

# Courses for horses

The Abderry sign's been around for 20 years or more on the Glenbrook Road property, on the left going east and just past the Kingseat Road intersection. Motorists can see a round Econobuilt shed, possibly an indoor arena; a training track and outdoor arena. The property obviously has something to do with horses – but what?

Abderry is a Boarding School for Horses.

If you've never heard of one before, you're not alone. It's a New Zealand, if not world, 'first'.

When they bought their 48-hectares as a family farm 23 years ago Desmond and Cheski Brown named the property Abderry after their children, Abi and Derry. Since 1984 the property has been involved in breaking-in, pre-race training, agisting, and training both racehorses and sporthorses.

Following the death of her husband, Cheski had to make some changes and that's when, in January 2003 the decision was made to redevelop and upgrade the facilities, turning the farm from a useful equine property to one with excellent facilities – and Abderry Equine Services Ltd was created. With its formation came a change of thinking, leading to the idea of promoting the facility as a boarding school for horses.

Like other education establishments, Abderry has a principal, Cheski, who works alongside a team of tutors, coaches and counsellors, all with their own specialist subjects. While an obvious difference is that the students are four-legged, it's the similarities between horse and human training that hallmark the school's educational principles.

She says horses watch and learn from each other too. "When we tie up a group of new entrants they perform, making a lot of noise. Then, when the next intake arrives the first lot just sigh dramatically as though to say to the newcomers, 'Grow up and stop the fuss'. They are so like children."

Abderry's syllabus follows the principle that horses can be taken through a generic syllabus, just as human children go to pre-school and then primary school to receive a common education, regardless of what they are destined to become. The teaching team insist on the same basic rules of patience and respect, which means a potential racehorse, or a sporthorse, is taken through the same lessons as a child's pony. "Abderry is not an exclusive establishment. We welcome pupils from all walks of life." Not only is the facility easily accessible, Cheski and her team are welcomingly approachable.

The custom-built boarding school facilities include a network of all weather tracks and races, flat and undulating paddocks, a 600m all-weather sand track and a 1000m grass track, two large all-weather exercise arenas, a specifically designed



School rules.



Principal Cheski's approval of a lesson respectfully learnt.

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