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From Nebo to the world



David specialises in foundation training for young horses.

From Nebo to the world

By Equestrian Life

The Queensland township of Nebo, 100km south west of Mackay, is a far cry from The Royal Mews at Buckingham Palace — unless you're horsemanship expert David Stuart. From his introduction to horses as a kid on his parents' cattle station, David has gone on to work with horses around the globe, from the United States, to Dubai, Europe and Asia. That being said, he's still very much a "country kid" at heart.

"My family has been involved in the cattle industry for a long time," explains David from his parents' property in Nebo, which has been in the family for 80 years. "Growing up in that industry, I always wanted to get better with horses; we used horses in those days for gathering cattle."

It was this introduction to horses that eventually led him to pursue a career with them. "The short version is I fell through a series of open doors. I got around some people who I thought at the time, and still think, are exceptional around horses... and they showed me another way of being able to get along with them."

It wasn't long before David headed to the US, and then as time transpired Europe beckoned. He's now being travelling to Europe — in particular the United Kingdom — for over twenty years.

Throughout his career thus far he's experienced far more than the average horseman, from giving demonstrations at Burghley International Horse Trials, the UK Horse of the Year Show and Buckingham Palace, through to working for the Dubai Royal Family. David says it's hard to pick a career highlight as each situation has been so unique, and he explains that really it's been a collective highlight — just being able to travel and see so much with his work has been surreal.



David Stuart in action.

"I still think of myself as a 'country kid' and I do pinch myself at times. You walk down the street at Nebo and see people you went to school with, and in some cases they haven't been out of the state let alone the country, so it's been a very different life that I've led."

David's trip to The Royal Mews at Buckingham Palace was certainly one of his more unique adventures.

"I was part of a delegation that went there, some time ago now. I was in Sydney at the time running a clinic, and we were given the nod that we had to go to Buckingham Palace. So we jumped on a plane that night, got there the next morning, and then the following evening gave a presentation at The Royal Mews... before jumping on a plane back to Sydney the next day. We couldn't tell anyone what we were doing due to security reasons.

"It was surreal. As I was leaving the hotel and walking back through the airport terminal the next day, there was a questionnaire asking why we were in London. Given I was wearing my trademark Aussie cowboy hat and probably didn't look very English, they asked what I was doing. I told them, 'I was at Buckingham Palace last night!' They thought I was taking the mickey out of them I guess, and said, 'There will be no further questions' before waving me on through!"

Much of David's training is based around building a strong foundation, as he has found through his work around the globe that getting the right basic start in life is important for every horse — no matter the country, the discipline or the level.

"It doesn't matter whether you're talking about dressage, eventing, cutting or polo, horses are horses and people are people. As you travel around and see things, the stronger that foundation is, the more success people are likely to have with a horse... and the more likely it is to work for the horse as well.

"I think that the better you can get them started, and get those basics really cemented and working well, and the horse working with you rather than against you, then you set up for success later on regardless of what direction you want to head."



David is a horsemanship expert who has delivered training and demonstrations around the globe.

In addition to working with individuals, David also offers a corporate program that focuses on staff training in larger organisations. In Dubai, the Royal Family have many stables and often the grooms have more influence over the horse than the rider does in some cases. In a couple of stables the grooms and staff have been the focus of the training. It does not make sense for someone to go out there and do the best they can riding the horse, and then hand it back to a groom that has no idea of what's taken place. So by educating the grooms and establishing a culture in a big stable regarding how to go about handling horses, even with people coming and going, there is a way of being able to still go forward; there is a structure in place. If there is no culture, the new people come in and then leave soon after. A good culture means that people stay longer, and the horses benefit.

"It's (organisational training and developing workplace culture) not something you do once; it takes time to develop that. Where people put that effort in and it comes from the top down, it really does start to pay for itself."

There was a time when David found himself abroad for close to nine months of the year, although in recent times this has been scaled back as his parents near retirement age and increased responsibility on the family farm beckons. Although the property was downsized some years ago, it still remains large enough for there always to be something to do.

Like many of us, David's 2020 plans have been altered due to the impacts of Covid-19 and the subsequent travel restrictions. "This is the first time I've been back in Australia in 20 years!" he laughs. He had planned to be in England from late July until late September, but instead has found himself at home training horses and managing cattle.

Not that David minds, as it's allowed him to get a few extra things done around the farm. "Getting a cover built over the arena has been one of the benefits of being home. During summer it is likely to be 40 degrees Celsius at two o'clock in the afternoon, and now with the cover we might become a bit more inspired to get out there and do more in the afternoon, rather than shading up in the cool. Even now in spring walking under it, it has got to be at least five or ten degrees cooler than out in the direct sun."

David had the arena cover built by the team at ABC Sheds, who build a wide range of customised farming infrastructure — from machinery sheds and hay sheds, to riding arena covers and stables.

"ABC Sheds were a tremendous company to deal with. They kept us informed right throughout the process, they did what they said they were going to do, and they did it in the timeframe specified. They were great to deal with."



David's covered arena, built by ABC Sheds.

With seven horses currently in training for clients, David is certainly making use of the new shed — and with a couple of clinics on the horizon, they are set to benefit from it as well. "When I announced to my clients that we'd built the shed, there were definitely a few clients who were glad to hear they might not need as much sunscreen as previous years!"



