

So you are thinking of entering Demo & Dabble but you would like to know a little more?

What is Demo & Dabble?

Demo & Dabble is an event designed by a passionate working group of equestrian volunteers with the recreational or grassroots rider at its heart.

The idea came from our 2023 ESNZ Strengthen & Adapt roadshows where equestrians identified a need for an event that was **lower levels, fun, safe, multi-disciplinary, not necessarily competitive and with a social element.**

Our first Demo & Dabble event was hosted by the Waikato Equestrian Centre in November of 2024. We engaged 8 passionate ambassadors who have a wealth of experience in the various disciplines – Dressage, Jumping, Eventing, CTR / Endurance and gathered them together to design a “Demo” (Demonstration) that ran a little bit like a mini-clinic.

During the Demo sessions our riders came along on foot and spent some time with ambassadors of each discipline to watch, learn, ask questions. This part of the event is similar to what you may have seen at the likes of “Equidays” – except instead of being on the outside of the arena spectating – you are in the arena with the ambassadors and have the opportunity to connect with other like-minded equestrians and our fabulous ambassadors – first hand.

The “Demo” part runs before the “Dabble” so you can learn as much as you want to before giving it a go. Demo's all ran slightly differently at the North Island event depending on the discipline, but the approach was similar in that during the Demo participants gather on foot either at a yard or in a ring depending on the discipline to watch, learn, question and participate on foot.

NOTE – You are welcome to attend the Demo part of the event FREE OF CHARGE. If you would like to participate in the Demo & Dabble the cost is \$50 per discipline. For this you will get a 1 – 1.5 hour demonstration clinic followed by a 1 – 2 hour ridden session where you can “dabble” in the discipline(s) all the while supported and coached as much or as little as you wish by our fabulous and knowledgeable ambassadors!

EXAMPLE the Jumping Demo at the North Island event featured 2 demonstration riders. Participants gathered at the sand arenas and spent time with the ambassadors learning all about the “need to knows” to enjoy a day at a jumping show – things like : what you can wear for differing shows, what gear the horse might wear, what rules you need to know, how to warm up best and what kinds of things might you need to know in the warm up ring, how the show typically would run etc. During this session participants can ask all those burning questions that come to mind – no holds barred!

Next the demonstration riders did a small course of jumps and participants were able to observe and listen to the ambassadors explain what they were doing as they rode and again – ask any questions that came to mind. After this, participants went on a course walk along with the 2 ambassadors to learn how best to approach the course.

At the completion of the “Demo” participants were able to head back to the yards, tack up their horses and come back to have a “Dabble” The idea behind the “dabble” is to give participants a chance to try a “training ring” style event but to have the support of the ambassadors at their side. Think of a group clinic situation with a friendly bunch of people and 2 passionate and experienced “clinicians” (ambassadors) at your side to coach you while you do as much or as little as you feel comfortable doing in the ring.

Some of the comments from our North Island participants included :

'It was a safe and friendly environment - I was encouraged to try a 2B dressage test and even though I am not at that level I felt comfortable giving it a go! It was great to get the judges perspective as well and tips for how it all operates!'

'It was so good having the Ambassadors help with test calling, giving tips and building confidence to having lessons on X country.'

'Highlight for the dressage- sitting in the dressage judge's backseat and seeing what they see and why they mark what they mark.

Highlight eventing - popping round the 65 cm course with my young green 5-year-old and then giving the 80 cm a go and he went fabulously round them.

Showjumping - getting great feedback from the ambassadors on allowing my horse to find his feet and not worry too much about trying to put him anywhere in front of the jump- he needs to figure it out for himself.

CTR - finding out what a fabulous sport this is, and very inclusive and friendly and how awesome to be able to do this in some of the most beautiful places/ farms in NZ. The ambassadors were so passionate and totally inspiring!'

'Again, just so helpful. I think the positive vibe they created really helped us feel at ease but also got so much out of the trainings. The energy then translated to the riders who were all very positive and encouraging with each other.'

Sponsorship & prizes

A big part of our intention for Demo & Dabble is to help people feel at ease, included, safe to ask questions and to give a great collection of tools and learning that make it easier to head out to your local training days or shows and feel confident to give it a go.

Because the event is "non-competitive" we gave out prizes in each discipline to riders who demonstrated excellent 'sportsmanship & horsemanship'.

It's all about getting out there with your horse and fellow equestrians, having a go, looking after your horse and putting their needs first, and supporting your fellow equestrian to have a go too!

At the North Island event we were delighted to have incredible sponsorship from our 4 discipline sponsors – Saddle & Canter (Dressage), Nztrack (Jumping), Beyond the Bit (Eventing), Equissage NZ (CTR).

The sponsors generously donated \$250 each to their respective discipline to help subsidize the entry fees to keep these as low as possible for riders. They also gave 2 x \$100 vouchers or prize packs that we were able to award to 2 riders in each discipline for showing excellent sportsmanship & horsemanship on the day. These were selected and awarded by the ambassadors.

But the prizes didn't stop there – we also had a heap of spot prizes to give away from Ecohorse and Vetpro!!

For our South Island event we are excited to have the following incredible sponsors on board who are also subsidizing \$250 per discipline to bring entry costs down for riders PLUS they will also give 2 x \$100 vouchers or prize packs per discipline to be awarded by our ambassadors for Sportsmanship & Horsemanship.

They are : Equissage NZ (Dressage), Nztrack (Jumping), Beyond the Bit (Eventing), New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing (CTR).

Then there are the spot prizes galore from Vetpro NZ, Bravepants, Melwood Equestrian and FMG insurance.

Social Element

Aside from rubbing shoulders with some amazing and inspiring ambassadors all weekend you will also find yourself in a community of like-minded equestrians who have similar aspirations to you. To add to this, we have a sponsored BBQ at the events for you to come along to and enjoy.

We were delighted to have FMG insurance supply the BBQ at our North Island event and we are in the process of landing on our South Island luncheon BBQ sponsors for our South Island event – no need to pack lunch!

Soi there you have it – the event is set for the 22nd & 23rd of March at the fabulous Dunstan Horsefeeds NEC Christchurch and all it needs now is you!

Our Demo & Dabble Facebook event has quite a following and we are posting more exciting reveals, information and sponsors each day.

Follow the event here : <https://www.facebook.com/share/1H8CfYEW24/>

We can't wait to see you there!

For any queries, questions or feedback please feel encouraged to contact Ashra McAvinue our ESNZ National Development Manager for Strengthen & Adapt.

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