

Number One, Naturally

Australian sprinter
dominates at
Royal Ascot

PLUS

THE RISE OF JAMIE KAH

**WHY INVESTING DOWN
UNDER ADDS UP**

**GERRY HARVEY'S
RACING ODYSSEY**



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Cover image Nature Strip winning the Group One King's Stand Stakes at Royal Ascot. Photo: Liesl King

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Photo: Sharon Chapman

FEATURES

34 THRILL OF THE CHASE

A Group One-winning owner, Mike Sherrin is now aiming to breed his own champions.



20 THE KEY TO JAMIE KAH

Her unparalleled horsemanship, and uncanny rapport with her mounts, sees Kah's star continue to rise.



14 NATURE BEATS NURTURE

Overlooked as a yearling, Nature Strip has matured into the world's best sprinter.



8 MASTER OF THE TRADE

As he celebrates fifty years in horse racing, Gerry Harvey's search for the secret to what makes a winner continues.

38 IT'S IN OUR NATURE

Australian-breds continue to shine on the global stage.

42 FAST TRACK TO SUCCESS

Thoroughbred Breeders Australia continues to play a vital role in attracting new staff to the industry, while also helping existing workers develop their skills.

6 CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

The Australian industry celebrates a truly remarkable year — on the track, in the sale ring, and on the global stage.

26 HIGHLIGHTS OF 2022

The borders reopen, a new chapter in the Winx story, and much more besides.



48 INGLIS GALLERY

The 2022 Inglis sales in pictures.

50 THE NUMBERS ADD UP

Soaring prizemoney is just one of the many reasons to invest in Australian bloodstock.

52 MAGIC MILLIONS GALLERY

The faces of the 2022 Magic Millions sales.

54 2023 SALES CALENDAR

All the key dates for next year's sales season.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

It gives me great pleasure to write this welcome on the back of what has been a truly remarkable 12 months for the Australian thoroughbred industry — on the track, in the sales ring and, significantly, on the global stage. It's hard to believe a year has passed since Australia reopened its borders to the world, and it's been incredibly satisfying to witness the energy and resilience with which the Australian thoroughbred community has met the challenges of the past three years.

The Australian sales market has long been the premier source of speed for investors world-wide, and the strength of our economy and quality of our horses remain key factors behind that success. The new year represents yet another opportunity to capitalise on our ever-increasing prizemoney and significant returns on investment in one of the world's most dynamic and exciting racing jurisdictions.

Our industry represents some of the most exhilarating and potentially profitable endeavours foreign investors could undertake, highlighted not only by success here in Australia, but also by the escapades of Australian-bred contenders on the world stage.

Nature Strip confirmed his bona fides as the world's best sprinter by capturing the Group One King's Stand Stakes in a blistering performance. Though he has been a prominent feature of the official world racehorse rankings since 2019, his five-length King's Stand victory has again shone the spotlight on the quality of our racehorses.

It was a memorable season on many counts. Godolphin has been a major investor in our industry for decades and Anamoe's Cox Plate victory — his seventh Group One — saw the

Street Boss entire become the blue army's most prolific world-wide winner at the elite level. A huge congratulations to the connections.

Additionally, just a week prior to the Cox Plate, another great supporter in Jonathan Munz had his emerging super horse, Giga Kick, run away with the \$15 million Everest, the world's highest-rated sprint race and richest race on turf.

Our two-year-olds also shone with Fireburn winning both the Golden Slipper and Sires' Produce, while finishing a neck shy of the Champagne in the juvenile Triple Crown. Fireburn is testimony to the faith shown by her owners who also raced the filly's sire, Rebel Dane, and then went on to support him in the stallion barn.

The Everest and \$10 million Golden Eagle have truly captured the attention of the racing public, and arguably the most pleasing aspect of 2022 were the crowds flocking to the Melbourne and Sydney carnivals for the first time since COVID-19 descended.

The carnivals certainly showcased the incredible prizemoney that is now on offer to owners: in the next year, there will be 87 races in Australia worth \$1 million or greater (up from 72 in 2021, while just eight years ago, there were 28). That's the equivalent of a million dollar race, on average, every four days!

In the 2021-22 season, one in every 57 horses that competed on Australian racetracks finished with career prizemoney of \$500k or greater, while returns to owners have grown by 92% in the past decade.

I encourage you to read the Investor's Guide on the Aushorse

"Our industry
represents some
of the most
exhilarating
and potentially
profitable
endeavours
foreign investors
could undertake."

Antony Thompson

website as it features some truly astonishing statistics about the strength of our industry.

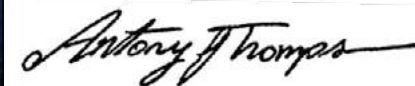
Aushorse exists to promote the myriad of benefits of investing in Australian bloodstock, and the strength of the market makes our job straightforward. Huge turnover, record returns in the sales ring and phenomenal prizemoney, underpinned by a strong international and local buying bench and the unwavering efforts of the industry at large, saw 2022 soar to new heights.

It's true that we have a rich diversity of investors in the Australian market, and their significant contribution has had a notable impact on the innovation and sustainability of our industry. It's again been a productive 12 months for our sister organisation, Thoroughbred Breeders Australia, which has engaged in a number of front-of-mind concerns, including mental health, horse welfare and staffing. Programs such as Fast Track and management skills workshops have gone a long way to addressing these issues.

A special mention must be made of those who were devastated by floods throughout 2022. Our thoughts are with our colleagues who are undertaking the arduous process of rebuilding.

In closing, I would like to thank the fellow directors of Aushorse and Aushorse/TBA CEO Tom Reilly and his team for again working so tirelessly to highlight just what a tremendous industry we have.

We look forward to welcoming each and every one of you back to Australian sales complexes in 2023.



ANTONY THOMPSON
CHAIRMAN, AUSHORSE



**In the next
year, there will
be 87 races in
Australia worth
\$1 million or
greater**

THE FASTEST HORSE FROM THE ENCOSTA DE LAGO SIRE LINE

Champion 3YO Male in Australia in 2019/20

At 3: won the \$14m The Everest *in record time*

At 2: won the Todman Stakes-Gr.2 *in record time*

YES YES YES



Wins **The Everest** in record time defeating
10 Gr.1 winners including **Nature Strip**

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Master of the trade

As he celebrates fifty years in horse racing, Gerry Harvey's search for what makes a winner continues,
writes Malcolm Knox

Photo: Sharon Chapman

In his fiftieth year in horse racing, Gerry Harvey admits he still hasn't found the answers. Thousands of horses bred, bought, sold and raced, and he cannot say why one wins and another doesn't. A daily print-out sits on his desk of the horses he either owns, has owned, has sold or has bred — a thoroughbred with some link to Harvey is on a track somewhere in Australia virtually every hour of every day — and he still says the essence of success is a mystery to him.

"We make a lot of assumptions about what horses are thinking, but they might tell us we were totally wrong," he offers. "We all wish they could talk."

He can't even say why it is that he still gets such a thrill out of seeing a horse win. Half a century hasn't really enlightened him. "Why do we get such a kick out of winning? That's an interesting thought. I see other people get it, and I get it too. There are more important things in the world than watching a horse run across the line first, but why are you so excited about this? I can't answer the question."

That's why the man who knows Australian racing at more diverse levels of involvement than anyone else doesn't gamble. He never has, and, although he considers it might be something he would do "if I get bored", he really can't see himself taking it up at age 83. "I'm not a punter because I'm pretty much going to lose."

Sitting in his corner office in the headquarters of the Harvey Norman retail empire, Harvey doesn't come across as someone who takes losing philosophically. His office is filled to the gills with piles of paper, unopened gifts, spreadsheets ... and more stacks of paper. He wears a nondescript branded polo shirt that was probably a freebie, and you could search for a week among all this paper



and mess, and you wouldn't find an ounce of pretension. He says "about a quarter" of the material in the office has to do with racing, but when all the stud books and bloodstock records are added up, it looks like more. His racing manager, Luke McDonald, has an office just around the corner.

Gerry Harvey with wife, Katie Page.
Photo: Magic Millions/
Luke Marsden

In Harvey's filing cabinet is one irreplaceable, treasured folder of paper. Asked about the first broodmares he bought at Broombee, the farm he purchased in 1972, and Harvey brings out this folder. For fifty years he has listed by hand every single horse he has owned, bought and sold. The ancient yellowing document starts with 'Roadside Inn \$12,000, Scarlet Lane \$8,000, Rusty Belle \$6,000, Rusty Light \$4,000, Kid Glove \$10,000.'

They were acquired at an Inglis dispersal sale, with owner Tom Flynn off-loading stock, and those first five are committed to memory.

"For my twenties, I wouldn't have been able to name a single racehorse in Australia. But when I got some money (at age 33), I started looking at horses and farms. Instead of buying yearlings, I bought five broodmares. I don't know anyone else who did it like that. I sold the first three foals as yearlings. One won two or three races, one was stakes placed, and one won 19 or 20 races. I thought, 'Oh, this is good.' So I kept doing it. I was captured by the racing industry. Why? I don't know."

Captured he was. Growing up near Bathurst in New South Wales, Harvey had spent his weekends working on cattle, wool and wheat properties with the ambition of becoming a farmer. He didn't have a lot to do with horses, nor was he a good rider — "When you're a kid, you jump on anything and know you're going to come off" — but he followed racing as a sport, even though his parents showed no interest. "I was just into racing, I don't know why. I could have been the local bookie on the train to school. I didn't bet, but I was happy to take bets." By his teens, he attended country meetings and memorised recent Melbourne Cup winners.

At the time, he also discovered a competitive fire in all sports, "cricket, tennis, football, you >>

MASTER OF THE TRADE

name it. I wanted to play sports every single day. I was okay at everything but not very good at any one. I could beat most people in six sports out of ten, but someone very good would beat me in any one of them.”

Into adulthood, all of that competitive drive and focus went into turning himself from a ‘vacuum cleaner salesman’ into the co-owner of one of Australia’s biggest whitegoods, furniture and appliances retailers, Norman Ross (later Harvey Norman), which listed on the stockmarket in the early 1970s and delivered Harvey what he hadn’t had until then: capital. He returned to racing with a fervour, buying Broombee, near Armidale, converting it from cattle to horses and racing the champions Gypsy Kingdom and Best Western with his mate John Singleton. He later purchased Baramul Stud and interests in Vinery Stud in New South Wales and Westbury in New Zealand, inevitably adding stallions to his broodmare formula, steadily building a large breeding enterprise.

As a breeder, Harvey says, “I had no guidance whatsoever. I read the catalogue and thought, ‘I know what I’m doing.’ I didn’t, but I had some luck.” To this day, he says, he works more on instinct than science.

“I’m not sure there’s a lot of expertise in breeding. A lot of other people are sure there is. How much is cause and effect and how much is accident?” He points to the extraordinary story of Giga Kick, the winner of the 2022 Everest — unfashionably bred and having survived a life-threatening bout of colic — the gelding wasn’t considered a commercial sale prospect and was instead retained by his breeder, but there are thousands of stories like

SOME OF GERRY’S BEST



ROYAL DESCENT

Biggest win: Australian Oaks 2013

Prizemoney: \$2,709,780

Bred and raced by Harvey, Royal Descent’s victory in the 2013 ATC Oaks was by a record-breaking 10 lengths.



SAMAREADY

Biggest win: Blue Diamond 2012

Prizemoney: \$1,669,800

Bred by Harvey, speedy filly Samaready won her first four starts including the Group One Blue Diamond before overcoming a series of setbacks to win the Group One Moir Stakes.



Gerry Harvey and close friend, John Singleton.
Photo: Newscorp/
Chris Pavlich

it. “Every rule is made to be broken. People have great theories, and you listen to them, people are entitled to them, and good luck to them, theories do work for some people.”

One rule Harvey did learn through the 1970s and 1980s was that breeding and owning is not a reliable money-making business. “I’ve had lots of dry runs, lots. I hate losing. To race ten horses and none of them win, I think I’ve got to give this away. But I don’t. Then I get one good one and, ha!, it’s all forgotten. The good thing is it keeps you very humble.”

Trading was a different matter. In the 1990s, after a recession in the industry, Harvey and Singleton bought the Magic Millions auction house on the Gold Coast. It quickly turned around and



SAVABEEL

Biggest win: Cox Plate 2004

Prizemoney: \$2,760,460

Raised and sold by Harvey, and now a sire of 27 Group One winners, Savabeel won two Group Ones including the Australian middle distance championship the W. S. Cox Plate as a 3YO.



