pet Rock	x	x	x	12	x	x	x	x
Poster Boy	4	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Prodigal Seelster	x	3	10	11	15	20	20	x
Racing Hill	x	x	x	13	x	x	x	x
Raging Bull	48	37	33	25	31	7	19	32

Rock N Roll Heaven	25	31	110	82	84	11	20	41
Roll With Joe	x	x	x	x	26	x	9	15
Shadow Play	x	x	23	13	25	51	60	80
Sir Lincoln	x	4	29	65	125	101	69	114
Sky Major	89	43	44	x	x	x	x	x
Somebeachsomewhere	x	x	5	70	76	87	34	88
Sportswriter	15	25	50	93	176	35	76	17
Stay Hungry	8	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Stunin Cullen	x	x	5	x	23	14	31	68
Sunshine Beach	x	26	26	36	20	57	x	x
Sweet Lou	105	214	225	122	90	86	x	x
Terror To Love	26	19	30	33	62	84	x	x
Thefasterthebetter	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Tiger Tara	1	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
The Stolnsiderm	5	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ultimate Machette	32	59	x	x	x	x	x	x
Vincent	106	110	148	x	x	x	x	x
Washington VC	x	29	30	38	61	42	75	90
Well Said	x	1	7	12	6	11	41	24
Western Terror	x	x	x	5	x	x	x	x
TROTTING	20/21	19/20	18/19	17/18	16/17	15/16	14/15	13/14
Individual Trotting Mares Served								
% change prior season								
Services - table below	599	661	639	623	597	517	528	470
% change prior season	-9.38%	3.44%	2.57%	4.36%	15.47%	-2.08%	12.34%	
% chilled NZ Serves	64.4%	57.3%	60.5%	51.5%	45.6%	52%	67.2%	74.4%
# Chilled NZ Serves	385	379	387	321	272	269	355	350
# Chilled NZ STALLIONS	15	13	13	12	10	8	11	7
% chilled Australia Serves	4.8%	6.3%	3.5%	1%	0%	0%	0.80%	5.9%
# Chilled Aussie Serves	29	42	23	6	0	0	4	28
# chilled Aussie Stallions	2	2	4	1	0	0	1	2
% frozen semen	30.8%	36.4%	36%	47.5%	54.4%	48%	32%	19.7%
# Frozen Serves	185	240	234	296	325	248	169	92
# Frozen Stallions	16	21	18	20	20	16	12	8
Stallions Used	33	36	35	33	30	24	23	17
Individual Services: some mares are served by 2 or more stallions								
Aldebaran Eagle	x	x	7	x	x	x	x	x
Andover Hall	4	9	5	16	19	50	33	x
Angus Hall	x	x	1	6	9	27	34	18
Barcardi Lindy	3	14	9	8	12	13	9	8
Centurion ATM	x	x	2	x	x	x	x	x
Crazed	x	x	x	5	1	11	1	6
Creatine	33	x	49	70	x	x	x	x
Dreamcatcher	x	x	1	x	x	x	x	x
Dream Vacation	3	x	2	3	3	14	15	6
En Solitaire	29	24	x	x	x	x	x	x
Father Patrick	55	126	82	25	44	x	x	x
Helpisontheway	x	1	x	x	x	x	x	x
Imperial Count	20	15	24	17	3	x	x	15
Kadabra	x	x	1	17	x	x	x	x
Love You	36	5	41	90	88	25	5	13
Lucky Chucky	2	2	2	7	2	5	19	11
Majestic Son	84	105	89	70	81	109	142	161
Marcoola	32	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Master Glide	2	4	3	13	23	19	10	x
Monkey Bones	x	1	x	2	6	7	66	40
Muscle Hill	3	3	x	21	35	38	27	28
Muscle Mass	31	20	19	17	52	x	x	x
One Over Da Moon	24	13	7	1	14	x	2	x
Orlando Vici	6	2	5	6	1	1	18	x
Pastor Steven	9	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Peak	3	11	32	51	66	67	40	x
Pegasus Spur	x	10	19	34	40	42	23	26
Quaker Jet	4	3	6	12	18	18	x	x
Quite Easy	x	1	x	1	1	1	2	2

