



Press release
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Manfeild enhancements excite

LOOKING at the Manfeild equestrian facilities, a top figure in dressage sees a venue becoming comparable with one of the very best.

Wendy Hamerton is Sport Manager for Dressage New Zealand, which has chosen the landmark Feilding location for the New Zealand Pony and Young Rider Championship on January 19-20 and the even larger Bates New Zealand Dressage Nationals, on March 3-5.

These international standard events, both involving hundreds of competitors, are major additions to the Manawatu sporting calendar and seen as the first of many set to be seen at Manfeild over many years to come.

After visiting last week to see progress on the enhanced outdoor arena that will be key to the competitions, Mrs Hamerton is bursting with enthusiasm.

"It's fantastic, I feel like a kid with a new toy! We're really excited about being able to run national events at this venue.

"Our commitment is for the Bates Nationals to be the best dressage event ever held in New Zealand and I am confident we can do this at Manfeild. Our major sponsor, David Jones-Parry from Bates Saddles, travels to many events world-wide. He has been to inspect the venue and is also very excited.

"Everything just looks amazing and I can't wait until we start using it. All the competitors are looking forward to being at Manfeild."

In addition to the 7750 square metre stadium's indoor surface both the 2011 events will also require the outdoor arena that is being virtually quadrupled in size and reconfigured from a rectangle into an L-shaped arena, measuring 190 metres by 80 metres.

Made possible by \$423,000 funding from Pub Charity, this work is on schedule for end-of-month completion.

Dressage New Zealand has also contributed by investing in the construction of 68 permanent outdoor yards, which are also suitable for the various agricultural events held at the facility.

Mrs Hamerton says the emergent venue is one of which all New Zealanders can be proud.

New Zealand has a facility of truly national standing that, through its geographical location, was central for the whole of the country.

Indeed, it goes further than that - Mrs Hamerton says Manfeild is developing to be right up there with the globally-recognised setting created for the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

She is very familiar with the top Australian venue and can see Dressage New Zealand being able to develop the same standard of events offered across the Tasman.

"For the first time we are going to be able to offer riders and equestrian enthusiasts an event that comes close to what the Australians have been able to offer over the past decade."

That'll also inspire the strong domestic riding scene to even greater heights, she believes.

"It's already having effect. Because of the facility being offered to us, we have been able to expand our programme and offer more levels of riders the opportunity to participate."

The ability to seat large numbers of spectators and provide entertainment and quality catering are also powerful pluses. Manfeild's location within the Feilding precinct is another positive.

"All these great resources - from saddlers to cafes - are within walking distance. There's potential for it to become a real holiday experience.

"All this will develop a new following of the sport as well as prepare riders for international competitions overseas."

Dressage New Zealand's association with Manfeild began in 2008, when in conjunction with Massey University and the FEI, the world equestrian body based in Switzerland, it chose the venue for an international dressage forum.

That exercise was repeated with equal success in 2009, and in February this year a riders' squad training weekend was held in the stadium. The impending competitions are the next step.

Manfeild chief executive Heather Verry said she and her team are committed to seeing Manfeild become the centre of equestrian sport in New Zealand.

"The ongoing developments and these exciting events reinforce that the stadium is fulfilling a primary role, as a centre of excellence for equestrian on a national and international scale.

"We are particularly thrilled that Dressage NZ shares our vision and has become such a strong supporter.

"This is good for Feilding, good for the Manawatu, good for New Zealand. Dressage is among the most popular equestrian pursuits and this region is known for being a hotspot for equestrian activity."

The Young Rider Championship is followed by the Central Districts Regional Championships, on January 22-23, further enhancing a feast of dressage for the region.

Eventing, Special Olympics riding and a showjumping world cup qualifier have also been staged at Manfeild over the past 18 months.

The venue will also host an American Quarter Horse national show on February 23-27. This will also draw several hundred horses and riders.



Dressage New Zealand Sport Manager Wendy Hamerton, left, and Manfeild Park Trust chief executive Heather Verry pictured on the enhanced outdoor arena, on schedule for end-of-December completion.