POLAR SUCCESS

Biggest win: Golden Slipper 2003

Prizemoney: \$2,143,550

The Harvey-bred Polar Success strode clear in the 2003 Golden Slipper, giving him his only success to date in the prestigious juvenile feature.



FASHIONS AFIELD

Biggest win: Flight Stakes 2005

Prizemoney: \$1,974,110

Raced by Harvey in partnership with great mate John Singleton, Fashions Afield won Group Ones as both a 2YO in the Sires' Produce and as a 3YO in the Flight Stakes for trainer Gai Waterhouse.

became a solid cash machine, expanding throughout Australia. Harvey and his wife, Harvey Norman CEO Katie Page, bought out their partners and have owned Magic Millions outright since 2011.

"I've always loved buying and selling," he says, and he looks on Magic Millions as a source of comfort while, as an owner and breeder, he has been through the inevitable ups and downs.

But it is still breeding and racing, with their infuriating unknowns, that fire him up.

"If there's no thrill in winning, you're not going to do it. That doesn't change at all. You're just as thrilled as the previous time, it doesn't seem to diminish. Do I get as big a thrill as the person who has just the one big win in their life? You see vision

of how excited they get, ten of them hugging each other, high-fiving and having another drink. I can't get that excited when I have five per cent of a horse and it wins a country race. But the more you've got, the more success you've had, you need still more of it. I'm very happy with any winner, but then I need three or four. That's why I have lots of horses. It's an addiction, there's no question about it."

Harvey has an unusual method — or lack of method — in where to send his racehorses to be prepared for the track. He sells off anywhere between all and nothing of a horse he has bred, but if he has any say in where it is prepared, he disperses his gallopers among dozens of trainers. At present, he has an estimated 150-plus horses in work with more than 60 trainers.

Photos: Fairfax/Paul Rovere, Anthony Johnson and Jon Reid

"Everyone that's ever been like me has ended up having their own training complex and their own trainers," he says. "Nobody does it like me. But I like people, and I like seeing people come from nothing to something. Hundreds of people over the years, I've changed their life by giving them an opportunity. You get a young trainer, or an old trainer, and they say, 'Without you, I wouldn't still be training.'"

It must be impossible to say no to this Santa Claus of the track, and Harvey admits almost nobody ever does. He gives trainers several chances before he will take horses off them. "It's very rare that I take a horse away. When I've done that, I give them another horse later on. A lot of people won't even allow a trainer one mistake. >>



If they break an agreement we've had, I might take the horse off them, but I'll say, 'Give me a ring one day when you've decided to be honest. If not, you go your way, I'll go mine.' Normally I just say, 'Don't do that again — if you do that again, we're going to have a problem.' I try to be kind and give people more than one go."

Twenty years ago, one of those grateful battlers was a young Chris Waller, who received a mare called Snowdropping from the Harvey stock. Today, Harvey is just as proud of the start he gave the champion trainer as the help he gave to a lifelong journeyman such as Pat Webster, and pretty much everybody else in between.

There is a continuity in that method, at least, between racing and retail. Harvey may be across the detail, as the reams of paper and the proximity of his racing manager McDonald attest, but he

couldn't keep so many plates spinning if he was a control freak. (Sporting control freaks play tennis or snooker, while racing, with all its uncontrollables, would only keep them up in a cold sweat all night.)

"I'm a big delegator," he says.

"You can't build a big business if you're untrusting. I know people who were better at their retail operations than me, and who were successful, but because I trust people and delegate, I could open more stores and make more money. It's no different in the horse business."

This year has been one of Harvey's best, with winners on the track and breeding successes off it, allied to the continued growth of

the Magic Millions business. Four days after our interview, he would have Alligator Blood running in the W. S. Cox Plate. It was a typical Harvey story: he bred the colt and sold it as a yearling to

"I'm a big delegator ... I trust people and delegate ... It's no different in the horse business."

Gerry Harvey

Right: Alligator Blood wins the Group One Champions Mile at Flemington.

Photo: Racing Photos/Jay Town

Left: Best Western won the Group One Spring Champion Stakes in 1981 for Harvey and Singleton.

Photo: Bluebloods

Allan Endresz at the Magic Millions sale in 2018 but, after Endresz's undisclosed bankruptcy, Alligator Blood became temporarily ineligible to race in Victoria. Harvey stepped in and bought a majority share. A runner in Australia's weight-for-age championship was the outcome. Alligator Blood ran fifth behind Anamoe in the race, but a fortnight later took an early lead in the Group One Champions Mile at Flemington and fended off all challengers. Trainer Gai Waterhouse began talking of a trip to Ascot next year. Harvey wasn't among the celebrating owners, but his familiar colours of royal blue with crossed white sashes were on display.

It was a winning gamble without being a punt. For Harvey, the satisfaction of what he has just achieved is soon eclipsed by thoughts of what is coming next. Winning is good, but his aims are as humble as you would expect from someone who has lost more than he has won. "I don't really have any (unfulfilled goals). I'm just trying to breed and race the best horses I can." ■

The Stakes Sensation Continues

I AM INVINCIBLE

Champion Sire - 2021/2022

Most Individual Winners
in a Season (208)

Most Stakes Winners in a
Season (28)

Vinnie Simply Invincible

HELLBENT

2022 Flemington Carnival
(6 Runners - 1 Stakes Winner & 4 Stakes Performers)

Magic Time - 1st

Listed VRC Amanda Elliot Stakes

Hell Queen, Awestruck, Hellish and
Hell Hath No Fury - Stakes Performers

Hellbent On The Rise



IN SECRET

(I Am Invincible x Eloping)
G1 Coolmore Stud Stakes



HOME AFFAIRS

(I Am Invincible x Miss Interiors)
G1 Coolmore Stud Stakes
G1 Lightning Stakes



MAGIC TIME

(Hellbent x Time Awaits)
1st - Listed
VRC Amanda Elliot Stakes

Nature beats nurture

Overlooked as a yearling, Nature Strip has matured into the world's best sprinter, writes **Andrew Rule**

Photo: Lisa Grimm

Nature Strip can't quite claim the completely humble origins of that other champion gelding, Northerly. But there are similarities.

Northerly's trainer, the wise code-swapping horseman Fred Kersley, tells the Northerly story against himself.

Kersley and another Perth trainer were offered two unfashionable young horses very cheaply — perhaps to square a debt — and had to decide who got which.

Naturally, both wanted the good sort. So they tossed a coin. Kersley lost the toss and was forced to take the plain, gawky bay while his friend got the desirable one.

The nice type won a maiden. Kersley's ugly duckling was Northerly.

It's an instructive story about horses making fools of people and their preconceptions, which is what happened with Nature Strip. It turns out that both the ultra-keen seller and several reluctant buyers got it wrong about the unwanted yearling destined to be the greatest sprinter on Earth.

His dam Strikeline was by Desert Sun, sire of Black Caviar's dam, Helsing. Strikeline produced good types. But a co-owner of Golden Grove Stud had theories about pedigrees and heart scores and had relegated her to the stud's second string band of mares to go to one of his own lesser stallions. That's what would have happened in 2013 except that one of his "hands-on" staff persuaded him to include Strikeline in a batch of mares booked to the emerging sire, Nicconi.



Nature Strip pictured as a yearling.

Photo: Golden Grove

Part-owner Rod Lyons (right) and trainer Chris Waller celebrate Nature Strip's win in the 2019 Darley Sprint Classic.

Photo: John Donegan/Racing Photos



Nicconi's advertised fee then was \$17,600 (before dipping as low as \$11,000) but Golden Grove had done a deal for nine discount services. Because of the staffer's lobbying in favour of Strikeline, the boss agreed to include her in the Nicconi nine.

The mare rewarded the gesture with a tall, chestnut colt foaled relatively late, in November 2014. The colt was the sort that would take time and not interest fans of precocious two-year-olds.

As a yearling, the colt struck some people around Golden Grove and its sister stud in Victoria, Barree, as worth racing. But he didn't fit the theories of those paying the bills. So he went to the 2016 Melbourne Premier sale with two others by Nicconi. Because he didn't look as forward as the other pair, he went through on Day Three.

Lot 146, a filly out of Dane Julia, was foaled two months earlier than Strikeline's chestnut. She made \$135,000. Named Neurotic, she would eventually win three races and \$93,000.

The dashing colt out of Solvini was passed in at \$150,000 and sold later. He ended up in rural Queensland, winning five minor races and \$98,000.

And Strikeline's chestnut son? He was passed in at \$90,000. If there were any real bidders, they baulked way short of the \$120,000 reserve.

One story has it that a cautious vet warned there was a potential problem with the colt, spooking trainers. And he needed time, something impatient owners hate to hear.

Enter Robert Smerdon. Golden Grove asked the enigmatic trainer to take the chestnut (and two more) to "see what you can do with them."

The chestnut was paraded for stable clients several times. Five punters took a one per cent share each — and another promised to take the balance later. As often happens, that didn't happen. >>

NATURE BEATS NURTURE

The result: Smerdon still had 95 per cent of a virtually ownerless horse that owed him tens of thousands in bills that kept going up.

One cost was breaking in. Nick Ryan, a star jockey who outgrew the scales, had learned the craft with Brett Cavanough but didn't yet have many horses of his own. Smerdon sent him the chestnut to educate.

Ryan was breaking plenty of horses at the time but liked the Nicconi as well as any and more than most. He was intelligent, tractable and a "good ride," though quirky.

When the horse went back into Smerdon's stable from Ryan's, another strong rider, former leading country apprentice Jacob Rule, rode him at trackwork and did the next phase of his education. He loved the horse but noted he sometimes grabbed the bit and went too fiercely.

Rule's opinion of the youngster is reflected in a photograph taken at Caulfield one morning: he's standing in the irons on the future champ doing the lightning bolt-archer pose made famous by Usain Bolt, the world's fastest man.

Over many months, the horseman taught his favourite horse to take off his cap and replace it on his head. "Just a beautiful big horse," is his summary of what he calls "the world's best sprinter before he became the world's best sprinter."

But beauty and brains don't feed the beast. Smerdon still needed owners. Farmer Peter Balderstone took up 10 per cent but the man earmarked for the balance had gone overseas and spent his money on other things.

Enter Rod Lyons, who made his pile in the carpet business and enjoyed spending some of it on horses, a vice he developed as a kid when his father raced a horse with the late Cliff Fahler.

"I drove over to Adelaide for the sales with a mate selling a horse when I ran into Robert



(Smerdon) and Stewie (Stuart Webb)," Lyons recalls, savouring a yarn he's told a few times lately.

"Robert and Stewie reckoned they would take me to dinner, get me pissed and sell me the horse," Lyons said. "The first bit was the easy part.

"Robert told me it had been broken in, had trialled brilliantly and I was guaranteed to get my money back because it would win wherever he took it."

Lyons resigned himself to take the lion's share, based on a valuation of \$120,000. He diluted his ownership with a bunch of friends, several in New Zealand. And he got to name the now gelded son of Strikeline.

In the carpet game, he'd sometimes had to negotiate with unions. If negotiations stalled,

Nature Strip's strapper and regular track work rider Stuart Williams has played a pivotal role in the horse's success.

Photo: Lisa Grimm

union reps would threaten a strike — complete with a picket line at the factory gate.

In industrial shorthand, a picket line was "hitting the nature strip". For Lyons, a "strikeline" was a picket line on a nature strip.

Despite Lyons' jokes about Smerdon's sales pitch, the trainer was as good as his word. Nature Strip did win on debut — at Mornington on October 10, 2017 as a \$1.80 favourite. Ryan Moloney, who'd been riding him in trials, was in the saddle.

Moloney already suspected he'd never ridden a horse with more raw talent or higher cruising speed. By the time he'd won on him twice, he was sure.

But all good stories have obstacles, and Nature Strip's connections hit plenty.

Despite his natural superiority, the chestnut could beat himself if things didn't suit him — mainly because he often went too hard too early and was "gassed" just as the swoopers hit the line.

At his second start, he was well backed but ran second to the reliably speedy Sam's Image at Moonee Valley 17 days after his debut.

He was held up for a run and had to go wide, flew home but ran out of ground before he could overhaul the winner, trained by the respected John Sadler. This was the beginning of Nature Strip's later reputation, perhaps, as a talented horse that could find a way to be beaten.

After four starts that Spring, Nature Strip was going well but his trainer wasn't: Smerdon was one of a group of people caught up in the Aquanita 'bicarb' scandal.