Shakennotstirred S	1	1	3	2	x	1	3	3
Skyvalley	x	1	5	x	1	10	4	13
Southwind Frank	12	10	13	x	x	x	x	x
Speeding Spur	15	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sundon	x	4	7	6	8	14	13	16
Superfast Stuart	25	46	26	12	26	20	39	54
Tactical Landing	10	14	x	x	x	x	x	x
The Best Madrik	1	1	x	x	x	x	x	x
The Pres	x	11	21	28	10	9	13	50
Trixtan	3	11	14	11	9	12	x	x
Used To Me	2	5	10	6	x	x	x	x
Village Mystic	x	x	x	6	x	x	x	x
Volstead	27	37	x	x	x	x	x	x
Waterloo Sunset	9	6	4	2	2	2	4	x
What The Hill	81	94	82	x	x	x	x	x
Wishing Stone	5	11	9	20	1	2	6	x

CHANGE AT THE TOP FOR CADUCEUS CLUB

Changes have been announced to the running of the Caduceus Club Fillies Series.

Long-time administrator Ken Crooke is winding back his involvement, after decades of "tireless work".

"For more than 20 years Ken has been responsible for the marketing, compiling the entries and looking after the money, all of this on a purely voluntary basis," says Auckland Trotting Club vice-president Jamie McKinnon, "but the time has come to him to kick back, enjoy his racing and Caduceus Club camaraderie and hand over the reins."

Ken Crooke will still be involved in running Series 23 and 24, with Series 25 and beyond being administered by the New Zealand Sires' Stakes Board, and its Executive Martin Pierson.

The club runs two races a year at Alexandra Park, the Group One Woodlands Stud Caduceus Club Fillies Class (won in April by True Fantasy) and the Group Two Ladyship Stakes (The Peter Breckon Memorial), which was won in February by Bettor Twist.

McKinnon : "Ken was there from the beginning, along with good mate the late John Devlin and the committee. At the time their dream was to put back into an industry that had given them so much pleasure."

"It was no mean feat to get these fillies races off the ground and to achieve Group 1 status was testament to their drive and commitment to make it happen."

Foal nominations are now being accepted for Series 25, and they, along with sustaining payments, will close on July 1 2021.

For conditions and regulations regarding Series 25 [click here](#)



KIRKWOOD TAKES ON NEW CHALLENGE WITH NORTHERN RIVERS EQUINE

Brad Reid

Cameron Kirkwood may only be a self-described '1997 foal' but the young Harness Racing NZ administrator is quite the all-rounder in terms of his involvement.

He has recently accepted an exciting new role as the New Zealand Bloodstock Consultant for Northern Rivers Equine.

That will see him selling services this season for the exciting new addition to the Down Under trotting ranks in Pastor Stephen and the up-and-coming Australian pacing prospect in Poster Boy.

His path to securing the role is a unique one and his pedigree page is stacked with black type despite his relative youth, with his earliest memories in this sport being around 16 years ago.

"The 2nd of October 2005," said Kirkwood nonchalantly when asked about his early recollections.

"It was the Banks Peninsula Trotting Cup and I had the option of going out and doing something with my mates or going to the races, which was an easy decision," he said.

It paid dividends, literally with trotting mare Paris Metro owned by his father upsetting a deep field of Open Class trotters as odds of \$25.

"Dad and his mates owned Paris Metro who was a 98 foal so for as long as I have been alive, she had been around either racing or breeding," he said.

Paris Metro was from the second crop of Safely Kept, a son of Jate Lobell who would be a dual-gaited sire

with much of his success coming from the square gaited side of the coin, especially in Australia where he stood for Alabar.

Her dam Transport Jo (Transport Chip) won four as a pacer but was the best of her family tree for some time with winners few and far between, let alone trotting relatives.

Paris Metro was originally broken in as a pacer until Jim Dalgety saw her trotting around the paddock and said "Nice trotter you have out there" which led to her being broken in as a trotter.

It was a wise move as she was a natural with a motor and subsequently placed in the 2YO Trotting Championship.

She broke a New Zealand record for allcomers by three seconds when getting her second victory at Winton in 2002 over the 2400m journey, stopping the clock in 3:01.9.

Having achieved her 6th win as a five-year-old, she suddenly found herself in Open Class in an era abundant with talent.

She found herself in the same fields as Lyell Creek, Take A Moment, Castleton's Mission, Play On, Allegro Agitato, Jasmyns Gift and Toomuch To Do without even lining up in a Group Race!!

