

BALLANTRAE FIESTA

Our beautiful little mare Ballantrae Fiesta (Toorigal Danny Boy x Aran Francesca) came to use at a time when we really needed a trustworthy pony. My daughter, Emme, had taken a nasty fall off her Arab x pony and lost all confidence. A few days after the fall, Fiesta was advertised in the new addition of Horse Deals. After contacting the owners we arranged to meet at the WPNEC where Fiesta and her rider were competing at an Interschool Dressage competition. I could not believe the movement on this little pony and after she had finished her test, Emme had a ride. I knew then that Fiesta was exactly what I was looking for.

One month later, on a freezing winters night in pouring rain, our girl arrived from Shepparton. From that moment on, a love has grown with this little mare that I have never experienced in 40 years of owning horses.

Emme and Fi's first event was three months later at the Geelong Show in the pony club and Connemara classes. Since then they have done numerous competitions winning and placing in many of them. Whilst out at competitions I am constantly asked, "What breed of pony is that", and I proudly answer "Fi is a purebred Connemara". Fiesta may not be the type of connemara pony that the Show Ring judges are looking for, but to my daughter and myself she is the greatest of them all. In two years, Emme and Fi have gone from competing at Pony Club Grade 5 level to currently competing at Grade 3 level and at a recent pony club competition jumped a Grade 1&2 (combination) level without any faults. Not bad for a pony only 13.2hh. At the recent APSB Pony Activity Day, Fiesta was awarded the "Best Performed Connemara" of the day after winning 3 jumping competitions, placing 4th in another, placing 5th in the Working Hunter and 4th in the Handy Mount.

At home you can often see Fi and Emme galloping around the paddock bareback and occasionally jumping over jumps in between the gallops. Sometimes the jumps reach 1 meter +. It is the trust the Emme has gained in Fi that allows her to ride her so confidently. Emme often has friends come over for a ride who are inexperienced riders. Fi helps out by giving the friends a ride and considering she is a pony that loves the fast lane, she never does anything wrong. It never ceases to amaze me how she reacts to inexperienced riders as opposed to experienced riders. Every now and again the bad angel comes to visit Fi when she decides she doesn't want to be ridden. Fi will watch Emme gathering the tack together, then all of a sudden she is off. We spend the next ten to fifteen minutes chasing Fi from one end of the paddock to the other. Watching Fi running along with her head and tail in the air, ends up with Emme and I laughing hysterically. Even my husband stands at the fence watching the entertainment. All of a sudden Fi decides she has played with us enough and stands still waiting to be caught. Emme figures a least she is warmed up ready for flatwork or jumping. Occasionally Emme and Fi will go for a ride around the township, even with dogs rushing at her, Fi is not fazed and she just keeps going along happily.

Unfortunately Emme is growing too tall for Fi and by the end of the year she will need a larger Connemara. We are planning for Fi to go to stud so that this outstanding bloodline of hers will remain for the future. I feel that the Connemara pony is one of the best breeds of ponies there is, with their ability to be an allrounder. I also feel that Ballantrae Fiesta is a very special ambassador for the Connemara breed.