Robert Hickmott stepped in to saddle him in the \$250,000 Inglis Dash in early 2018. Then Hickmott hit a temporary hiccup and the horse was transferred to Sadler, and top jockey Craig Williams took over from Moloney for that Autumn.

Sadler, familiar with Nature Strip from the



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NEWHAVEN GRADUATES...



IN THE CONGO

(Snitzel x Via Africa)

G1 winner



LAVISH GIRL

(Xtravagant x Ends In Tears)

G2 Winner



XTRAVAGANT STAR

(Xtravagant x She's A Danica)

Listed 2YO winner

www.newhavenpark.com.au

NATURE BEATS NURTURE

start, describes him as “a big, stretchy horse.” Unlike most sprinters, he’s long as well as tall, and could have passed for a Derby candidate. In fact, he wouldn’t look out of place in any field anywhere from a hurdle race to the show jumping ring.

“I never saw Phar Lap but I wonder if he was a bit like him,” Sadler muses about the one that got away.

Sadler and Williams were good players out of luck. Nature Strip ran second at Caulfield at \$1.65 — then fourth at Morphettville after “getting away” from Williams and running himself into the ground.

The owners decided to switch stables. The temporary beneficiary was Darren Weir. Nature Strip won four straight before running eighth of eleven in the Group One Moir Stakes at Moonee Valley in September 2018, again by racing too fiercely. As a late foal, by the calendar he was still a green three-year-old.

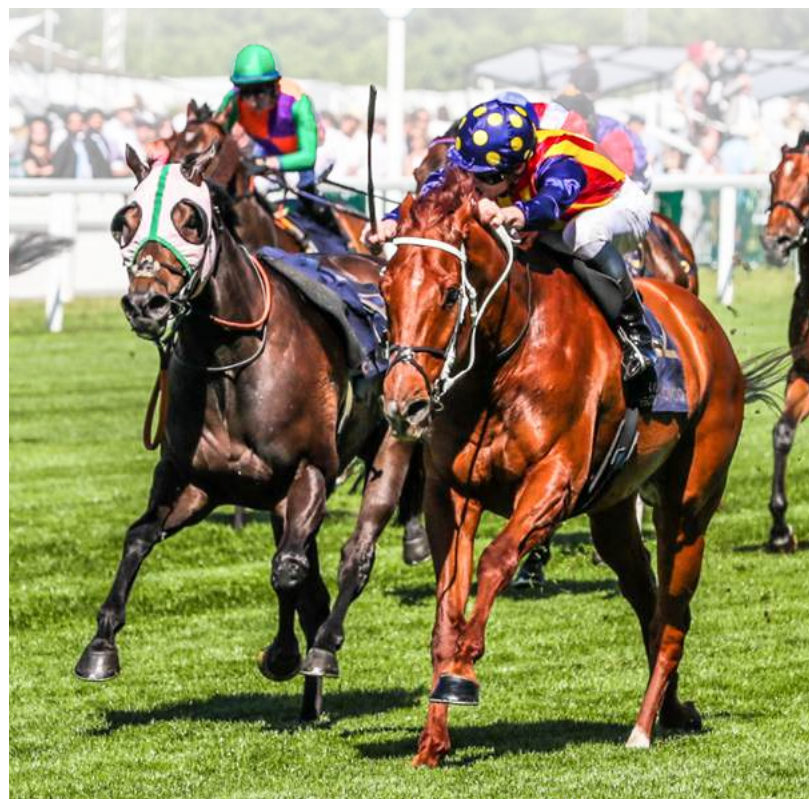
Weir told Lyons the horse was still learning, and that once he learned to settle — to sit and sprint instead of the other way around — his unlocked potential would make him a world beater.

Wise words from the Victorian horseman. But Weir, too, fell victim to what was becoming the Nature Strip curse, outed for serious charges that derailed his training empire.

After a long spell, the horse went to Waller headquarters. The 19 weeks between starts meant he had time to mature so the Winx whisperer could start with a fresh canvas.

Any of Nature Strip’s previous trainers would have won big races with him as he matured. But, as Sadler volunteers, none could have done it better than Waller.

Waller’s main task was to use a track rider who could foster the horse’s mental maturity to match his growing physical maturity. The rider



Nature Strip destroyed his rivals in the Group One King's Stand Stakes at Royal Ascot in June.

Photo: Lisel King

who got the job was Welshman, Stuart Williams, who spends more time on the horse’s back than anyone else, including usual race day jockey James McDonald.

A slow-growing gelding doesn’t mature until he’s six years old. Outside racing, performance horses are rarely at their peak until they are 10. They keep learning.

Under Waller and Williams, Nature Strip turned into the best version of what he was destined to be. Not instantly. And nowhere near as impregnable as a Winx or a Black Caviar, but seemingly unbeatable on his best days, like Chautauqua.

Flying a horse to Europe to race is a punt. Some horses hate it. Some get travel sick and don’t recover, if ever. Most lose weight.

But when Nature Strip stepped off the plane before Royal Ascot in June, he was as relaxed as if he’d walked across the road. No sweat — literally. He’d actually put on weight during the flight.

Anyone who has seen his sire, Nicconi, stretched out asleep in his paddock at Widden, might not be surprised to hear it. Apples don’t fall far from trees.

Everyone bar the competition was delighted when he won the King’s Stand Stakes. But no one was surprised. On his best days, he looks unbeatable. Positive thinkers insist he would have won the Platinum Jubilee four days later if connections had backed him up.

How much longer Nature Strip has is really just a matter for him. His Spring campaign back in Australia maintained his reputation, rather than burnished it.

Defending his Everest crown, he sat on a blistering pace set by his old sparring partner Eduardo, the pair leading the field at the top of the straight. While Eduardo eventually finished a long last, Nature Strip held on to the final 50 metres, before being overhauled by swoopers.

Three weeks later he faced off in the Champions Sprint (VRC Classic), a race he’d also won in 2021. Travelling up on the speed again, he fought on gallantly to finish second, beaten a short head.

Given Nature Strip’s earnings of \$20.6 million so far and his record of nine Group Ones, his connections might thank their lucky stars that he has, technically, a throat problem. It has never stopped him galloping but it would have stopped him passing the tough vet test to be sold to Hong Kong after his first eye-catching trials. That is probably where he would have ended up if he had been a flawless specimen.

The racing Gods move in mysterious ways. Ask Fred Kersley. ■

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The key to Jamie Kah

Her unparalleled horsemanship, and uncanny rapport with her mounts, sees Kah's star continue to rise, writes **Helen Thomas**

Photo: Morgan Hancock/Racing Photos

On the cusp of this year's Melbourne Cup Carnival, one of Australia's major owners got a call from one of Australia's most respected trainers. He wanted to know which jockey to book for a race on Golden Eagle Saturday in Sydney — Frankie Dettori or Jamie Kah?

It's a question that would have been unimaginable a couple of years ago, let alone a decade ago — a 'girl rider' being discussed in the same breath as an international racing superstar.

But this is how far 26-year-old Jamie Kah has come. Growing up in South Australia with her parents — former Winter Olympian speed skaters — she won her first race as an apprentice a decade ago, then the SA Jockeys' Premiership three times before moving to Melbourne in 2019.

At the time, it seemed a big move for a young woman, a quick step onto a major stage. Now, not so much.

On the final day of this year's Melbourne Cup Carnival, Jamie Kah won the Group One Champion Stakes on Zaaki for trainer Annabel Neasham. It was quite a remarkable victory.

Not only did she have to tactically outride the best jockeys on some of the best horses in the country, she had to do so after being dumped by her eight-year-old charge before they even got to the barriers.

"He tells me when to go, this horse. You know, when he's on, he just goes and he just pours the speed into it and he did exactly that today," Kah told Francesca Cumani in a post-race interview on Network 10.

"I knew he was on, too, when he dropped me coming out of the mounting yard. He's been very quiet his last few starts, he's been an angel. But today, he started going left and I went right. But I landed on my feet and I was not letting go of him."



Watching her tumble from the saddle, land upright, hang on to the reins, pull Zaaki up and jump on his back again, no harm done, was almost as breathtaking as watching the pair win the \$3 million 2000m contest minutes later. For a lesser person, it could have been a disastrous accident. For Kah, it was almost an inspiring mishap.

This is why Peter Moody, the elite trainer forever linked to unbeaten mare Black Caviar, describes her as "an unbelievable talent".

"I think she's probably nearly as good a horse person as I've ever seen," he says. "Her natural instinct and her capabilities on a horse's back are quite phenomenal."

And the statistics back him up. Last year, Kah became the first jockey in Victoria, male or female, to ride 100 metropolitan winners and the first woman to take the state premiership.

Jamie Kah pilots Zaaki to victory in the Group One Champions Stakes at Flemington.
Photo: George Sal/
Racing Photos

It was an astonishing 'double'. The century had eluded outstanding riders such as Damian Oliver, Craig Williams, even the late Roy Higgins. For the record, Kah's final tally was 105.

Ahead of this year's Melbourne Cup Carnival, she was ranked #30 on Thoroughbred Racing Commentary's Top 50 international jockeys. She rides for top trainers like Chris Waller, Mick Price, James Cummings and the Maher/Eustace juggernaut, as well as for rising stars such as Annabel Neasham.

Kah's ascent almost sounds like a kind of contemporary fairytale. Finally, a gifted, young woman has reached the pinnacle of an industry traditionally marred, like so much of big business, by sexism. But it's more a story of impassioned drive and hard work, with the odd contemporary twist. >>

THE KEY TO JAMIE KAH

Jamie Kah didn't break Australian racing's 'glass ceiling'. She arrived on the scene when that barrier had already been shattered by many fine female riders doing the hard slog — in terms of breakthrough achievements and recognition — ahead of her.

Jockey Michelle Payne, the first woman to win Australia's Melbourne Cup, and indomitable trainer Gai Waterhouse have been defining role models within and beyond their sport.

Along the way, of course, Kah's had to endure unnecessary, unkind scrutiny like so many successful women before her, in too many professions. On occasion, she's brought this on herself. After riding those 105 winners in Melbourne last year, she was suspended after breaking Victoria's strict COVID-19 lockdown rules, attending a party with a group of jockeys. She missed the entire Spring Carnival.

It was a humiliating 'own goal' that invoked a public penalty as tough psychologically as it was financially. There was speculation that she might leave the sport. For a young woman whose life centres on horses, any number of equestrian pursuits beckoned. They still do.

There's a general consensus now that Kah will, like her parents, become an Australian Olympian, albeit as an equestrian. But she is on record as saying that she missed race riding and, since her return, has worked to regain her position as one of our most high-profile jockeys.

At the same time, her recent breakup from her fiancé and new relationship was seen as 'fair game' by some media outlets. She also achieved another, less dramatic 'own goal' this Spring. After being named a VRC Ambassador for this year's Cup Carnival, Kah rode in Sydney on Victoria Derby Day — the start of the Carnival — only to be suspended by NSW stewards.



Yet, this sport is in dire need of true, horse-loving envoys. And the impetuous Jamie Kah certainly fits the bill. Throughout her suspension last year, she remained close to her horses on her property on the Mornington Peninsula. It's where this proper horsewoman seems happiest.

This is one of the reasons broadcaster Lizzie Jelfs believes the young jockey is a crucial player on contemporary racing's stage. "She literally lives and breathes the horse — and that's why she has such an important part (in) racing's social licence, because there's not just one of her," Jelfs says.

"There are so many young women and men who would ride work and be in stables, and then go off and ride their own horses or look after the off-the-track horses. There are so many people who are like that.

Champion trainer Peter Moody describes Kah as "an unbelievable talent".

Photo: George Sal/
Racing Photos

"She's the person who lives and breathes it at the top level and that's why she's so important, because ... a good proportion of our industry is made up of people that just love the horse.

"They treat them better than they treat themselves. I think that's why she's a role model, that's what she does. She's in the limelight and that's why we turn to her to tell her story."

A rider herself, Lizzie Jelfs notes that Kah, who never really courted media attention before last year's fall from grace, almost seems to have blossomed since her return.

"It's almost like she doesn't need to worry about what people think. People are going to think whatever they want; she is just there to do her job and get the best results possible for connections. And I think that's what she rides like, because she's just got plenty of confidence now."

It's an astute observation. Compared to some sports stars, Kah doesn't do much media, and recently split from her sports management firm. But occasionally the new, different confidence that Jelfs describes is apparent.

