

THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE'S LEADING STUD FARMS



Alabar Bloodstock

Tongala, Victoria

Australia

011-61-3-5859-2201

alabar@alabar.com.au

Alabar (NZ) Ltd.

Pukekohe

New Zealand

011-64-9-232-1800

alabar@alabar.co.nz

www.alabar.com.au

THE VIEW DOWNUNDER ~ HAROLD HOWE

New Zealand's NEVELE R STUD

Now in its 35th year, Nevele R Stud serves as home to many top North American stallions during their stays in New Zealand.

Imagine if you will Somebeach-somewhere standing contentedly in a paddock on the grounds of Nevele R Stud in New Zealand. It's an image Peter O'Rourke has almost every day.

That may or may not happen next year for the Christchurch nursery. If it does it will most definitely be a monumental landmark in the history of the farm which just celebrated its 35th anniversary.

Nevele R is one of the big boys in the southern hemisphere. The farm has been at it a long time and looks poised to be a factor for the foreseeable future.

Its origins lie in an impromptu meeting between property developer Wayne Francis and transplanted Australian bloodstock agent Bob McArdle. The result back in 1973 was the creation of the farm which began with 250 acres and the stallion Nevele Romeo, hence the name Nevele R Stud.

Today the farm stands eight stallions including Ontario shuttle horses Lis Mara and Badlands Hanover. Artiscape, Falcon Seelster, McArdle, Red River Hanover, Pforty Seven, Courage Under Fire, Live Or Die and Continentalman are also holding court this season. Then there is North American frozen semen from Muscles Yankee, Rocknroll Hanover, Dream Vacation and the late Artsplace and Holmes Hanover (NZ permits usage of semen from deceased stallions).

Last breeding season the farm served 1,700 mares and as of late November were looking at approximately 1,600 this year (including 500 from Australia).

In 1999 Francis succumbed to cancer and at the end of March last year McArdle retired. The farm in its entirety is owned by a family trust created by Francis and spearheaded by his daughter Helena.

"The board that oversees the trust is

full steam ahead as far as the farm is concerned," explains O'Rourke who serves as general manager.

"Helena in particular is very keen on the industry and in fact came with me to Canada and the United States in late October. She has a young family of her own but is very enthusiastic about Nevele R and definitely wants to do the right things to move it forward."

The farm sits just outside the city limits of Christchurch (population 400,000) which means the urban sprawl is almost on its doorstep.

"We're just 15 minutes from downtown so it definitely is desirable for development although I would think this global financial crisis will curtail things for some time. The long term plan takes this into consideration and at some point there may be a major relocation but things will continue on for the time



Photo courtesy of Nevele R Stud Ltd

Lis Mara, Badlands Hanover, Artiscape and Red River Hanover are among the North American stallions that stand at Nevele R Stud in New Zealand.

being,” notes O’Rourke.

By North American standards Nevele R Stud is unique. Its business plan is solely based on standing stallions. They do not breed horses for the market.

“New Zealand is a farming nation and it would be hard on the south island to find a farmer who does not have a broodmare. In the region of Southland which is at the bottom of the south island there is a total population of just 200,000 but there would be at least as many broodmares as there are in the greater Auckland area which alone has a population of over one million,” explains Ged Mooar the farm’s marketing manager.

“For a period of six or seven years the number of mares being bred was in decline but in 2007 the numbers took a spike but we think that because of the financial climate we will not see that again this year.”

The spike can be attributable to a favourable tax situation which came into

play in New Zealand (see November edition of *The Harness Edge*).

“For the breeding farms it was very important in how it allows us to write down the investment for new stallions and for racing the stake money took a big hike. And I don’t think that this has yet fully filtered down to the breeding industry,” says O’Rourke.

A decade ago the New Zealand Standardbred industry looked like it was in decline but a combination of factors kick-started it not the least being the arrival of sire Christian Cullen who for the record does not stand at Nevele R Stud.

“I cannot stress what an impact that horse has had on New Zealand. I suppose the closest analogy I can draw is the effect Meadow Skipper had on the game in the 1970s in North America. He has changed the breed and energized the sale of yearlings. People pay premiums for his offspring which leads breeders to pay his stud fee of \$25,000 which not that many



Photo courtesy of Nevele R Stud Ltd

Peter O’Rourke, farm manager of Nevele R Stud.

years ago would have been unthinkable," notes O'Rourke.

"And along the way Cullen has pulled along the fees of other horses. In fairness, I should say that the New Zealand Sires Stakes is relatively new by your standards but it has steadily grown in conjunction and it all has contributed for a good climate for horses."

The New Zealand breeding industry is dominated by pacers. There would be only 800 or so trotting mares in the country. Even so it is rather amazing at the aggressive nature of the New Zealand and Australian farms to pursue new sires, particularly New Zealand where the dollar sits at an unimpressive 54 cents US.

"Back in May our dollar was at 82 cents. Being a small country we have always been prone to wild fluctuations in currency rates so it can make it very difficult to strike deals for North American horses and now what the breeders want

are the Grade A horses," says O'Rourke.

Mooar has the task of attracting the business but Nevele R has a reputation for being among the very best marketers.

"We do not rely on just print advertising to do our work. We are on the road knocking on doors working with the 'have a cup of coffee' mentality and it's paid off over the years. It also allows us to get feedback from our customers."

Lis Mara is the new kid on the block this year. Nevele R purchased 50 per cent of the southern hemisphere rights for the lifetime of the horse for an undisclosed sum. His target book for this year is 150 and he appears to be right on schedule before returning to Emerald Ridge Farm in Rockwood, Ontario.

Nevele R Stud has a connection to Canada dating back when it began. Among the first stallions to stand at the farm was former Roger White pupil Timely Knight, a typically diminutive son of Good Time. At the time he was the richest pac-

ing stallion to come to New Zealand having won over \$500,000 and went on to sire two New Zealand Cup winners.

"Truthfully, we need to be adding a new stallion each year to keep on top of things. We think that now we have 10 of the top 20 stallions in the world but at the same time it has never been more competitive in the breeding business. If we want to continue to be a leader down here this is what we have to do. Really, it's a pretty simple plan," says O'Rourke.

And about that horse Somebeach-somewhere...

"You can print that when we were in Harrisburg for the sales we had dinner with Jim Simpson (President and CEO of Hanover Shoe Farms where Somebeach-somewhere is now standing). There's nothing more to say than that."

But that statement in itself speaks volumes and there is an empty paddock...



VISIT US AT www.theharnessedge.com FOR ALL THE LATEST NEWS

Plan to attend our
**Annual SBOA Awards Banquet and
 Stallion & Silent Auction**

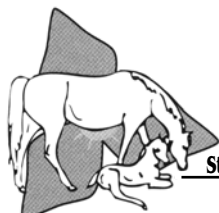


IM JUST SPECIAL
 2008 SBOA Filly Stakes Winner (Pace)



BELLA DOLCE
 2008 SBOA Filly Stakes Winner (Trot)

Photos by New Image Media



**Standardbred Breeders of Ontario
 Association**

Saturday, January 17, 2009.
 Delta Guelph Hotel & Conference Centre, Guelph, Ontario.
 Hotel rooms available at a special rate.
 Tickets: \$60 (includes parking)
 Information Seminar at 5 p.m., Cocktails at 6 p.m. and Dinner at 7 p.m.,
 Music and live band to follow.
 Call Patti Cunning (905) 854-1354 or Laurie Poole 519-678-3637.