

KAIMANAWAS OF NEW ZEALAND

Nº. 4 – January 2016

Petra received an in-foal mare from the 2014 muster, and is working towards introducing her into her horse trekking business, Surf&Turf, in Raglan.

Tell me about your farm in Raglan? On our 50 acres I have cattle, sheep, turkeys, ducks, chooks, cats and dogs – as well as ten horses including my Kaimanawa and her foal. Six of the horses are used in the trekking business.



How long have you been running Surf&Turf? I started in December 2013 with 5 horses, running treks over neighbouring farms and the beach.

When did you get your Kaimanawa? I got Diva from the 2014 muster. She is 7 years old, and had her foal on the 20th October.

Why did you choose to get a Kaimanawa? I wanted to save a one.

How would you describe your Kaimanawa? To start with she was sceptical, not trusting and very shy. Now she is very obliging, trusting and willing.

Before you got your Kaimanawa, what was your background and experience with horses? A little over 5 years ago Petra purchased her first horse, Lilly,

an unbacked 3yo standardbred who was needing a home. Two days later Lilly was delivered to the cattle yards and Petra's horse experiences began. From leading Lilly to sitting on her back for the first time in a few months, the next step was saving for a well fitting saddle



and getting some proper riding lessons. Unfortunately the first lesson ended early with a trip to hospital – but with a determination to teach herself with the help of YouTube and much practice. Petra says 'I suppose I had no choice but to have a partnership with my horse, she taught me to listen to her, then put her and my ideas together. Today



we hoon along the Raglan beach in the waves bareback and bridle-less. I feel confident enough to retrain all my horses who have issues with previous owners and turn them into respectful safe horses for my trekking business. I ride all my trekking horses in rope halter, and will do the same with Diva.'

How did you feel when she was delivered? I was excited, sad, and happy all at the same time.

What did you do in the first few months? I introduced her to the herd, but when I found out that she was in foal I turned her out.

Do you have a favourite memory from the first year? When I was able to stroke her head in the pasture. I had been able to wash her



down with the hose from the cowshed, do her feet, take her for a walk – all without a halter, but it was 8 months before she would let me touch her head.

What has been your biggest challenge? Mending her head wounds while she was still unhandled.

What has been your biggest success? Her gaining trust in me.

What stage is Diva's training at now? Not as far as I would have liked her to be due to horse trekking work. I can ride her

bare back, and have had a saddle on her. She also floats, so the next step once all the holidaymakers have gone is to take her to the beach to introduce her to the water and take her for a swim.

Do you have some plans or goals for your Kaimanawa?

I would like to introduce her into my horse trekking business and take little children for their first adventures on horseback. Diva is only 14hh, so a bit small for me.

What advice would you offer someone planning to get a Kaimanawa? Kaimanawas born in the wild are special, no interaction with humans.

They have an untouched soul, looking into their eyes there is a free spirit who wants to give 200%. Don't micromanage them, let them be part of you, but let them keep their spirit and be free together.

What facilities did you find useful to begin with? I had a small cattle holding yard.

Are there any books or authors you found useful? Petra had read about horses, how people interact with them, wild and domestic. Petra says 'I wanted to learn everything I could about horses and communication. I learned all I know from my horses – trust, leadership, communication, and softness. Diva is so responsive to it, and if it works then don't change it. That's how I feel.'



The Wild Horses' Perspective

The First Days

The newly mustered wild horses have had their lives turned upside down. Being captured and then separated from their family band members and close companions is traumatic for them. And, to add to that, they have been removed from their familiar home ranges. They have lost all that is near and dear to them.

Understanding the horses' predicament as they make their transition into captivity is helpful to the horse and makes it easier for them. It's hard for them to adjust initially so it's up to us humans to make it as easy for them as possible.

When they arrive off the truck, which is yet another traumatic experience, they are in a state of shock. Often they just shutdown, as it's all been just too much; this can sometimes be misinterpreted as being quiet and people take advantage of them being in this state and begin their handling. But, a shutdown frightened horse (or any being) cannot learn, or retain much, if anything at all, in this state – they can also become dangerous - because they can explode unexpectedly.