In an interview with *Racing.com* on the night of the Group One Manikato Stakes at Moonee Valley, which was eventually postponed due to a lightning storm, Kah revealed she was currently on top of her weight enough to have enjoyed a serve of hot chips earlier that day. With tomato sauce. It was a charmingly competitive aside. For most of her colleagues, such indulgence is just not possible, weight-wise.

Not long after that interview, horses engaged in the Manikato headed out onto the track for the race, only to be turned back after another frightening bolt of lightning and thunder crack shook the course and surrounding suburbs. Kah was riding three-year-old filly Coolangatta and both went up in the air in shock. >>

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Gr.3 placed
SNEAKY PAIGE - 2020 Magic Millions



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Gr.3 winner **BRERETON**
(2021 Magic Millions)



Gr.3 winner **BISCAYNE BAY**
(2020 Magic Millions)



Gr.1 winner **ZOUGOTCHA**
(2021 Easter)



Gr.2 winner **GLISTENING**
(2020 Magic Millions)



Gr.3 winner **SWEET RIDE**
(2021 Easter)

Gr.3 placed
BASQUIAT - 2021 Magic Millions

Stakes placed
DIO - 2020 Easter

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THE KEY TO JAMIE KAH

Peter Moody was awed by how she handled the young horse that night. “She never, ever at any stage looked like falling off, landing awkwardly, pulling on her mouth or anything. She was part of the animal, you know? And that really, for me, exemplified her horsemanship skills.”

Most within racing circles agree that her rapport with horses, her ability to get them to relax and focus through races is what sets her apart.

“She places horses really well, so she can conserve their energy,” Jelfs says. “She switches them off and that’s why she gets the best out of them. She seems to know where they want to be or want to land and where they’re most comfortable. And I think that’s her greatest asset.”

Terry Henderson, head of OTI Racing, concurs. “Globally, she’s certainly not unique; Hollie Doyle is an incredibly talented jockey in the UK ... (but) Jamie’s certainly the best female jockey I’ve seen in Australia.

“She’s a lovely rider. She’s got an affinity with horses that gets them to run for her which is the element of a top-class jockey. She makes the right sorts of decisions, she doesn’t panic in her races.

“So many jockeys often make a decision before they have to in a race. But she’s got that nice balance of making a decision quick enough and yet seeming to be able to think about what decision to make.”

Almost a form of mental gymnastics, in fast slow-motion: art, not science.

Henderson agrees that Kah can get horses to relax before riding them out to the line and explains that she is someone who can help validate Australian racing’s social licence. “She’s incredibly important (in that debate). If we don’t take advantage of the talents of the young women in our industry now, promote them almost beyond what they would normally be promoted, we’re



Kah poses with young fans after her Champions Stakes win.

Photo: George Sal/
Racing Photos

Jamie Kah and Dollar For Dollar, a horse she has taken on to retrain post racing.

Photo: Racing Photos/
John Donegan



wasting an enormous opportunity to improve our social licence.

“You know, we keep coming back to the fact that racing is one of the few sports where women have to compete with men on an equal playing field ... we’ve got to look at how we can take the great assets we’ve got and use them to improve our social licence. And certainly, women are, I think, front and centre.

“Jamie Kah is a very, very good jockey and she is succeeding because the industry simply understands that she is very, very good, irrespective of being female,” he says.

Like Lizzie Jelfs, who says Kah “is showing that gender doesn’t matter”, Terry Henderson believes that “to succeed in our industry, you virtually have to have a gender-neutral approach to it, because no one’s going to give you any favours really. If you’re good enough, they’ll put you on.”

Peter Moody is more focused on Kah’s ability to reach new heights as a jockey. “She’s got a great understanding of the animal and when she gets that similar understanding of timing and assessing a race, she will probably go to the same level as a jockey.

“At the moment, it’s probably her horsemanship skills that are leading the way,” Moody says. “And her capabilities as a jockey are very, very good. Don’t get me wrong, I’m not playing them down. But she could take that to a whole new level too, I believe.”

In the end, what lies at the heart of Kah’s success so far might be found in a comment she made in a recent report the VRC did on her off-the-track work and rapport with retired racehorse Dollar For Dollar.

“A day without horses is a bad day for me.” ■



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2022 highlights

This year saw borders reopen, the beginning of a new chapter in the Winx story, and much more besides

Australia's greatest becomes a mother

The best racehorses have an innate sense of timing, when to start breaking the hearts of their rivals, when to take the gap, when to run through the pain barrier, when to put their nose down on the finish line.

Is it any surprise Winx knew exactly the moment to have her first foal?

"We drove nine hours from the Gold Coast and we went up to the paddock to see Winx, and 30 seconds after we arrived there, the vet said, 'Her water has broken and she's about to give birth,'" laughs part-owner Peter Tighe. "We couldn't have timed it any better."

Or maybe Winx couldn't have timed it any better.

Australia's champion racehorse is finally a mum, giving birth to a healthy Pierro filly in the Hunter Valley in October.

The news was a relief for Tighe and fellow owners Debbie Kepitis and the family of the late Richard Treweek, who were devastated when the four-time Cox Plate winner lost her I Am Invincible foal in the

latter stages of her first pregnancy in 2020.

This time, the relief was palpable during the late night foaling watched by Tighe, his wife, Patty, as well as Kepitis and her husband, Paul.

"The same as with her final races, you held your breath hoping the fairytale still happened," Kepitis says. "We held our breath hoping the fairytale of her having a live foal this time happened, and it was such a relief to have it go by the book, the same as her last few races. There was a lot of relief and tears and gasps — and not much talking."

"As all the broodmares do, she reacted straight away and was licking the filly all over and being very attentive, while she's doing the rest of what you do while you're having the foal. She was a very conscientious mother."

A winner of 33 consecutive races to end her glorious career, Winx, a \$230,000 Magic Millions yearling, is arguably Australia's greatest ever racehorse. Her filly is already

showing signs of craving the same attention afforded to her mother.

"The filly's a gorgeous, inquisitive little horse," Tighe says. "She comes over to the fence and sticks her head through it. She's interested in what everyone is looking at. If it goes too far mum reins her in pretty quickly. We were surprised she interacted so much with us."

"I don't know if you would say she's a spitting image, but they all say she looks exactly like her mother."

Winx and her Pierro filly.
Photo: Winx Official



Young guns to the fore in the sprinting ranks

Jonathan Munz swears by it, and he didn't need to watch a global television feed from New York as he won Australia's richest race to realise his methodology worked. The Rasmussen principle. What is it? And can it really be a pointer to continued breeding success?

The concept involves inbreeding to superior females. He worked around an old mare called Best In Show, who appears in the sixth line on both sides of his exciting sprinter Giga Kick's pedigree. The theory has been around for ages and Munz, one of the most astute breeders in the country, is an unabashed fan.

"Basically that family clicks super well with Redoute's (Choice) blood because it's got the same dam line," Munz explains.

Before Scissor Kick (who Munz also bred), a son of Redoute's Choice, relocated to Tunisia after a slow start to his stallion career, he sired Giga Kick. The chestnut three-year-old, who went on to win his fifth straight race since the start of his career in the \$15 million The Everest, is now one of the country's most bankable racetrack stars.

It's a huge nod to Munz's contribution to the industry over many years, which has involved

positions on stakeholder groups such as his current role with the Thoroughbred Racehorse Owners Association in Victoria, mixing with his investment as a prolific owner and commercial breeder.

Giga Kick almost wasn't meant to be. He was so sick with a severe bout of colic as a young horse, it was only the fact he couldn't have a cannula put in that he survived at all. Remarkably, he stood up in his box

a couple of hours after being at death's door.

His win in The Everest was a triumph for perseverance, and for young trainer Clayton Douglas, who at 27 scored the biggest win he's likely ever to have in the game with Giga Kick wearing Munz's famous red-and-white stripes.

"He's a very good judge, sensible and a good horseman," Munz says. "He's six foot tall so he wasn't going to make a jockey for very long. When he became a trainer I decided to support him and gave him a horse.

"He's ridden Shoals and Super Seth. He said, 'If this horse (Giga Kick) isn't a Group One winner, I'll eat him'. He knows good horses and he thinks this is the best horse he's ridden."



Giga Kick wins the \$15 million Everest.
Photo: Lisa Grimm

Australian mares make their mark

Over 25 years since Katsumi Yoshida began importing elite Australian mares to bolster Japan's already phenomenal bloodlines, the strategy is reaping considerable results both on the track and in the sales ring.

Yoshida's Northern Farm has led the way, securing a host of Group One-winning Australian mares to continue their breeding careers in Japan.

In the past decade, mares of the quality of Mosheen, Absolutely, Southern Speed, Shamrock, Kirramosa, Set Square, Yankee Rose and She Will Reign have been purchased and mated with Japan's leading stallions, with a commercial purpose in mind.

In 2022, the most expensive yearling sold at auction in Japan was out of an Australian mare. The 450 million yen paid (A\$4.68 million) by leading Japanese buyer Danox for the colt by Maurice out of Mosheen was the same price as it paid for a foal by Lord Kanaloa out of multiple Group One winner Yankee Rose in 2021.

In the foal session of the 2022 JHRA Sale, an Epiphaneia colt foal out of Mosheen was purchased for 300 million yen (A\$3.2 million), while She Will Reign's Heart Cry colt sold for 165 million yen (A\$1.75 million) in 2021.

The progeny of these Australian

mares are big business and backed up by results on the track. Mosheen has made her mark as a broodmare through her multiple Group-winning daughter Primo Scene, while her son Mawson Peak and daughter Carpentries are both winners as well.

Meanwhile Yankee Rose's daughters Romneya and Liberty Island have both made impressive starts to their racing careers and She Will Reign's first colt, Danon Tornado, also won on debut in 2022.

It's a trend which is expected to continue given the quality of recently purchased Australian mares by Japanese interests. Group One-winning half-sisters Funstar and Youngstar sold to Yoshida for \$2.7 million and \$1.4 million respectively in the past two years, while Australian-bred mares Pinot, Seabrook, Amphitrite and Mystic Journey have been purchased privately with their first progeny approaching the track or the sales ring.

Intriguingly, these Japanese-Australian bloodlines have also attracted interest back in Australia and in July an Epiphaneia filly out of Mosheen's daughter Paronella was purchased by Mick Price and Michael Kent Jnr for 60 million yen (A\$640,000).



Extremely talented filly captures the Oaks

As he does in the months before every sales season, Anthony Cummings will venture out to stud farms dotted throughout the eastern states in Australia and try to find his next superstar on the racetrack. He looks at hundreds each year. Some he likes, others he doesn't.

But it's in the early stages, he says, you can find a hidden gem.

"The first time I saw her was in December in the COVID year getting prepared for the Magic Millions," Cummings says of his latest top level winner, She's Extreme. "At that stage she looked every bit a potential two-year-old."

"As she grew out she changed shape and at Easter that wasn't as obvious. For most people who had only seen her at that point, I don't think that type of potential was on show. I was lucky to have seen her at the right time."

"I always say most often your views are formed in the first 30 seconds you see them. She's lived up to every expectation."

She's Extreme was one of the stars of the Spring, a Victoria Oaks heroine

to back up her outstanding two-year-old season when she ran in the Golden Slipper before winning the Group One Champagne Stakes.

History will show Cummings bought her for \$275,000 at the 2021 Inglis Easter Yearling Sale, not Magic Millions. Aquis Farm sold the Extreme Choice filly, out of WA Derby and Oaks placegetter Keysbrook, as a

weanling for just \$32,500.

Dorrington Farm's Robert Crabtree had taken a shine to Extreme Choice's progeny, but they were thin on the ground. The stallion had fertility issues, and when Crabtree saw Cummings pounce with a filly at Easter, he picked up the phone.

"I was actually after an Extreme Choice and I couldn't breed one, so I started hunting," Crabtree says. "I loved her female pedigree to complement Extreme Choice. It doesn't always work, but this mare had been placed in both an Oaks and a Derby in Perth. That appealed to me."

"But once I saw (She's Extreme), I was converted."

Crabtree spent the weeks leading

up to She's Extreme's momentous win during Melbourne Cup week at Flemington fighting the horrific floods throughout the Victorian breeding nurseries. It made the Oaks win even more special.

"I had a congratulatory call from Gai Waterhouse, which I very much appreciated," he says. "She said to me, 'That is a very special filly that can go from a 1200-metre Group race as a two-year-old all the way to the Oaks and pick up a Group One mile between'. And she won it purely on class."



