

Jason Leitch - Judge

Originally from Narrabri NSW, Jason and his wife Rachel now run a cutting horse training and stud business from their property at Springsure. Many people may remember Jason when he performed with his steer Charba; Paint, his horse and numerous ducks and dogs at four Sydney Shows in the late 1990's.

Jason has the ability to train and communicate with all sorts of animals. Jason trained Charba the steer to stand on all fours on a reinforced milk crate whilst Jason stood on his back and cracked a whip! Jason was also able to ride Charba in a figure of eight whilst changing leads, and one day he played polo on him at Ellerston, Kerry Packer's Upper Hunter property.

Jason has a horse called Paint trained to do all sorts of tricks but also he has carried Jason to victory in two Man from Snowy River Challenges in 2003 and 2004 and the inaugural King of the Ranges Stockmans Challenge in 2004. This competition is a multidisciplinary horseman's challenge over ten different events including jumping, packing a pack saddle, riding a buck jumper, shoeing a horse, etc. Paint is now in semi-retirement with Jason's mother Trish who uses Paint each month for the Narrabri Riding for the Disabled.

For one year Jason worked under the legendary American horseman, Ray Hunt. Much of Jason's approach to training animals was learnt from Ray, the original horse whisperer and earlier this year he was invited back to participate in a tribute show at Fort Worth Texas to honour Ray Hunt after his death in 2009.

In 2004 Jason started training cutting horses for clients. The sport of cutting originated in Texas in the late 1800's when fences and yards were scarce so cowboys on specially trained horses would cut out cattle from the large mobs when they were ready to sell. In a cutting show, a rider goes into a herd, selects one beast and drives it away from the mob, when he has it on its own he then drops the reins and the horse works on its own to stop that cow from returning to its friends.

After just a few years in the cutting industry Jason won its premier event, the 2010 NCHA Futurity in Tamworth, Australia's richest performance horse event, from a record field of 145 horses. He entered six horses in the event and five made the finals, a feat considering this is their first show and each horse has had up to two years training. Also in Tamworth he won 2010 and 2011 NCHA Classic Challenge for five and six year olds.