"When she won the National Trot in 2004, I didn't know a lot about racing, but I could tell it was something pretty big and special.

"Dad's head was nearly hitting the roof he was jumping that high and the next day him and his mum booked a plane to go and see the trainers and the horse," he said.

Having had stints with Grant Payne, Fred Fletcher, John Parsons & John Hay, the mare's Group One success came in the care of Michelle Wallis having been sent the horse for beach training to nurse the niggles she was having with her feet.

This association with the Wallis barn eventually led to Kirkwood doing school holiday stints in the North Island working in the stable at Waiuku.

"Paris Metro was going up to Auckland for an Interdominion tilt and the fact she had corns meant she needed beach training.

"We ended up becoming great mates with the Wallis team. I ended up getting some hands-on experience with them later on helping them out through the school holidays," he said.

Kirkwood pursued his passion for the sport further by partaking in a Stipendiary Stewards course on race night while still at school.

"I really enjoyed that and soon after I got a phone call

from Nigel Macintyre to give me the heads up that there might be a role at Harness Racing New Zealand.

"I threw my name in the hat, wound up getting an interview and the rest was history," he said.

Kirkwood has now been an administrator at Harness Racing New Zealand for six years. He is an integral part of the team that oversees registrations, with that role now expanding to assisting Harness Racing New Zealand's handicapper, Andrew Morris.

The administration of the sport can seem pretty isolated from those who are hands-on with the horses but it's both experiences that give Kirkwood an appreciation, better than most, for the importance of the work that goes on at harness racing HQ.

"It's like an iceberg, you can only see so much from a distance but there is plenty going on underneath that you don't see from behind the scenes," he said.

As much as he admits to struggling with the 5am starts of working in a stable, he says that pales in comparison to that of being a bid spotter, another feather in the cap of Kirkwood's industry experience having worked at the last two National Yearling Sales for New Zealand Bloodstock.

"Being a bid spotter is pretty tough," laughed Kirkwood.

"At least in a stable once you're up early, you are up and the day usually takes care of itself.

"As a bid spotter in Christchurch, you end up standing for extended periods in quite a lot of heat and you have to be 100% alert at all times, you can't afford to let your mind wander, or you might miss a bid.

"It might only be a few hours, but you are just drained at the end of the day," he said.

"I also work for Regan Todd most weekends and public holidays and it's a great crew out there, I love it.

"When I first started going out there five years ago, he was making a bit of a name for himself and here he is today now one of the country's leading trainers. He has taught me so much not just with the horses but about life in general," he said.

Through his experience of working hands-on from all angles in harness racing, what ties Kirkwood's new role altogether his passion for breeding trotters.

Although his name only appears three times on the breeding registrar with the late Paris Metro, he has experienced the many high and lows attributed with this special sector in our sport.

Kirkwood learned the hard way how tough the yearling sales can be when the group of five involving his father and himself entered an Angus Hall filly from their Group One winning mare.



She failed to attract a bid.

"It's all actually a bit of a blur and is hard to swallow. You don't really remember much it all happens so quick. We went there with realistic expectations and people said she looked the part but to not even get a bid was disappointing.

Later that year Kirkwood got a phone call to inform him that Sundown In Paris, a three win daughter of Sundon x Paris Metro, had passed away in a paddock.

"She was our future broodmare with Paris starting to get on a bit so that was tough to get that phone call," he said.

Fortunes turned in 2018 however when Paris Metro's 6th foal by Muscle Mass (Massive Metro) was sold and sent North to the Wallis/Hackett barn.

You could argue the fact given the connections of the mare had sold the horse, but any breeder will tell you winning a race with a horse you have bred is just as satisfying, regardless of whether you cop the winning stake.

Massive Metro wound up winning the Listed Uncut Gems and went on later in the year to accomplish one of the most unbelievable fairy tales by repeating the deeds of his Mum and winning the National Trot at Alexandra Park.

All of a sudden the pedigree page that was four dams and full of pacing blood had shrunken to just the two dams, and the connections had the half-sister by Angus Hall that had failed to sell for breeding.

Massive Metro has since won the Greenlane Cup and been 10 times Group placed including a close up third in the G1 Interdominion Trotting Grand Final in 2019.