She's Extreme returns to scale after her Oaks victory.
Photo: Racing Photos/
Morgan Hancock

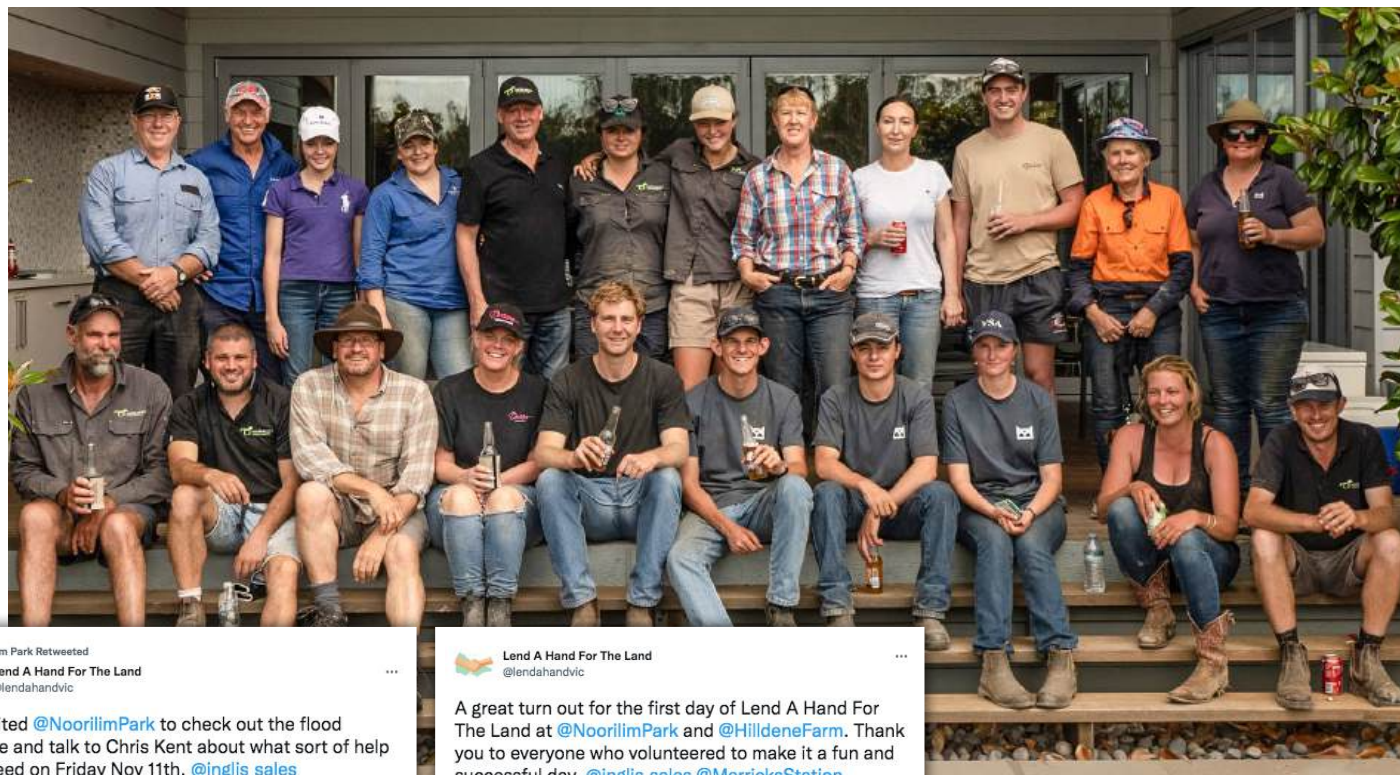
Industry rallies in the face of natural disaster

For many stud farms in Victoria, Friday October 14 will be a day that can never be forgotten.

After sustained heavy rain in central Victoria through winter and into spring, a huge storm broke, bringing more than 10 centimetres of rain in just a few days. Additionally, though, a vast amount of water was also being released from Lake Eildon, the dam which marks the start of the Goulburn River.

The result was inevitable: the Goulburn River broke its banks and rose to levels higher than the most significant flood in living memory, back in 1972. And it wasn't just the height that shocked, but the speed. At Swettenham Stud, the river rose almost three metres in less than three hours.

For those farms with significant river frontage, it was a tense scramble to move horses to high ground and safety. That Friday morning, Yulong Stud put out a call for people with boats to come and help lead horses that had been left marooned in the flood. The response from the local community was overwhelming: by the afternoon more than 10 boats



Noorilim Park Retweeted
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We visited @NoorilimPark to check out the flood damage and talk to Chris Kent about what sort of help they need on Friday Nov 11th. @inglis_sales @MerricksStation @DMCTim @Racing @7horseracing @SkyRacingAU @vicbreeders @TDNAusNZ @anz_news



were traversing the flooded paddocks, making sure horses and staff were safe.

At other properties, staff swam

Lend A Hand For The Land
@lendahandvic

A great turn out for the first day of Lend A Hand For The Land at @NoorilimPark and @HilldeneFarm. Thank you to everyone who volunteered to make it a fun and successful day. @inglis_sales @MerricksStation @DMCTim @vicbreeders @RacingVictoria @SkyRacingAU @7horseracing



into the flood waters to lead nervous horses to safety.

The next day Noorilim Park, about 30 kilometres to the north, was in a

Lend A Hand For The Land volunteers.
Photo: DMC

similar position as the flood moved downriver. There, tens of people — some from neighbouring studs, others involved in racing and breeding from across the state, and many with no connection to the thoroughbred industry at all — descended on the farm to help as best as they could.

And if there is one silver lining to the natural disaster, it was the response and support that came



Industry rallied to help flood affected farms. Photo: TBA

naturally from the community.

"We were amazed and blown away by the support that we received, both on the day the flood broke and in the days afterwards," says Yulong's Sam Fairgray. "Without all the help we received, we would have been in a far worse position."

For many of the farms impacted by the floods, both along the Goulburn as well as those on other river systems

in northern Victoria, there remains much work to do to restore properties to their former state. But the community is again rallying around

them. In November, a group set up after the flooding called Lend A Hand For The Land organised more than 40 volunteers to help impacted farms



with everything from removing debris to fixing pumps and clearing stables.

Other assistance has been provided by Thoroughbred Breeders Australia (TBA), who have focused on providing mental health support to those caught up in the traumatic events, as well as support to farms that wish to apply for government flood relief grants.

Open borders have auction houses excited for the year ahead

When the international borders shut, and then the domestic ones followed, there was a natural assumption Australia's biggest sales companies were going to feel the full force of the pandemic.

But a funny thing happened. Auction houses reported figures which showed just how resilient the breeding industry is, and underpinned by record prizemoney levels, modern technology played a role to keep buying interest high overseas as those stranded offshore found innovative ways to source the next racetrack champion.

Suddenly buying at the Australian sales didn't require you to be in attendance on the grounds every day.

"The sales themselves have gone unbelievably well under the circumstances," Magic Millions director Barry Bowditch says. "I don't think the industry has been too affected by the borders being closed or not being able to get in easily, but it's been frustrating we haven't been able to open them up. Now we just want to get people to

"We're looking forward to welcoming guests back from the US, Japan ... Europe, Middle East, Hong Kong and China."

Sebastian Hutch

the Gold Coast and give them that great Magic Millions welcome in January."

The Magic Millions January Yearling Sale in 2022 still grossed over \$242 million with an average price of \$239,556. It far outweighs even the pre-pandemic numbers of

\$189 million and \$217,852 from the 2020 sale. They expect 2023 to be even better.

Inglis reported a similar tale, grossing \$153 million at an average of \$399,700 for its 2022 Easter sale.

"We set a new record for the sale in 2022 and I say with a fair degree

of confidence we're going to have guests from all around the world in 2023," Inglis chief executive Sebastian Hutch says.

"We're looking forward to welcoming guests back from the US, Japan in particular, Europe, Middle East, Hong Kong, and China.

"For what is usually a very cosmopolitan sale, the restrictions imposed by COVID have meant it hasn't been anything like we want it to be, and we're looking forward to returning to normal."



Top: The Magic Millions auditorium. Left: Buyers inspect yearlings at Inglis. Photos: Magic Millions and Inglis

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Thrill of the chase

A Group One-winning owner, Mike Sherrin is aiming to breed his own champions, writes **Bren O'Brien**



Photo: Sharon Chapman



As a relative latecomer to the racing world, Mike Sherrin has learned to rely upon the advice of experts.

So when a seven-figure offer came on the table for his promising sprinter Apache Chase, he immediately sought the counsel of Eagle Farm-based trainer Desleigh Forster.

"We were offered \$1.2 million by guys in Hong Kong, and I remember having a meeting with Desleigh on a Sunday morning and she said, 'Michael, it's a lot of money, but if you decide to keep him, I'll guarantee I'll win you a Group One,'" Sherrin recalls.

It was quite the call from Forster, who had yet to train a Group One winner.

"She put it on the line, but she just loves him," Sherrin says.



Top: Sheralee Estate on the Sunshine Coast.

Photo: Sharon Chapman

Inset: The property was previously a sand mine.

Photo: Mike Sherrin

"I wasn't really tempted anyway. We always knew he had the potential to come through and earn more money than that. It would have been nice to bank that \$1.2 million just there and then, but I preferred to keep him and work with Desleigh to go on and do what we've done now."

Apache Chase would provide one of Australian racing's highlights of 2022 when he gave the much-loved and highly regarded Forster a memorable first top-level success, leading all the way in the Kingsford-Smith Cup in May on his home track at Eagle Farm.

In the background that day was Sherrin, the successful businessman turned hobby owner and now boutique breeder, whose red and orange colours Apache Chase has carried to victory in nine races to win over \$2 million.

While he has kept a low profile, Sherrin

deserves considerable credit in the Apache Chase story. It was he who picked out the future Group One winner for just \$50,000 at the Magic Millions March Yearling Sale in 2019. A self-confessed novice when it came to yearling selection, he happened upon the Better Than Ready youngster by instinct.

"I didn't really know a lot about the caper at that stage. I was there with a couple of guys who were supposed to give me a bit of advice, but every time I asked them about a page, they just ummed and ahhed," he says.

"I had heard good things about Better Than Ready, so I saw that (pedigree) page and thought he sounded pretty good. I thought he might go for more than he did, but we were lucky to buy him for \$50,000. If you look through his breeding, through his dam Silken Whisper, that's a fair page there."

There was a sense of fortune behind the mating between Better Than Ready and Silken Whisper. >>

THRILL OF THE CHASE

Eureka Stud had won a nomination to Better Than Ready and opted to send the then 19-year-old American-bred mare to the Kruger family's Lyndhurst Stud Farm, 70km down the road.

"There was a competition that Lyndhurst and (Better Than Ready shareholder) Richard Foster put on that if you had a filly place in the Silk Stocking Stakes at the Gold Coast, you got a free nomination to the stallion," Eureka Stud's Harry McAlpine says. "The condition was it had to be a stakes-winning or stakes-producing mare."

Silken Whisper had produced Group Two winner and Group One placegetter Churchill Downs earlier in her career, so she fit the bill.

"She was getting on in age, but she was able to do the job," he says.

The resultant foal, the first-ever bred on Eureka by the stallion and the last from the mare, was a leggy colt with plenty of bone, but who didn't fit the usual Better Than Ready 'early going' model.

His \$50,000 price as a yearling was right on the average for the progeny for Better Than Ready at the 2019 Magic Millions March Yearling Sale and a good return for Eureka considering they had got the service fee for free.

The bay colt (now a gelding) with flashes of white became one of the first of Sherrin's horses to enter Forster's stables.

"I had always followed Desleight's training career, reading the papers and seeing what she did," he says. "I just wanted someone who was local, who had a small team who I could talk to on a personal level. I rang her up one day and said, 'We need to have a meeting, I've got a couple of horses.'" It was that decision, not the choice to select the horse as a

"I just wanted someone who was local, who had a small team who I could talk to on a personal level."

Mike Sherrin

yearling in the first place, which Sherrin sees as more important in Apache Chase's success story. He believes Forster was exactly the right trainer for the headstrong horse, taking her time with him and developing him along with his stablemate Red Chase, who would become a winner of eight races and nearly \$500,000.

Red Chase's success was also satisfying for Sherrin and his wife, Terry-Ann, as they had bred the son of Red Element. And it was breeding horses, or one horse in particular, that had sparked their passion for racing in the first place.

