

Media Release

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Historic China mission creates a sporting win win

An historic trade mission to China this month has achieved a number of milestones for the Australian equestrian industry. Meanwhile the Chinese are keen to learn from the visitors to boost their equine prospects for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The independent market visit, led by the Hunter Export Centre, featured the Australian Stock Horse Society (ASHS). Notable “firsts” during this inaugural ten day tour by ASHS representatives included:

- Insights into the application of traditional Chinese medicines with horses by the Faculty of Veterinary Science at Nanjing University
- The first ever game of Polocrosse in China. Polocrosse was invented in Australia in 1938
- The first ever game of Polo between a team of Chinese versus Australian representatives. It was played on a sand race track
- An agreement for sharing of information between the *Chinese Horse Industry* magazine and the *ASHS Journal*.
- Invitation to attend the Chinese Horse industry forum in Beijing early in 2005
- Invitation to feature in the Chinese Equestrian Year Book – a definitive resource for the industry in China
- A demonstration by Australian farriers which included identifying and resolving current hoof care management issues in China.

The Society began researching its export potential following the 2000 Olympics and then secured financial support from the NSW Department of State and Regional Development to employ a business development co-ordinator.

Australian Stock Horse Society chief, Mr Steve Guihot said, “A recent study of Society members showed that almost 60% stated that they were either quite or very interested in developing their export potential. Also in the past six months we have seen a doubling of traffic from South East Asia to the Society’s official website.

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“Our new business development co-ordinator - Ray Hynes - has put the two together and worked closely with the Hunter Export Centre to convert this interest from China into a comprehensive trade mission,” Mr Guihot added.

A meeting earlier this year of Upper Hunter ASHS members, supported by the Coal and Allied Community Trust, to explore opportunities exceeded expectations. From that initial meeting a group of 15 people representing various interests in the equine industry participated in the recent independent market visit to China.

In Australia the Society promotes this as the “*breed for every need*”; however preparatory research indicated that the Chinese market would be interested in the breed for recreation and sport, rather than for work. This was therefore incorporated into their selection of the delegation team and the mission’s itinerary.

Mr Guihot added, “Because the market is relatively under-developed, the Chinese were particularly interested in accessing our skills in training and horsemanship, in addition to acquiring the horses themselves.

“Therefore we went equipped with a range of translated materials and resources to ensure that we got our message across very clearly and these proved to be a very worthwhile investment.” Mr Guihot added.

The ten-day mission departed Sydney on 24 September 2004 and visited Beijing, Nanjing, Wuhan and Shanghai. It met with forty riding clubs in Beijing then travelled to Nanjing, home to a new state of the art 2000 acre equestrian centre before flying onto Wuhan to attend the second national horse festival.

The 14 person mission party was led by Hunter Export Centre’s Don Champagne and Helen Xie, Australian Stock Horse Society’s Steve Guihot and Ray Hynes plus the Society’s Honorary Veterinarian Bill Howey, farriers, breeders, equine product and service suppliers and a representative from Scone TAFE. The group was formed with the assistance of Coal & Allied Community Trust.

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EDITOR’S NOTES: ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN STOCK HORSE SOCIETY:

1. The Australian Stock Horse Society has 9000 Members and has registered over 150,000 horses since establishing itself in 1971.
2. The Society is the largest organisation of recreation/work horses in the country.
3. Its mission is to maintain the heritage and to promote the bloodlines and high performance of the Australian Stock Horse among equestrian activities and the general public. It aims to (i) preserve the heritage and identity of the Australian Stock Horse; (ii) promote the development and popularity of Australian Stock Horses throughout Australia and the world and (iii) maximise the benefits of owning a Registered Australian Stock Horse and being a Member of The Australian Stock Horse Society.
4. The ASHS is headquartered in Scone, NSW and currently employs ten staff.
5. **For more see www.ashs.com.au**