The trials and tribulations of breeding stock took another negative turn in 2020, this time losing another of Paris Metro's foals who was showing the same traits of family ability.

Musculature Metro (Muscles Yankee) was good enough to feature in the New Zealand Trotting Stakes at two and was just starting to hit his strides at three before a sudden and untimely illness.

"He was tough and a big-framed horse who could have been something quite special, but he got knocked down by a mystery illness. He went from being ready to go to the trials to having to be put down in a matter of days," he said.

Thankfully, the final foal from Paris Metro was in work and showing immense potential from day dot.

Mufasa Metro is from the first crop of Father Patrick offspring in New Zealand and by all accounts everyone associated with him has had a lot of time for him.

Despite possessing the talent to race at two, Kirkwood



and Co applied patience and waited until this season to unveil their budding champ.

Although he is far from the polished product, he was good enough to continue the family trend of winning at his race debut at Alex Park in December and has only been out of the money four times from 10 starts.

"He was a bit of a funny horse early and was probably a bit on the hot side of things to be fair. He was due to go to the workouts as a two-year-old, but then Covid happened and that was a blessing in disguise as he has matured into a great looking animal.

"He went super running third in the Sires Stakes finals and it's no disgrace being beat by two horses like Five Wise Men and Leaf Stride.

"When he hit the front turning for home, I was having flash backs of his mother," laughed Kirkwood.

Since sitting down to chat, Mufasa Metro has drawn four for his three-year-old Ruby at Cambridge and could have a crack for the lead and give a very good account of himself.

With one eye on Sunday, Kirkwood has the other on the forthcoming breeding season as he looks to hit the ground running with his new role at Northern Rivers Equine.

"Pastor Stephen was a champion horse with a champion pedigree. I think the fact he is coming down under in the flesh presents a great opportunity to Southern Hemisphere breeders providing another fresh semen option.

"He is priced to do a decent book of mares and I will be sending Paris Under Siege to him myself in the Spring so the first mare he has booked is my own. I'm putting my money where my mouth is that's for sure.

"He's a full brother to Father Patrick who like his bro was a two-year-old colt of the year himself. Chocolatier who was another world champion at two is basically their uncle which shows they are a bit of a get up and go family and have the pedigree to cross with any of our best mares," said Kirkwood.

Pastor Stephen has already left several top line performers in Europe and arrives here as an established sire in his own right.

Rounding out the roster for Kirkwood is Poster Boy, the son of Somebeachsomewhere out of one of Australia's hottest maternal families.

His dam is the imported North American mare, Aston Villa, who like many of the champion broodmares is by the great sire in Artsplace. She was the 2019 Australian Broodmare of the Year on the back of the deeds of Poster Boy and his two Rocknroll Hanover brothers, Yankee Rockstar and Born To Rocknroll.

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As his name would suggest, Poster Boy has Hollywood looks and had speed to burn with injuries robbing everyone involved in seeing the best of the horse.

Had he stayed sound, New Zealand breeders might have been more familiar with the Victorian Derby and Chariots of Fire winner, especially given he ran third in the Miracle Mile won by Spankem at just four years old.

While he never got much support here last year, he served a solid book in Australia and is an attractive option for breeders looking to get a similar cross to Captainteach-erous with the Somebeachsomewhere x Artsplace blood at a quarter of the price.

"He was obviously a very, very nice horse and his pedigree and pricing point should make him an attractive option to New Zealand breeders.

"He has had good support in Australia where he is probably better known on the track, but that will be part of the fun with this role going forward, educating breeders on the deeds of both horses and seeing if we can help them in any way going forward," he said.

PEAK ON THE MOVE, BUT WHERE?

David DiSomma

After serving more than 400 mares, Peak is on the lookout for a new owner, and a new home.

The 14-year-old chestnut has been at stud at Alabar Farm in Pukekohe for the past six seasons.

Cheval Rapide Syndicate manager Greg Ayers says: "We would like to gift Peak to somebody that will provide a new home and look after him and they will still be able to breed from him."

Peak was a trotting trail-blazer when champion trainer Tim Butt brought him out from Scandinavia.

The son of French super sire Ganymede Peak (and a Danish mother) then had a record of eight wins from 45 starts.