Sherrin has had plenty of wins in business through Sherrin Rentals and had been involved in

Mike and Terry-Ann with Apache Chase while spelling at Sheralee Estate.
Photo: Sharon Chapman

motor racing at the top level through Sherrin Racing, but it was racing a 'slow horse' called Kembla Heights with some good friends that got him really excited.

He decided to give Kembla Heights a home on his farm, then in Dubbo, and thought he'd have his first dalliance with breeding.

"We put Real Saga over her and not long after that, I sold the property and she came back up here to Queensland and I raced her filly," he says.

That filly was Saga Miss and while she took a while to break her maiden, she went on a run of form, winning five races and convincing Mike and Terry-Ann that the breeding game was worth a shot.



The first part of the plan was finding the right farm.

"I had this property up at Noosa. It was once a sand mine and we had to rehabilitate it, and we started doing that and we thought because we had a couple of horses, we'd need a paddock up in the corner to put them in," he said.

"As we kept rehabilitating the property, it turned into a bit of a hobby farm, and now it's a bit more than a hobby farm. We ended up building a house up here and moving in!"

Sheralee Estate, as it is known, is now a boutique broodmare farm and pre-training centre, set on 50 acres at Cooroibah on the Sunshine Coast.

Mike and Terry-Ann's attention then turned to the bloodstock, which by their own admission was under-performing.

"Our horses were all good-looking horses but to be honest, they were all pretty slow," he says.

Enter another significant figure in the Sheralee Estate story, bloodstock agent Jim Clarke.

"I was introduced to Jim when I was thinking I'm not doing too good at this breeding business. I didn't know much about it and was very young in it. We hit it off really well. I have a lot of respect for him," Sherrin says.

"He was able to help me go through my stock and we realised we weren't going to go too far with what we had."

Clarke and Sherrin hatched a plan to upgrade his broodmare band, purchasing stakes-performed



mares through the major Australian sales. They have spent over \$1.6 million across the past three years on several well-credentialled purchases. "We have got five broodmares

and we hope to have eight. We want to spell a couple every year and have six foaling down and we want to race six from every crop," he says.

But the pair's ambitions extend beyond Australian shores and when we spoke with Mike, he had just returned from the Keeneland sales in Kentucky where he and Clarke had purchased Chardy Party, a Grade Three-winning daughter of Dark Angel, who is now headed to Australia via a mating with one of the world's most prominent stallions.

"She's going to the UK and she is booked to go to Frankel. She'll be covered Australian-time and be back here this time next year," he says.

Not content with just one mare in foal to



Apache Chase's victory in the Kingsford-Smith Cup (inset) gave trainer Desleigh Forster her maiden Group One win.
Photos: Michael McNally

Frankel, Sherrin continues his international search with a view to sourcing another high-quality mare to go to the super sire.

It's an approach a world away from the days a decade ago when the Sherrins were breeding from the six-start maiden Kembla Heights, and the difference according to Mike, has been Clarke.

"What better person to have with the experience and background he has. I lean a lot on Jim with that and we talk a couple of times a week. He's very involved with what we are doing," he says.

In between his overseas trips, Sherrin has time to check in on Sam, the stable name for Apache Chase, who is having a let-up in the lush paddocks of Sheralee Estate ahead of his next campaign.

With his Group One winner in one paddock and mares in foal to some of the world's top stallions in another, it is clear what began as a hobby has become somewhat of an obsession for the Sherrins.

"My wife and I just love it," he says. "This is such a fantastic industry and people are always so willing to help out with advice. It's been great."

It is those contacts the Sherrins have made in the past few years since relocating to Queensland that have made that journey such a pleasure.

The Apache Chase experience has not just been shared with trainer Forster and jockey Jim Byrne, but with the horse's breeders as well. Eureka Stud has cheered on the sprinter's every success.

"It's not easy to do to breed a Group One winner. It's a thrill for us and a thrill for Michael and Terry-Ann to get a Group One winner so early in their racing pursuits," McAlpine says.

"They have gone on now and expanded and become quite big players in it all now. Mike is a great advocate for the QTIS scheme ... It's great to have someone who has so recently become involved as an advocate for breeding and racing in Queensland." ■

It's in our nature

Australian-breds continue
to shine on the global
stage, writes **Greg Tobin**

Photo: Liesl King



**AL MUTHANA
SOUTH AFRICA**

2017 h (Deep Field — El Daana)

Bred by Shadwell Stud.

Shadwell Stud played a major role in southern hemisphere racing and breeding for five decades before deciding in 2021 to scale back its operations south of the equator. During that time, Shadwell often

used Australia as a nursery for runners in South Africa: the three-time stakes winner Al Muthana is just one shining example. Among 21 black type winners for Newgate Farm's Deep Field, Al Muthana is a half-brother to another three-time stakes hero in Wawail (including the Group Two Kewney Stakes), from the Group Two Edward Manifold winner El Daana. Sent to South Africa in July 2019, Al Muthana won on debut as a winter two-year-old but has enjoyed a near impeccable 2022, winning four from five, culminating in his success in the Group One Greyville Gold Challenge Stakes. Both El Daana (\$120,000) and Wawail (\$425,000) were sold at the 2021 Shadwell Dispersal, with the latter now dam of 2022 Macau stakes winner, Desi Prince.

**IMPERATRIZ
NEW ZEALAND**

2018 m (I Am

Invincible — Berimbau)

Bred by Raffles Dancers.

David Ellis' Te Akau Racing has enjoyed phenomenal success with Australian-breds in New Zealand (think On The Bubbles, Sword Of State, Avantage, Age Of Fire, Heroic Valour, Princess Coup)

and the I Am Invincible mare Imperatriz is a deserved addition to the honour roll. Winner of her first two starts as a two-year-old — including the Group Two Eclipse — Imperatriz was a dual Group winner as a spring three-year-old, but would peel off five in a row to end her classic season. Those wins included success in the Group One Levin Classic (defeating fellow Australian-bred On The Bubbles and subsequent Golden Eagle winner I Wish I Win) and, just weeks later, a five-length romp in the Group One NZ Thoroughbred Breeders. By Yarraman Park's I Am Invincible — also sire of Group One NZ 1000 Guineas winner Media Sensation — Imperatriz was purchased by Ellis from Bhima Thoroughbreds for \$360,000 at the 2020 Gold Coast Magic Millions Yearling Sale.



When Nature Strip first appeared on the International World Racehorse Rankings in November 2019, the flashy chestnut had just notched up his third Group One success in the VRC Classic, now known as the Champions Sprint.

Courtesy of six more wins at the elite level, plus an Everest, and \$20 million in stakes, Nature Strip has remained a constant in the world rankings: indeed, for many months as the highest rated sprinter on the planet.

However, Australia's reigning Horse of the Year revealed to a global audience in June 2022 that his

incredible speed wasn't limited to local competition by capturing the Group One King's Stand Stakes at Royal Ascot.

First won by an Australian-bred in 2003 courtesy of trailblazer Choisir, Aussie sprinters Takeover Target, Miss Andretti and Scenic Blast would win three King's Stands in four years (2006-09), but the 13-year break between drinks was well worth the wait.

Few horses have dominated in the manner that Nature Strip took apart his King's Stand rivals, winning by nearly five lengths and forever stamping himself as one of Australia's best sprinters.

Photos: Chase Liebenberg and Race Images NZ.

Although Nature Strip's fellow traveller — the Group One Blue Diamond winner, Artorius — failed to come away with a trophy from his European sojourn, a tad more luck could easily have seen him improve on third placings in both the Group One Platinum Jubilee (won by Australian-bred Merchant Navy in 2018) and Group One July Cup.

Closer to home, the remarkable success of Australian-breds in Hong Kong continues with Golden Sixty named Horse of the Year for the second time in a row. He becomes the first Australian sourced galloper since the legendary >>

IT'S IN OUR NATURE

LIM'S LIGHTNING SINGAPORE

2015 g (Lope de Vega — Wayne's Gold)

Bred by Lynn Tipper.

Winner of the Group Two Aushorse Golden Horseshoe in Singapore as a two-year-old, Lim's Lightning was again a standout at three before heading back to Australia at four. Although he recorded just one success down under, Lim's Lightning's return to Singapore has seen the sprinter unleash career best form with seven wins from nine starts, including the prestigious Lion City Cup, Raffles Cup and Singapore Gold Cup — all at Group One level. His final appearance was a resounding performance in the Group Three Kranji Mile International in May. Lim's Lightning is among a legion of Australian-bred sprinters who have excelled in Singapore including Rocket Man, Zac Spirit, Lim's Cruiser and The Inferno. A \$50,000 purchase from the 2017 Magic Millions Gold Coast Horses in Training Sale, Lim's Lightning has won 12 races and A\$2.2 million and hails from the same Lope de Vega crop as Gytrash, Spanish Whisper and Vega One.



WELLINGTON HONG KONG

2016 g (All Too Hard — Mihiri)

Bred by Kia Ora Stud, David Paradise & Steve McCann.

Wellington had already joined the storied ranks of quality Australian-bred sprinters in Hong Kong by the end of 2021, but has gone from strength to strength over the last 12 months: deservedly being named Hong Kong Champion Sprinter in July. After commencing the year with a strong fourth at Group One level in January, Wellington has subsequently rattled off four straight victories, including the Group One Silver Jubilee Cup and the Group One Chairman's Sprint Prize. Wellington returned in October with a resounding victory in the Group Two Premier Bowl. A son of Vinery Stud's All Too Hard, Wellington was sold by Kia Ora Stud for \$70,000 at the Gold Coast Magic Millions Yearling Sale: and has since gone on to win the equivalent of A\$7.3 million. Sold privately to Hong Kong interests after being broken in by yearling purchaser, Lauriston Thoroughbreds, Wellington has raced 17 times for 11 wins.



Silent Witness to win the top award twice, while the son of Medaglia d'Oro was also named Champion Miler and Most Popular Horse.

Despite finishing one shy of Silent Witness's record straight victories, his A\$22.5 million in stakes makes him the greatest prizemoney winner in Hong Kong history.

Hong Kong buyers would spend \$42 million at Australian yearling sales in 2022. Not surprisingly, the \$70,000 yearling buy, Wellington, was named Hong Kong's Champion Sprinter following dual Group One victories in the Queen's Silver Jubilee Cup and Chairman's Sprint Prize, along with the Group Two Sprint Cup and Premier Bowl.

It wasn't just two-way traffic either with Sky Field (HK Sprint) and Stronger (Centenary Sprint

Cup) both taking out Group Ones.

Like Hong Kong, Singapore has enjoyed a terrific run with Australian-bred horses and that continued in 2022 via Lim's Lightning (Kranji Mile and Gold Cup) and Lim's Kosciuszko (Derby and Lion City Cup) capturing multiple Group Ones, along with Golden Monkey — a \$54,000 yearling buy — who won a pair of Group Twos.

In Malaysia, Awesome Storm would be successful in the Group One Tunku Gold Cup, while Macau was a happy hunting ground for Australian-breds too with Star of Yiu Cheung (Challenge Cup and Gold Cup), Bygone Era, Cheers Brothers and Desi Prince all saluting in the nation's Group Ones.

Interestingly, Desi Prince is from a half-brother

to Shadwell Stud's South African Group One winner, Al Muthana, who — along with Group Two winner Kitty Cat Chat — were the stand out performers for Australia on the other side of the Indian Ocean.

Perhaps it was 'across the pond' though where Australia really made its presence felt, having now won 32% of Group One races in the last two seasons, despite making up just 8% of the racing population. Te Akau Racing's Imperatriz led the way with three Group wins (two at Group One), but Babylon Berlin, On The Bubbles and Sword Of State also snared multiple black type wins.

And let's not overlook impeccably bred I Am Invincible mare, Jazz Etude, who won the Autumn Dash at Nigata in Japan in October. ■

Photos: Singapore Turf Club and Donald Lee

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Fast track to success

Thoroughbred Breeders Australia continues to play a vital role in attracting new staff to the industry, while also helping existing workers develop their skills, writes **Tim Rowe**





Top Left: Twin Hills' Olly Tait with past and present trainees. Top Right: Springfield Farm's Eliza Grantham. Bottom: Fast Track graduate, Lachie Pethica.

For Lachie Pethica the pull of the thoroughbred industry was strong. His parents bought a share in a racehorse while he was in his teens, and he was bitten by a bug that many say is curable only by death.