Giving the wild horses what they need most is up to the human. As prey animals, horses, and especially wild horses, are instinctively scared of new things, so the horses need time to figure out that everything new is not going to hurt them; that includes people and everything else in their environment.

They need the company of another horse or horses, food and water and to be left in peace for at least the first day/night. Putting another horse into an adjoining yard will help the new arrival to settle more. It would be wise for the horse provided for company be quiet and without a cover, as a horse wearing a cover can frighten the wild horse enough to have it attempt or even succeed in escaping.

All the Kaimanawa horses are different and will react accordingly. Some will be absolutely shutdown as previously mentioned. Some will be highly reactive and if pressured, will either attempt to jump over the yard railing or crash through it, while others can appear more confident. They will respond better with thoughtfulness and consideration from humans.

The next step

Introduce yourself quietly by entering the yard and standing still, while offering a big handful of cut long grass (long grass is more

appealing) or hay. If the horse is highly reactive, offer food through the fence at first. It may take some time for the horse to take food, just be patient... it's a big deal for the wild horse. Patience is key to helping the horse.

Get the horse used to you by entering the yard, offering food and then leaving, to let it be. If the horse is reacting strongly to your presence, only stay in with it a short time till it settles, then leave. That way he learns that you being in with him doesn't hurt. He has to learn you are trustworthy. Leaving while he is calm allows him to learn this.

Don't put the horse into a position so he thinks that he needs to defend himself. There should be no reason for him to bite or kick if you are aware of how the horse is feeling – putting too much pressure on him is unhelpful to the horse – and not safe either.

Go into the yard for short periods, several times throughout the day. Increase the time spent with the horse slowly. Some come on in leaps and bounds, taking food readily, others require more time, and some will take a lot longer. Resist the urge to reach out to touch the horse - wild horses don't want to be touched by us, they don't understand our intentions – they perceive humans as life threatening.

Wild horses senses are acute – they are aware of everything in their environment – so every movement you make should be slow, deliberate and smooth. Keep the environment quiet too if possible. Kaimanawas are extremely sensitive. Especially during this initial stage, they have no idea what lies ahead of them, so they're expecting more trouble. Keep in mind what they've been through already to reach this point... they've lost their family and their home, the only thing they have left is their life!

Being able to read the horse and use feel as a guide goes a long way. Be watchful, be aware - look for signs - read his face and body, they will show you how he's feeling. Notice his expression, his eyes, ears, mouth – are they relaxed or tight. Same with his body, is it reasonably relaxed or coiled tight and about to spring. We have to anticipate what he is about to do next and react before he does. Keep the horse calm by withdrawing just a bit or all together.

Be self disciplined. It's hard for us humans to do nothing when we are with horses, yet it is one of the most powerful tools we have. Just stand/sit with the horse, offer food by hand and wait... Patience, patience and yet more patience... It's not a race.

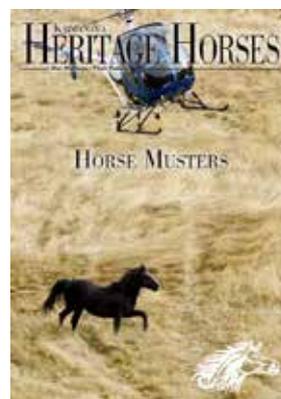
Robin Sisley

Author of *Eat the Wind*

Visit our website to learn more about getting a wild horse from the muster. You can download our booklet on the muster process, about the Kaimanawa horses, and options for getting a Kaimanawa Horse. There are also application forms for when you are ready to apply.

If you would like a Kaimanawa but don't want to do the initial handling or don't have the needed facilities, then we can put you in touch with registered handlers who can get your Kaimanawa ready for you. We also have Kaimanawas at our welfare centres that may be just what you are looking for.

Once your Kaimanawa is delivered you can contact us to ask for advice on any matter. Our experienced committee members and area representatives can point you in the right direction for a long and happy journey with your Kaimanawa.



www.KaimanawaHeritageHorses.org