"He was a calculated risk," says Butt, who fell in love with European-bred trotters while campaigning the great Lyell Creek in Sweden, "he was a beautiful horse who had residual value as a stallion."

He had just three starts in New Zealand for two wins.

He took out the Group Three Ashburton Flying Mile in October 2013, and then the Group One New Zealand Trotting Free For All on NZ Cup day. In doing so Peak became the first stallion to win a Group One in the Northern Hemisphere and then in New Zealand.

Three days after his triumph on New Zealand Cup day he fronted up in the Dominion. He finished tenth.



Peak warming up for the NZ Trotting FFA

Tim Butt: "I'm sure he could have been the best trotter in Australasia if he hadn't injured himself in the Dominion, in my view he was going to win that race and that would have been three from three... he strained his suspensory in that race and never raced again."

After initially going to Michael House, Peak ended up at Alabar Farm, alongside such breeding heavyweights as Art Major and Majestic Son.

"He is a great and a stunning looking horse," says Alabar's General Manager Graeme Henley.

He served 270 mares in this country and another 150 across the Tasman.

Among his best known progeny here are Doff Your Cap and Invictus while the Australian-based Gimondi has won nine from 26, including six last season.

But he is now in the same market as sires like Muscle Hill and Love You (and Majestic Son) and is not considered a viable commercial proposition.

"If he'd raced a bit more and had gone out on a high he might have got some better quality mares," says Henley, "but the reality is that there is a myriad of frozen semen out there and we decided not to renew the lease."

Butt says there's a real difference between Peak the race-horse and Peak the stallion.

"I've had a lot to do with his progress at stud, he's been a bit disappointing and his stock can be highly strung. He was such a great mannered horse himself."

Butt has had some success from Peak progeny, among them The Golden Lion (Peak - Young Monkey) who has won three from 13 in Australia.

Ayers: "Our preference would be to leave him as a stallion but if we have no uptake he may require gelding if this helps him to be rehomed"

The Cheval Rapide Syndicate is also offering to pay for the gelding procedure and relocation costs from Alabar if a suitable new home is found.

Anyone wanting more information about Peak can contact Greg Ayers - greg@advancejoinery.co.nz

LATE FLURRY AT NATIONAL STANDARDBRED WEANLING SALE

Michael Guerin

NZB Standardbred saved the best for last at their National Weanling Sale hosted as a physical auction at Karaka on Monday 3 May.

The equal two top lots of \$36,000 each inside the final 15 minutes of a busy day capped a successful sale for the industry.

An Art Major filly out of Matuvutu (NZ) (New York Motor-ing) sold to Beaufine Park and a Bettors Delight colt from five-race winner No Liability (NZ) (Christian Cullen) purchased by Robert Dunn shared the honours for the day as lots 124 and 130 of the 130-lot catalogue.

They didn't win that title by much with a Bettors Delight (ex Queen Camille) sister to Henry Hubert (NZ) (Lot 8) going for \$33,000 early in the day to Trent Yesberg, while there were three other lots of \$30,000 or above including the Father Patrick (ex Con Grazia) filly, who was the sale-topping trotter at \$30,000.

While many of the top lots were purchased by New Zealand trainers there was strong Australian interest, particularly from Team Bond in West Australia and Tumbly Park in NSW (headed by Scott Whitton), best known for their successful string of horses carrying "Ultimate" in their name.

Australian-based Dean Shannon from Montana Park made use of the trans-Tasman bubble, flying over to purchase three weanlings from Karaka, highlighted by the \$28,000 purchase in an Always B Miki filly (Lot 93) out of Franconia (NZ) (Art Major)

Weanlings being weanlings and the pinhooking market is nowhere as developed or lucrative in harness racing as it is for thoroughbred racing, the sale was solid and left NZB Director and Operations Manager James Jennings happy.

"The average is up, clearance was exceptional and it was a hard day for the pinhookers because the nice lots went for good money," said Jennings.

Especially pleasing for NZB Standardbred was so much activity on their online bidding platform, much obviously from Australia, which shows how comfortable buyers have become with purchasing digitally.

"That was great but it was also really good to see some of our Australian friends here and we can't wait to welcome more back for the yearling sales next year," said Jennings.

500 CAREER WINS FOR FRED FLETCHER

Joshua Smith

Fred Fletcher didn't let the torrential rain dampen his spirits on Sunday, with the veteran trainer taking home a winning double at Addington Raceway.