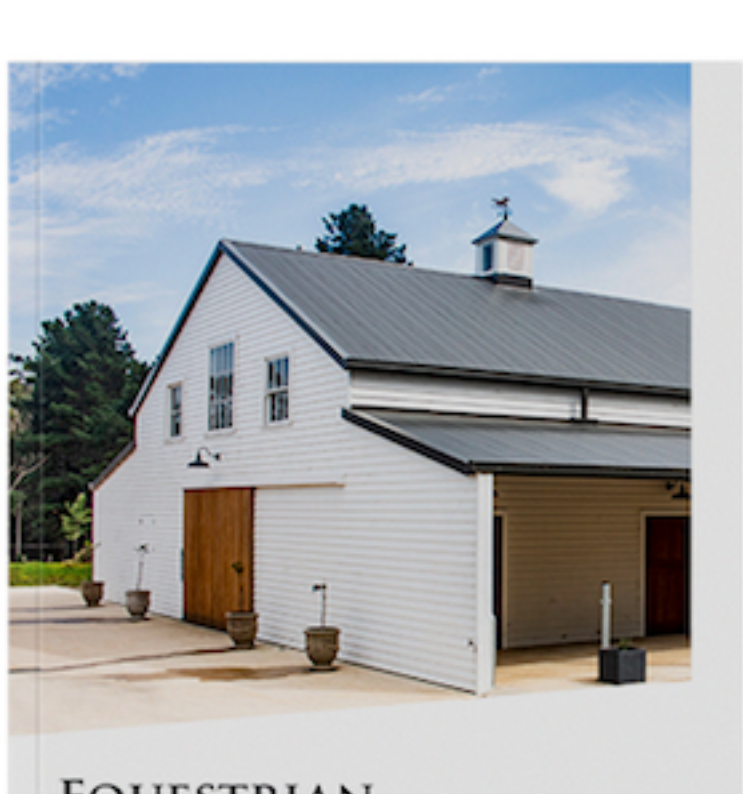
The covered arena provides great protection from the hot Queensland sun!

From working at prestigious venues around the world to training local people and horses on home soil, David Stuart is just happy that he's able to enjoy a career working with the animals he loves. No matter the country, the people or the horses, "good horsemanship is good horsemanship". And whether you're providing a training demonstration at Buckingham Palace or working cattle under the hot sun in Nebo, a cowboy hat is always suitable attire!

For more information on David, please visit his website www.davidstuart.com.au

This article was written in conjunction with ABC Sheds.

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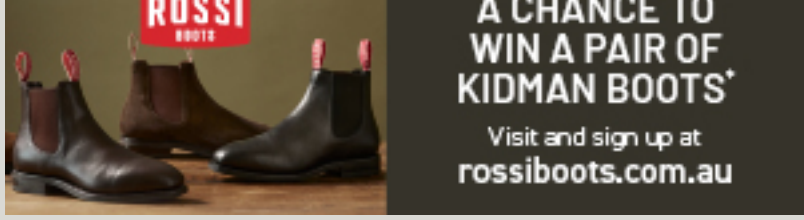
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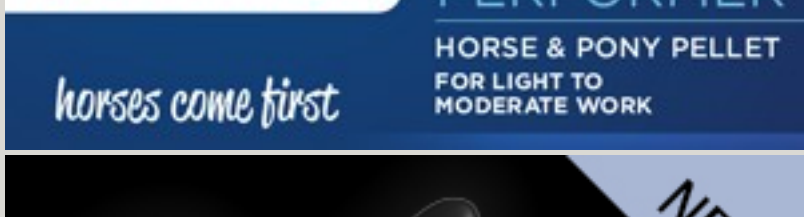
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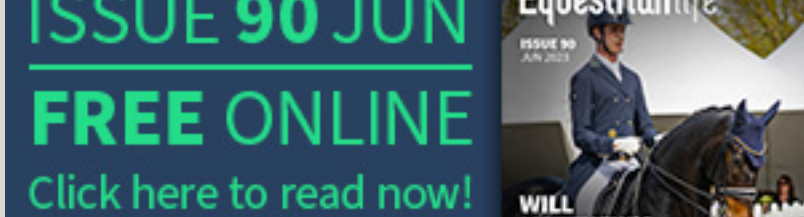
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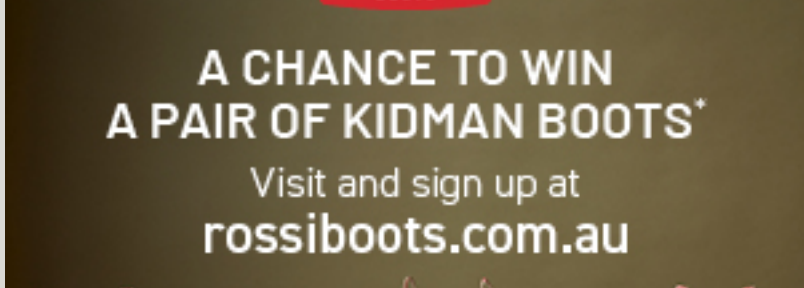
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