"Go to uni," his parents said, "get an education". But the itch had to be scratched. Midway through a commerce degree at Melbourne University he spotted an ad for the inaugural Thoroughbred Breeders Australia (TBA) Fast Track program.

For a young man with little hands on horse experience, it was the perfect offering: a 12-month course starting at Scone TAFE to learn the basics of horse handling and care, followed by a job at a respected stud farm, all while completing a Certificate III in Horse Breeding. University could wait.

"I toyed with going into the thoroughbred industry professionally straight out of school, but I was a little bit apprehensive making



that jump, so I decided to go and study commerce at university," Pethica says.

"I got halfway through my degree and I was a little disenfranchised by what I was doing and I'd been looking for something in racing, or more so breeding, when I came across an advertisement for the Fast Track program and, to me, it just made perfect sense having that educational structure as well as providing a job."

Pethica spent his practical periods of Fast Track with Arthur and Harry Mitchell at Yarraman Park Stud in the Hunter Valley — and a stint in his home state of Victoria at Three Bridges Thoroughbreds, while finishing his degree. He was also the recipient of the Basil Nolan Jnr Scholarship, an award open to all Fast Track graduates that allows them to complete the renowned Irish National Stud course. His education continues apace as he is now on Godolphin's Flying Start program.

"A lot of the opportunities along the way were made available by Thoroughbred Breeders Australia. Fast Track has a great structure, which has allowed me to progress quickly, so that combined with the scholarship to the Irish National Stud, was a really a good opportunity to pursue the Flying Start course."

TBA's Cecelia O'Gorman, who ran Fast Track for the first four years, insists the program is there for everyone: from young people directly out of school, to people wishing to change career, and even those with no hands on horse experience.

"We've taken on trainees from all kinds of backgrounds, from beauticians, electricians, army veterans, cricket coaches: it's really less about where you've come from and more about where you want to end up. Our goal was to provide a pathway to allow people to enter the breeding industry and get a thorough grounding that would allow them to develop a career. >>

FAST TRACK TO SUCCESS

“We take a lot of pride in all our trainees; it’s a great feeling when you see them at a sale or when you visit a farm and they’re there.”

With 87% of the course’s graduates remaining in the industry, there is reason to feel proud.

South Australian horsewoman Eliza Grantham, 24, was part of the second Fast Track intake and came into the program with more equine experience than the vast majority of her peers.

That said, Grantham gained a lot from Fast Track, both the theoretical and practical elements of the course, and receiving first-hand insight into the day-to-day running of a major commercial stallion operation.

“I think they did a really good job lining up the TAFE lecturers that we had. They are current industry people,” Grantham says of the theoretical learning side of the program.

“Mia Collins, who is still involved with Fast Track, has bred thoroughbreds for years and years and the knowledge she has is invaluable. If I have



Trainees take part in a number of extracurricular activities, including a trip to Royal Randwick.

Below: South Australian-based trainee, James Loder.



any issues, I still call her up now and she is full of ideas.”

Grantham has taken the knowledge learned over the 12-month period with her as she embarks on her own journey running the family’s Springfield Farm near Adelaide in South Australia where, in 2022, she took on the challenge of standing a stallion, the three-time Group Three winner Nostradamus.

“I had worked mostly in racing stables and then we bred a few horses ourselves, but the Fast Track program opened my eyes to the commercial side of the industry and to the stallion side of it as well,” Grantham says.

“The scale of mares coming in (to Newgate Farm), the processes involved in getting them ready to be served, managing foals at foot and more of the vetting side was extremely enlightening.

“The yearling preps was on another scale as well.”

The program has also been embraced by employers. Twin Hills Stud’s Olly Tait has been a major supporter of Fast Track, providing students with on-farm experience at his Cootamundra property in southern NSW, and three of the students have remained on staff since the completion of their education.

“We can’t run the industry without staff and

the better the staff we have, the better the industry will be,” Tait says.

“TBA is finding trainees who have got an enthusiasm and an interest in horses and/or racing and we’ve been very fortunate to have some good trainees come to Twin Hills.”

It’s a similar story at South Australia’s Cornerstone Stud, where Abi Wheatland joined their staff as part of Fast Track, having previously been working at Hungry Jacks.

“Abi came from Murray Bridge. She has never had any exposure to breeding, but she’s quite an inspirational girl,” says Cornerstone’s Sam Pritchard-Gordon. “She’s been with us for a year now and she’s been super.”

“Her partner James Loder, who is also from Murray Bridge, was working in the local abattoir and had never had any horse experience, but was coming up on the weekends and helping Abi feed up. He got stuck into it and he asked for a job about 12 months ago as well. He is now on Fast Track and doing brilliantly too.”

For TBA, the development of Fast Track was an important first step in the education and training space.

“We really viewed creating a pathway into the industry as a priority,” says TBA chief executive Tom Reilly. “Of course it (Fast Track) won’t solve >>



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FAST TRACK TO SUCCESS

all the industry's staffing issues, but it does mean there is an opportunity with a clear structure. We will be looking to expand the numbers of trainees in the coming years.

The board and the team at TBA also believe the organisation can play a part in supporting breeding businesses, so in 2022 rolled out a series of workshops for senior staff to improve their management skills. The workshops were funded by TBA and hosted around the country.

"The vast majority of studs are small businesses and might not have the capacity to organise this type of training for staff, so we think there's a role for TBA to step in and provide this," says Reilly. "We have been really encouraged by the feedback from those who attended, with 96% of people saying they'd recommend it to their peers."

One of those was Sam Matthews, Swettenham Stud's general manager in Victoria, who attended the workshop with two colleagues.

"It was a very well-rounded workshop because it was not only how to deliver the message, but why you go about it that way," Matthews says.

"Our staff definitely got a lot out of it and you can see the way they speak to the staff during a 'coaching moment'. It's not the old school way of, 'why did you do that, don't do it again,' it's 'let's talk about a way where we can do it together or it might be more efficient' and leading them to a different answer."

"In this day and age, you need to be very aware of how people take criticism and I think that workshop allowed our staff to make sure they are on top of that."



**Attendees at the Nagambie management skills workshop, one of six sessions held around the country.
Below: 2022 Nolan Scholarship recipient Jarrod Robinson and Mia Collins.**

Eureka Stud's Angus McAlpine attended the Queensland management course and found the training that was focused on encouraging managers to treat employees as individuals very useful.

"It helped demonstrate how to recognise how different staff prefer to work. Some prefer to work by themselves, others are better in a team environment, so it was good to learn those sorts of things."

Another addition to TBA's offerings will be a new online learning platform, TBA Learning, which will launch in late 2022. The site will allow staff from around the country to take part in free online courses — all taught by industry

experts, including video and written teaching materials — and gain certificates of completion.

The first course to be rolled out will be a general horse care and handling one, aimed at providing new employees in the industry the chance to get a grounding on the basics.

"We know there can sometimes be a transitory workforce in breeding, for example with back-packers taking on jobs, so this course gives employers the chance to point those inexperienced staff somewhere to get a grounding," says Madison Tims, TBA's education and projects manager.

"We will look to add more courses in the coming year, but we think this can be a valuable tool for the whole industry, especially as it allows access to learning no matter where somebody is in the country." ■

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Inglis Gallery

Exceptional results across the board had everyone celebrating at Inglis in 2022



Top row (from left): Ciaran Maher; Denys Chan, Karson Cheng and Natalie Young.

Second row (from left): Catheryne Bruggeman and Mike Moroney; Mick Flanagan; Marie Yoshida; Gavin Murphy.

Third row (from left): Shane Wright; Shingo Hashimoto and Dr Hirofumi Kawasaki.

Fourth row (from left): Shona Drechsler and Mick Price; Charlie and Tom Magnier; Ross Lao; Hubie de Burgh.





Top row (from left): Sally Williams; Mathew Becker and Matt Houldsworth; Tony McEvoy; Peter O'Brien.

Second row (from left): Catriona and Royston Murphy, Sebastian Hutch and Michael Smith; Paul Willetts.



Third row (from left): John Ferguson; Teo Ah Khing; Rae-Louise Kelly; Antony Thompson; Sheamus Mills.

Fourth row (from left): Anthony Mithen and David Redvers; Damon Gabbedy; Sean Dingwall and Jason Stenning.



The numbers add up

Soaring prizemoney is just one of the many reasons to invest in Australian bloodstock, writes **Tom Reilly**

Irish Songs is the type of horse anyone would be proud to own. While the seven-year-old is not in the superstar category of Winx or Nature Strip, the \$140,000 yearling sale graduate has more than modest ability.

A consistent performer on regional tracks, his first win in the city came at start 11, in a Highway race reserved for horses trained in regional NSW, while his biggest win came at Canberra racecourse, where he won the Listed National Sprint. The winning cheque for that victory saw the gelding's career earnings soar from \$466,000 to over \$550,000. Not bad for a horse that only hit the frame in one Stakes race.

But when it comes to horses with extensive prizemoney, Irish Songs is far from alone. In fact one in every 57 horses that competed on the track in the 2021-22 racing season had earnings above the half a million dollar mark.

And those numbers will continue to grow apace as Australia enjoys a prizemoney explosion, which provides owners with an unparalleled opportunity to get a return on their investment.

In the past decade total purses for flat racing have surged by 92%. This has seen the values of all races, from minor maidens in the country through to the metropolitan meetings that take place at the major tracks, soar.

But if there is one area that has grown

CAREER EARNINGS OVER \$500K

One in every 57 horses racing last season had career earnings of more than \$500K



Above: Seven-time Group One winner Anamoe has amassed over \$10.6 million in prizemoney. Photo: Racing Photos/Scott

exponentially, it is the top end: just eight years ago there were 28 million dollar races each season, while in 2023 that number will be 87.

This means there will be a race worth \$1 million or more every four days, on average, in Australia next year.

To provide some international context, in America there were 57 races worth A\$1 million or more in 2022, while across the whole of Europe (including the UK), that number was just 23.

Of course, it's not just our returns to owners that are top class, the quality of Australian bloodstock is there for all to see.

Nowhere was this more obvious than Royal Ascot, where Nature Strip, Australia's leading

sprinter, took on Europe's best as well as American Group One-winning speedster, Golden Pal.

The result could not have been more emphatic, with Nature Strip demolishing the field by nearly five lengths. That victory will almost certainly mean he is again crowned the world's highest rated sprinter, a title that has been won by horses carrying the AUS suffix in seven of the past 10 years.

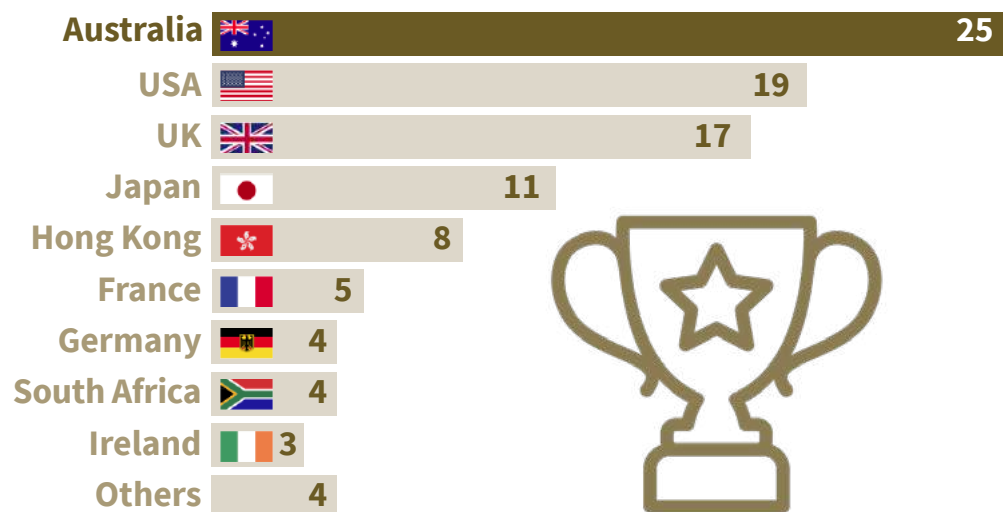
When it comes to action on the track, Australia also hosts more elite races than any other jurisdiction according to the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA).

In 2021 Australia hosted a quarter of the world's highest rated Group Ones, while in 2020 it was 25 per cent, meaning that in both years



MORE ELITE RACES THAN ANY OTHER JURISDICTION

Australia hosted a quarter of the world's highest rated Group One races in 2021



Australia had more races ranked in the top 100 than any other country. In fact, in the past seven years, Australia has topped that list five times.

