

THIS PAGE Katie Bridgeman leads her pony Mindy up the truck ramp after their first jumping competition; the wardrobe door and bathroom door to the right are finished in Melteca 'Snow Elm', chosen for its pale winter wonderland vibe.

OPPOSITE A bird's-eye view of the living and kitchen zone with its removable table, here displaying books, trophies and the Smartest on Parade sash Katie won at last year's Horse of the Year Show; the Moroccan-inspired candleholder on the kitchen bench is from Freedom Furniture.



IN THE PINK

Harnessing the power of colour on the horse show circuit

WORDS SHELLEY BRIDGEMAN / PHOTOGRAPHS TESSA CHRISP



THE SAYING GOES that ponies are like potato chips; you can't stop at just one. And that's certainly what we discovered. My daughter Katie's little show pony was soon joined by a horse for me, and then we bought Katie a jumping pony too. Suddenly our horse float was too small. It was time to invest in a truck big enough to transport three large quadrupeds to events around the North Island.

If you'd told us a few years ago we'd both end up as qualified truckdrivers, my husband Kevin and I would have laughed. But in June 2012, while the truck was being built, we took crash courses for our class 2 licence. I was first to pass and naturally I remind him of this from time to time, glossing over the fact that it was mainly because our courses were structured differently. Why let the truth stand in the way of a good story?

With a show most weekends over spring and summer (and jumping competitions scattered throughout the rest of the year) we clocked up about 10,000km in our first 12 months. I usually drive to the event and Kevin drives home. For the long haul between Auckland and Hawke's Bay, we swap over at Tokoroa.

Our first overnight stay in the truck was at last year's Poverty Bay A & P Show in Gisborne. After dinner Katie went to check on her pony in the yard and returned with eight teenaged show-jumpers who filed in to admire our pink upholstery – needless to say, not a traditional choice for horse truck interiors. >



THIS PAGE Shelley Bridgeman worked with interior designer Prudence Lane on the materials and finishes; the pink upholstery is Warwick's Macrosoft in Kiss and the roman blind closing off the "crawl-through" to the cab is in Warwick's Harvest fabric in Licorice; the kitchen drawers and refrigerator door are in Melteca 'Hakata'. **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top left) Shelley relaxes while Katie, 10, supervises Taffy, her friend's chestnut pony, as he eats his hay. The Missoni throw in the sleeping zone was a spontaneous acquisition that just happens to incorporate all of the truck's interior colours. A Diptyque scented candle and faux water lily sit on a metal tray. The petite all-white bathroom; bath towel by Emanuel Ungaro.

I wanted a hue that would work with (rather than fight against) the glossy white interior shell. The combination of no-nonsense black rubber flooring, white benchtop and mirror-finish cabinetry gives the sweetness of the pink a harder edge. There’s a combined kitchen, living and dining area and the space above the cab is the sleeping zone. We have an oven, hob, refrigerator, gas heating, sound system, video monitoring so we can view the horses while travelling – and a loading ramp that operates at the push of a button.

But our truck is just a minnow in the wider scheme of things. Olympian Zara Phillips’ six-horse lorry – which has a granite kitchen, satellite TV, dishwasher and his-and-hers wash basins – is enough to give anyone truck envy. And, locally, we see some seriously huge equine “motherships” when we’re out and about. I have the utmost admiration for the Hunterville woman whose seven-pony truck was featured in *NZ Life & Leisure*. Despite having three showjumping children, she managed to wear wedges, keep her white leather upholstery immaculate and bake double-decker banana cakes while on the road.

My own domestic efforts are far more modest. In the late afternoon we mark cocktail hour with nibbles and gin and tonics spiked with fresh squeezed lemon juice but by the time the horses are washed, plaited, rugged, bandaged, fed, watered and stabled, I’m not inclined to cook up a storm. Dinner is likely to be grilled sausages and boiled asparagus. Then there are a few ferocious rounds of Last Card before we all get an early night, ready for competition the next day. Hardly exciting, but we can’t imagine doing anything else with our weekends right now. ■

Q&A

How many horses and ponies do you have? It’s a moving target but at the moment we have three. Katie has her super jumping pony, Little Mindy Lou, and Coco, who has just turned three and will be a future show pony. And I have a mare called Dusty.

What do you love most about the truck? It’s totally self-contained and – with dedicated storage for saddles, bridles, feed and grooming gear – there’s a place for everything we need.

What do your friends think about your becoming a truckdriver? They think it’s hilarious and they tell me I need to wear flannel shirts and get a snake tattoo on my arm. I’m not planning on doing either of those things but I do sometimes hanker after a high-visibility vest like the professionals wear.

What are the specifications of the truck? Custom-built by the Hamilton-based Wade Group on an Isuzu FSR700 AMT 240hp, it measures 8.8m x 2.4m. Roughly half the space is devoted to living; three horses (or ponies) travel in the back section.

Shelley Bridgeman

THESE PAGES (clockwise from right) Shelley chats to Deb Ferris and her daughters Paris, 10, and Matisse Masterson, five, while Katie tends to Mindy. Katie and Mindy tackle a practice jump at the Waitemata Show Hunter’s event held at Woodhill Sands; Katie wears a protective helmet and vest while jumping. Shelley loads and secures the ponies for the trip home; padded dividers and rubber flooring help to keep them safe while travelling. Two wall-mounted speakers in the horse bay deliver soothing music while a small video camera ensures there are no equine high jinks en route.



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