

# HIGHLANDS HERALD

Voice for the Heart of Mpumalanga

Emakhazeni (Belfast), Emgwenya (Waterval Boven), Entokozweni (Machadodorp), Dullstroom & Sakhelwe, Kwena Basin, Elands Valley, Ngodwana, Kaapsehoop

July 2012

## Riding for horses around SA against African Horse Sickness

A story about Fever and Tarwood from Kaapsehoop Horse Trail's and their amazing journey two and a half year journey around SA with Isabel Wolf-Gillespie and Lloyd Gillespie. *By Isabel Wolf-Gillespie*

African Horse Sickness (AHS) is a highly infectious non-contagious, vector born viral disease affecting all species of Equidae. It is classified as an Orbivirus of the Reoviridae family of which there are 9 serotypes, all distributed throughout South Africa. It is endemic to Africa, and is characterised by respiratory and circulatory damage, accompanied by fever and loss of appetite. There is currently a vaccine against AHS but it is far from 100% effective. It is also expensive and not made available to all horse owners in SA. It's a controversial issue and there is a big outcry from the equine industry which is questioning whether enough is being done to develop a new vaccine. The question is whether Government is doing enough to protect the South African equine industry, whether it understands the full value and extent of the equine industry?

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Fever & Tarwood

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## Riding for horses around SA against African Horse Sickness

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### The expedition

The first time we met Fever and Tarwood we had no idea what wonderful and challenging experiences lay ahead for the four of us. Fever is a 14h chestnut registered Boerperd bred by Mr Adri van Niekerk in Badplaas. Tarwood is a 15h black Anglo Arab x Boerperd x Shire bred at Kaapsehoop Horse Trails. The two were loaned to us by 'Kaapsehoop Horse Trails' to continue our journey from the Limpopo Province onwards.

We began our journey along the "great, grey, green, greasy" Limpopo River and on our very first day Fever and Tarwood had to wade and swim across the Limpopo River into Zimbabwe at least 20 times. The river's edge was overgrown and thick, and we would cross when the South African bank was impassible. The journey along the river took weeks.

The heat in the Limpopo Valley is excruciating and we spent many days resting in the midday heat under trees, only to continue the day's ride when the sun had dipped. With the journey we became more aware of our horses, of ourselves, and of the land we were riding through; with it we became deeper connected to everything. It was an extraordinary relationship we formed side by side for day and night, day after day. Fever and Tarwood became even greater teachers than companions. A friend said that wasn't it amazing how the two horses loaned to us on this journey were the two that taught us the most. Fever, a red chestnut, we often associate red with fire, explosiveness and power. He's the most incredible athlete with a heart of gold, and ready to give everything to his rider with the right handling and care. Tarwood, meanwhile, was the friendliest

and funniest horse I've ever met. With great endurance and stamina, he was always happy to enjoy the moment.

The two horses travelled, but with long periods of rest in-between, about 4000km with us: all along the Limpopo River, then the Marico, Molopo and Kuruman rivers to Askham, down to the Namibian border and to Augrabies. Then it was along the Orange River and through the Richtersveld to Alexander Bay, before heading down to Port Nolloth. The journey along the West Coast took us through the Namaqualand National Park to Cape Town, before passing Hermanus, Still Bay, Mossel Bay, and from there inland on dirt roads to George and Knysna and through the Tsitsikama Forest to Plettenberg Bay. Then it was back to the coast and on to Port Elizabeth, and then to Port Alfred where we have let them rest with our own herd of horses.

Knowing only the Kaapsehoop mountains, Fever and Tarwood had never seen the ocean before. Their first encounter with the Atlantic Ocean at the Orange River Mouth was on a particularly unpleasant day and Fever was not impressed and blew nervously at "the moving water with white foam on top".

Although on 8 June the two made their way back home to the Kaapsehoop Horse Trails outside Kaapsehoop village where they are currently used on the horse trails, it was an exceptionally sad day for Lloyd and me. It was with a very heavy heart at the memories of the experiences we shared for the last 2 1/2 years: thank you to the two beautiful boys! Thank you also to Christo, Linda and Leon from Kaapsehoop Horse Trails (more info at [www.horsebacktrails.co.za](http://www.horsebacktrails.co.za)) for allowing Fever and Tarwood to be a part of our life journey around South Africa.

*Lloyd and Isabel are in the process of finalising a book on their journey. Visit their website [www.ridingforhorses.co.za](http://www.ridingforhorses.co.za) for more info.*

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