That took him past 500 career wins, 477 on his own account (1978-2021) and 24 in partnership with Mark Smolenski (1988-90).

The weekend deluge was the biggest Fletcher has seen in his lifetime, but he said the quality track at Addington meant racing on Sunday was never in danger.

"It's always good getting a double, especially on a wet day," Fletcher said. "It was absolutely shocking, I have never seen so much water around Canterbury.

"But Addington is a very good all-weather track, they can always hold their meetings when they have huge amounts of rain."

Luminite got the day off to a perfect start when winning the opening race of the day, the Spectators Iconic Kiwi Roast Mobile Pace (1980m).

The six-year-old mare was taken straight to the front by Blair Orange where he was able to set the pace throughout. She kicked clear of her opposition when turning for home and maintained her advantage, running away to a 3-1/2 length victory over Leconte.

Luminite took a series of placings into the race, and Fletcher thought she was a good chance of breaking maiden ranks on Sunday.

"I thought she was the best horse in the race by a long-shot," he said. "It is the first time we have put her in front, and she is a very good front-runner and proved that today."

Royal Del secured the stable double when winning the Fahey Fence Hire Trot (2600m). The Royal Aspirations gelding showed a blistering turn of foot late to run down leader Unique Rose to win by half a length.

Royal Del had qualified for the Gr.1 Mitre 10 3YO Ruby (1609m) at Cambridge Raceway next Sunday, but the quality of the field led Fletcher to keep him at home.

"He is a very nice horse," Fletcher said. "We were in the Jewels with him, but the 3YO Ruby is one of the best fields on the Jewels programme, so we stayed at home."

Fletcher had also qualified Royal Pride for the same race, however, he succumbed to illness on his northern campaign.





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"I had sent Royal Pride up there (Auckland) for it, but he got really crook up there and he is going to come back into work the day after the Jewels."

Fletcher has enjoyed a busier than normal season with more than 100 starts, and his double on Sunday has brought his season's win tally up to 10, and 501 training wins in total.

"I thought today was our best chance of picking one up (win) for a while, and we ended up getting two, which was great," he said.

PRICES HOPING GOOD LUCK CONTINUES

Jamie Searle

Racehorse breeders John and Katrina Price started the year with lucrative sales, but now their sights are set on a \$100,000 race in the Waikato on Sunday.

The Winton couple have sent their mare, Pearl Harbour, north to compete at the Harness Jewels at Cambridge Raceway. It's a premier race day when the country's best two, three and four-year-olds do battle in \$100,000 races.

"It would be the icing on the cake for a horse like Pearl Harbour, if she went to the broodmare band with that [a Jewels win or placing] beside her name," Katrina said.

She and her husband have raced seven horses at the Jewels with their best result being a third. Pearl Harbour will be racing at the Jewels for the second time after finishing 10th in 2019.

Chicago Bull who finished seventh for the Prices at the Jewels in 2015, is now a \$2 million earner in Perth.

"We basically sold him half an hour [after he raced at the Jewels]." Katrina said.

The Prices went to another level as vendors when selling the two highest-priced lots at the standardbred yearling sales this year.

Auckland and Christchurch hold sales annually and the Prices' two colts fetched \$320,000 and \$310,000 at Christchurch in February.

"We were thrilled," Katrina said.

"It means you've got money to reinvest [in breeding] and hopefully try and improve things more."

The Prices will always race a small number of horses but their focus is firmly on breeding and preparing young stock for the yearling sales.

"The colts will get sold, and we'll race the fillies we want to keep long term."

They have no thoughts of moving their breeding-sales preparation business out of Southland, believing the province suited their needs.

"For us, if we're concentrating on yearling preparation, there's no better place ... we have grass all-year-round."

The Prices are looking forward to watching their runner, Pearl Harbour, race on Sunday. They trained Pearl Harbour but for the Waikato race she has been officially transferred to the Auckland stable of Barry Purdon and Scott Phelan.

Nathan Williamson, of Branxholme, is driving Pearl Harbour, and he will also rein Southland's other starters at the meeting – You're So Fine, Ragazzo Mach, Kiwitrix and Pembroke Playboy. The latter three are trained by Williamson.

You're So Fine is trained at Ryal Bush by Brett Gray.

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