

# Hoofbeats Celebrates our 45th Anniversary



*The Hoofbeats log cabin office, which is nestled into the trees on a semi-rural property just 30 minutes from Perth CBD.*

Life was a lot different in 1979, a year when Australia's population was under 15million, the average weekly wage was around \$150 and the median price of a house in Perth was \$38,600 and in Sydney it was \$50,700. It was in this year that four horse enthusiasts in Perth discussed the lack of a local publication that catered to their shared interest in horses, particularly Appaloosa horses, and that perhaps they could combine their skills to put together a magazine that would promote the horse scene in WA.

Given that one of the group had his own print business, and another had an extensive background in magazines, this foray into the world of equestrian publishing in the late 70's ensured the time and effort the four put in to the very first edition of Hoofbeats magazine would be professionally produced and worth its cover price of \$1.50.

David Nangle, who owned the print business, was the initial editor, Steve Rooke was the graphic artist and Sandy Hannan was the equestrian photographer who was already attending shows around WA every weekend to take photos and interview a few of the competitors. Sandy's husband Robert was already a successful commercial photographer who had worked in a number of different countries and as a photographer with Kerry Packer's Women's Weekly magazine, in-flight magazines for airline companies, and Time and Mode magazines. He also headed to shows and rodeos across the state to take photos when he was not on one of his many overseas assignments.

It was interesting to note that when the first issue came off the press Sandy, David and Steve were excited and absolutely thrilled with the result while Rob's expectations had been shaped by his involvement with high-end international and popular and well known magazines but he was realistic and over the years he made quality control his mission.

The first issue was well supported by the WA horse community with over three hundred subscriptions received prior to printing, and increasing to nearly six hundred within a few issues. This was all very positive and welcoming but each of these subscribers had to have a sheet of six labels hand-written with their name and address. It was all very hands-on and time consuming but it was effective at the time and clear when the last label was used the subscription had run out. Needless to say everyone in the office was pleased when this manual method was phased out and a computer introduced, allowing for a more streamline and efficient system.

From its inception as a part-time project, Hoofbeats magazine quickly garnered a dedicated following as the first magazine of its kind in Western Australia, catering to the state's horse owners and riders with its mix of

informative articles and coverage of local equestrian events. As the magazine's production started to considerably impact David and Steve's 'real' jobs, they passed the fledgling business on to the Hannans. Sandy, supported by Rob, stepped into the role of editor, and Hoofbeats moved from the 'dining room table' into Rob's commercial photographic studio in Perth's CBD, which saw the magazine produced in the centre of the city for many years. The continued growth of Hoofbeats and expanding staff numbers necessitated a move to a larger office, with a purpose-built log cabin office built on Sandy and Robert's semi-rural property 30 minutes south of the city being established in 1990. This location not only provided a scenic backdrop but also reflected the magazine's deep connection with the equestrian lifestyle.

While Rob usually preferred to stay in the background of the business, he played a huge role in its success and growth, managing subscriptions and accounts for many years after starting to wind down his commercial photography business in the late 90's. He built strong personal relationships with team members and many of the magazine's contributors, advertisers and stockists. He was always on hand to offer feedback on front covers and ultimately made the final decision in regards to cover design. He always had encouraging words for a job well done and was always the first out the door to help with unloading countless boxes of magazines as they arrived at the office to pack for subscribers every two months. As Sandy's role expanded as editor Rob was always there offering advice and encouragement and taking on many of the property and horse management roles so she could still combine riding, the magazine and equestrian photography. When rushing off for a dressage lesson Sandy would find the float hooked up, hay net installed, saddlery in the car and Rob loading her horse as she exited the office.

## National distribution

The decision to expand the magazine's distribution across Australia in 1992 proved to be a pivotal turning point, significantly boosting circulation and advertising, plus the number of industry professionals and well-known riders and trainers keen to contribute to the magazine's content. This content remained true to its ethos and resonated with horse owners and riders involved in all manner of equestrian pursuits as they sought out practical and inspiring information, increasingly aware of the role they could play in their horse's overall health and wellbeing.

One of the magazine's notable features is The Green Horse, the magazine was well ahead of the curve when this eight page feature was launched back in 1996.





Staff line-up December 1979.



Hoofbeats exhibited at and featured Equitana from its first Australian event. In 2012 our Team included Ian Smith, Sandy Hannan, Wendy Elks and Di Bawden.



The answering machine said we were out riding!! Sandy Hannan, Sue Manning and Jane Henning on Sandy and Rob's Appaloosa stallion, Tarcoo. Around 2000.



No, we do not spend ALL our time at lunch but staff are the most important aspect of any business and they work hard so we have to keep them happy. 2012 Hoofbeats Team from the left. Terry Schulz, Rob Hannan, Sandy Hannan, Ian Smith, Tracy Weaver Sayer, Caitlin Bolger, Carol Willcocks, Carol Watson, Katrina Bailey and Di Bawden.



Rob Hannan and office dog, Bear Hannan taking a break from the office.

Staff Christmas party 1997 or 98. Left back row: Marg Langan, Diane Bawden, Karen Watson, Sandy Hannan, Marg Forbes, Penny Stewart. Front row from left: Judy Hicks (not staff), Tracy Weaver-Sayer with Courtney, Di Rowlings and Kylie Vlasschaert.



Rob Hannan riding his Appaloosa mare, Auctioneer's Dream.



Long term Hoofbeats Team member, Tracy Weaver-Sayer with Linda and Pat Parelli.

Focusing on sustainable horse keeping and property management, The Green Horse was a finalist in the Ford Landcare Media Awards in 1997, highlighting its influence and importance in promoting landcare initiatives among horse property owners.

From its humble beginnings, Hoofbeats maintained its educational focus and release every two months for 45 years, with this edition marking issue number 271. It always has been and always will be a magazine that is centred around a love and respect of horses, a source of information that has provided enjoyment and advice for tens of thousands of readers over the years. For many it has been a valued resource carefully organised in issue order to be referred to regularly, while others have kept copies in a cluttered pile in the tack shed, readily shared with family, friends, agistees and competitors.

The magazine has evolved with the times and in recent years has reached a global audience via its digital format, although we hear from readers time and again that they continue to treasure their time relaxing with a printed copy of the magazine, switching off from their devices and thumbing through the pages when they make some 'me' time.

A lot has changed since 1979; there have been changes in the way we interact with and care for our horses, how we learn about caring for them and how that information is presented and accessed.

A lot has changed over the years at Hoofbeats too, most significantly with the loss of Rob to cancer in February. His commitment to Hoofbeats was unwavering until the very end; he pottered around the office and helped out wherever and whenever he could until early January, even helping with a box or two of magazines as they were readied for posting to subscribers in December. He pored over the pages of the February/March issue in the days before he passed away on his much loved property, taking the time to leave messages of thanks and support to each of the Hoofbeats team.

Rob was farewelled by family and friends on 13th March with a celebration of his life and legacy. The success of Hoofbeats and its place as the longest running independent equestrian magazine published in Australia was something he was incredibly proud of. His enthusiasm and dedication to producing a quality magazine will continue to inspire us as we move forward into the future with Hoofbeats.