Remarkably, it is still more affordable to invest in the Australian market than other major racing jurisdictions.

Over the past five years, buyers who sought a leading prospect from yearling sales would have had to pay less here than America or Europe.

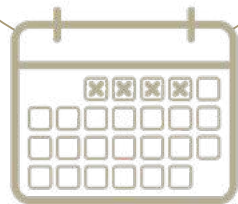
For example, the average price for the top 50 yearling colts sold at auction in different jurisdictions in 2022 is as follows (in US\$): USA \$1,125,000; Europe \$1,116,000 and Australia \$841,000.

It is the same for the most prized yearling fillies: USA \$893,000; Europe \$805,000 and Australia \$684,000.

With most major breeders in Australia offering their stock for sale, buyers also get the opportunity to access the best families in the stud

A \$1M RACE EVERY FOUR DAYS

In 2023, Australia will host a \$1 million race every four days on average



book. This is seen in the number of Group One winners that were available to buy as yearlings.

In the past three racing seasons, some 70% of locally produced top level winners were available at public auction as yearlings, a higher proportion than any other country.

And if one of those colts happens to become a stallion prospect, the rewards on offer match or surpass those available elsewhere. In recent years there have been a number of horses sold to stud for valuations in excess of \$30 million.

To get yourself a stallion prospect you need to be buying an Australian-bred. In the past decade the winners of each of the key stallion making races — the Blue Diamond, Golden Slipper, Sires' Produce, Caulfield Guineas, Golden Rose and



Multiple Group One winner Shout The Bar was sold off the track for \$2.7 million. Photo: Inglis

ACCESS TO THE BEST BLOODSTOCK

In the past three seasons, 70% of Australian-bred Group One winners were offered for sale as yearlings

Coolmore Stud Stakes — have been produced locally.

This Australian dominance on the track is backed up by performance in the breeding barn: at the end of last season nine out of the top 10 stallions in the general sires list were locals, and all but one had been through the sales ring as a yearling.

For those buyers targeting yearling fillies, there is also the option of trading in for a strong return if they have a well-performed prospect.

In the past three years, 22 Group One-winning fillies or mares sold off the track at auction for an average of \$1,871,000, while in 2022 some 31 Group winners off the track traded hands publicly for an average of \$883,550.

All up this means that if you're considering investing in a yearling in 2023, Australia really is the land of opportunity. ■

Magic Millions Gallery

There was plenty to smile about at the Magic Millions sales in 2022 for the buyers and vendors alike



Top row (from left): Jim Clarke and Bjorn Baker; Justin Bahen; Gavin Murphy.

Second row (from left): Yuesheng Zhang; Johnny McKeever.

Third row (from left): Steve O'Dea and Jamie Walter; Anthony Mithen, Ryan McEvoy, Royston Murphy and Suman Hedge.

Fourth row (from left): Jess Bott, Gai Waterhouse and Adrian Bott; Cameron and Kellie Bond; Michael Hawkes, Alan Bell, Henry Field, John Hawkes, Jim Carey and Wayne Hawkes.



MAGIC MILLIONS GALLERY



Top row (from left):
Michael Smith and Teo Ah Khing; Brett Howard and Denise Martin; Annabel Neasham and Brian McGuire; James Harron and Matt Scown.

Second row (from left):
Brian Siemsen, John Foote and Tony Gollan; John Kelly.

Third row (from left):
Barry Bowditch; Maree McEwan and Merrick Staunton; David Redvers; Hannah Jennings and Ciaran Maher.

Fourth row (from left):
Chris Lee; Tom Magnier; Andy Williams; Dermot Farrington; John Singleton and Peter Moody; David Jolly.

Fifth row: Shane Nichols.





2023 sales calendar

With open borders and endless
opportunity – there's never been
a better time to join us for
a sale in Australia

Photo: Sharon Chapman

10-16 January 2023**Magic Millions Gold Coast Yearling Sale**

(Queensland)

2022 Results**Book 1**

Lots Catalogued	933
Lots Sold	785
Clearance Rate	94%
Aggregate A\$	229,807,500
Average A\$	292,748
Top Price A\$	1,900,000

Breeding & Vendor**I Am Invincible – Suspiciouse (FR) colt**
(Newgate Farm, Aberdeen)**Book 2**

Lots Catalogued	297
Lots Sold	225
Clearance Rate	88%
Aggregate A\$	12,811,000
Average A\$	56,938
Top Price A\$	270,000

Breeding & Vendor**Deep Field – Brookton Flash colt**
(Grandview, Peak Crossing)**I Am Invincible – Suspiciouse colt****Extreme Choice – To Dubawi Go colt****12-14 February 2023****Inglis Classic Yearling Sale**

(New South Wales)

2022 Results**Book 1**

Lots Catalogued	660
Lots Sold	555
Clearance Rate	92%
Aggregate A\$	67,228,500
Average A\$	121,132
Top Price A\$	825,000

Breeding & Vendor**Extreme Choice – To Dubawi Go colt**
(Mane Lodge, Sutton)**20 February 2023****Magic Millions Tasmanian Yearling Sale**

(Tasmania)

2022 Results

Lots Catalogued	146
Lots Sold	113
Clearance Rate	82%
Aggregate A\$	4,344,500
Average A\$	38,447
Top Price A\$	150,000

Breeding & Vendor**Toronado (IRE) – Il Sogno filly**
(Armidale Stud, Carrick)

*All dates subject to change

Photos: Magic Millions and Inglis

2023 SALES CALENDAR

23-24 February 2023

Magic Millions Perth Yearling Sale

(Western Australia)

2022 Results

Book 1

Lots Catalogued	178
Lots Sold	146
Clearance Rate	88%
Aggregate A\$	13,078,500
Average A\$	89,579
Top Price A\$	330,000

Breeding & Vendor

Playing God – Moodometer colt
(Willaview Park, Narrikup)

5-7 March 2023

Inglis Melbourne Premier Yearling Sale

(Victoria)

2022 Results

Premier Session

Lots Catalogued	590
Lots Sold	490
Clearance Rate	90%
Aggregate A\$	77,270,000
Average A\$	157,694
Top Price A\$	950,000

Breeding & Vendor

I Am Invincible – Fine Bubbles colt
(Widden Stud, Widden Valley)



I Am Invincible – Fine Bubbles colt



Playing God – Moodometer colt



Dundee – Prettyhappyaboutit filly

14-15 March 2023

Magic Millions Adelaide Yearling Sale

(South Australia)

2022 Results

Lots Catalogued	454
Lots Sold	363
Clearance Rate	89%
Aggregate A\$	20,984,500
Average A\$	57,809
Top Price A\$	375,000

Breeding & Vendor

Dundee (NZ) – Prettyhappyaboutit filly
(Kambula Stud, Kadina)

20-21 March 2023

Magic Millions March Yearling Sale

(Queensland)

2022 Results

Lots Catalogued	427
Lots Sold	320
Clearance Rate	84%
Aggregate A\$	12,562,000
Average A\$	39,256
Top Price A\$	230,000

Breeding & Vendor

Russian Revolution – Right of Way colt
(Lyndhurst Stud Farm, Warwick)

Photos: Magic Millions and Inglis



Zoustar – Solar Charged colt

3-4 April 2023**Inglis Australian Easter Yearling Sale**

(New South Wales)

2022 Results

Lots Catalogued	487
Lots Sold	383
Clearance Rate	87%
Aggregate A\$	153,085,000
Average A\$	399,700
Top Price A\$	3,000,000

Breeding & Vendor**Zoustar – Solar Charged colt**
(Widden Stud, Widden Valley)**1-2 May 2023****Inglis Australian Weanling Sale**

(New South Wales)

2022 Results

Lots Catalogued	417
Lots Sold	268
Clearance Rate	78%
Aggregate A\$	13,065,000
Average A\$	48,750
Top Price A\$	400,000

Breeding & Vendor**Pierro – Now Now filly**
(Fairhill Farm, Mulbring)**4 May 2023****Inglis Chairman's Sale**

(New South Wales)

2022 Results

Lots Catalogued	100
Lots Sold	71
Clearance Rate	85%
Aggregate A\$	33,430,000
Average A\$	470,845
Top Price A\$	2,700,000

Breeding & Vendor**Shout The Bar (Not A Single Doubt – Drinks All Around (NZ))**
(Glensk Thoroughbreds, Mount Vincent)**5 May 2023****Inglis Australian Broodmare Sale**

(New South Wales)

2022 Results

Lots Catalogued	198
Lots Sold	134
Clearance Rate	79%
Aggregate A\$	8,668,000
Average A\$	64,687
Top Price A\$	350,000

Breeding & Vendor**Tiz My View (Snitzel – Miss Tizzy (USA))**
(Coolmore Stud, Jerrys Plains)**14 May 2023****Inglis Gold Yearling Sale**

(Victoria)

2022 Results

Lots Catalogued	232
Lots Sold	178
Clearance Rate	84%
Aggregate A\$	3,528,250
Average A\$	19,822
Top Price A\$	150,000

Breeding & Vendor**Frosted (USA) – True Priority filly**
(Supreme Thoroughbreds, Romsey)**18-19 May 2023****Magic Millions National Weanling Sale**

(Queensland)

2022 Results**Book 1**

Lots Catalogued	399
Lots Sold	250
Clearance Rate	81%
Aggregate A\$	22,294,500
Average A\$	89,178
Top Price A\$	750,000

Breeding & Vendor**Zoustar – Members Joy filly**
(Segenhoe Stud, Scone)

Photo: Inglis

2023 SALES CALENDAR



Away Game

23-25 May 2023

Magic Millions National Broodmare Sale

(Queensland)

2022 Results

Book 1

Lots Catalogued	745
Lots Sold	550
Clearance Rate	85%
Aggregate A\$	124,502,500
Average A\$	226,368
Top Price A\$	4,000,000

Breeding & Vendor

Away Game (Snitzel – Elusive Wonder)
(Newgate - Killora Consignment, Aberdeen)

30-31 May 2023

Magic Millions National Yearling Sale

(Queensland)

2022 Results

Book 1

Lots Catalogued	410
Lots Sold	271
Clearance Rate	74%
Aggregate A\$	14,387,000
Average A\$	53,089
Top Price A\$	575,000

Breeding & Vendor

Exceed and Excel – Nomothaj colt
(Silverstream Consignment, Canungra)

8-9 June 2023

Inglis Great Southern Sale

(Victoria)

2022 Results

Select Weanlings

Lots Catalogued	375
Lots Sold	267
Clearance Rate	81%
Aggregate A\$	12,103,500
Average A\$	45,331
Top Price A\$	280,000

Breeding & Vendor

I Am Invincible – Private Dancer filly
(Rushton Park, Tatura)

Broodmares

Lots Catalogued	79
Lots Sold	46
Clearance Rate	75%
Aggregate A\$	2,387,500
Average A\$	51,902
Top Price A\$	260,000

Breeding & Vendor

Scarlet Moretta (Fastnet Rock – Venetian Lady (USA))
(Shadow Hill Thoroughbreds, Avenel)



10 October 2023

Inglis Ready 2 Race Sale

(New South Wales)

2022 Results

Lots Catalogued	290
Lots Sold	162
Clearance Rate	73%
Aggregate A\$	16,720,000
Average A\$	103,210
Top Price A\$	750,000

Breeding & Vendor

Dundeel (NZ) – Lady Moura colt
(Baystone Farm, Gnarwarre)

TBC

Magic Millions 2YOs In Training Sale

(Queensland)

2022 Results

Lots Catalogued	140
Lots Sold	87
Clearance Rate	81%
Aggregate A\$	6,855,500
Average A\$	78,799
Top Price A\$	500,000

Breeding & Vendor

Toronado (IRE) – Canterbury Hill colt
(A List Stud, Baddaginnie)

Dundeel – Lady Moura colt
Photos: Magic Millions and Inglis

THOROUGHBRED BREEDERS

Australia

Thoroughbred Breeders Australia is the voice of the breeding industry: we lobby federal and state governments, official bodies and racing authorities to ensure breeders are given the representation they deserve.

Recently we have worked hard on issues such as welfare, education and training, government funding for thoroughbred

research and mental health support for staff in the breeding sector.

Our strength lies in our numbers. Through increased representation of breeders, TBA will have greater effect when seeking to influence decisions on quarantine, biosecurity, taxation, animal welfare, gaming revenue and trade issues amongst many others.



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