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Women Jockeys in New Zealand

Female riders are so much a part of New Zealand's racing scene now that it's hard to imagine our racing without them. And at a time when women hold the highest positions in the country (Prime Minister, Chief Justice and Governor-General), it's hard to believe that women won the right to hold professional jockey licences in New Zealand only 24 years ago.

- During the late 1960's and early 1970's women were allowed to ride in non-betting races reserved especially for them with names like Powder Puff Derby, but the (male) racing administrators of the time proved very reluctant to go any further than that.
- **Linda Jones** of Cambridge was the first woman to apply for an apprentice jockey's licence, in September 1976. She was refused, on the grounds that she was "too old, married and not strong enough." This was despite the fact that she had won the inaugural Qantas International Women's Handicap at Rotorua (held during International Women's Year in 1975) and was considered by many people to be the best female rider in the country.
- Canadian jockey **Joan Phipps**, invited to New Zealand for the 1976 Qantas Lady Riders Series, was refused permission to ride in tote races here.
- Supported by the Rotorua, Waikato and Stratford Racing Clubs, the Series grew to four races in 1977. These three clubs, senior racing journalist John Costello and a determined group of women riders around New Zealand proved to be strong, and ultimately successful, advocates for female jockeys.
- Finally, in July 1977, the New Zealand Racing Conference approved the licensing of women as jockeys.
- The first woman to ride against male jockeys in a New Zealand betting race was **Joan Phipps** and she made the most of a memorable occasion by riding Daphalee (a mare, of course!) to victory in the Te Hinemoa Handicap at Te Awamutu on 1 November 1977.
- On 15 July 1978, four New Zealand women, **Vivienne Kaye** at Trentham, and **Joanne Hale, Joanne Lamond** and **Sue Day** at Waimate all made their professional riding debuts.
- A week later, on 22 July 1978 21-year-old **Sue Day** of Christchurch became the first New Zealand professional female jockey to ride a winner when she won the Waybrooke Handicap on Jaws at Timaru.

Linda Jones

In 1978-79, the first full season that women rode as professionals in New Zealand, 14 women rode winners. During that year Linda Jones (who had reapplied for her licence early in 1978 after giving birth to her daughter Clare a few months earlier) rapidly emerged as a star of New Zealand racing.

Apprenticed to her husband, trainer Alan Jones, Linda had her first professional ride on 12 August 1978. She rode six winners in the first five weeks of the 1978-79 season. This was the beginning of a stunning season of firsts for Linda:

- The first women in the southern hemisphere to ride four winners in a day.
- The first woman to ride a winner at Ellerslie or Trentham, and the first to compete in the Auckland, Sydney or Wellington Cups.
- The first woman in Australasia, the United Kingdom, Europe or North America to ride a Derby winner (Holy Toledo in the Wellington Derby).
- The first woman to ride a winner against male professionals at a registered meeting in Australia (riding Pay The Purple to victory on 7 May, 1979 in Brisbane).
- The first woman in racing to be awarded the MBE for her achievements in the sport.

Injured in January 1979 and unable to ride for ten weeks, Linda did well to finish her first season with 49 wins, in equal tenth place on the jockeys premiership, and fourth on the apprentices list behind Jim Cassidy and Greg Childs, both now leading jockeys in Australia.

It was a fine beginning to a record of success that New Zealand's women riders have been adding to ever since:

- **Dianne Moseley** was the first female jockey to win a Group One race in Australia when she won the Foux Cup on Double You Em at Doomben, Queensland on 10 July 1982.
- **Maree Lyndon** became the first women jockey to win a major Cup race when she rode Lord Reims to victory in the Adelaide Cup on 18 May 1987.
- On 18 June 1997 **Cathy Tremayne** rode six winners at the Ruakaka meeting.
- In the 2000-2001 season **Lisa Mumby** finished third on the New Zealand jockeys table with 84 wins, and **Trudy Collett** was 13th with 58 victories.
- Forty-four women are among the jockeys licensed in New Zealand for the 2001-2002 season and thirty-eight of the 74 currently registered apprenticeships are held by women.

- However, one major challenge remains to be met. A female jockey has not yet won the New Zealand premiership. The first woman in Australasia to win a jockeys title was **Bev Buckingham**, winner of the 1982 state premiership in Tasmania, Australia.

References:

Racing Annual, 1977, 1978 and 1979, edited by John Costello (Moa Publications)

Miller's Guide, 2000 (Miller Form)

New Zealand Racing Calendar (New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing)

**Leading New Zealand Female Jockeys
by total number of career wins, to 31 July 2001**

* indicates a current licence-holder



1. *Trudy Collett 586
2. * Linda Ballantyne 538
3. Debbie Healey 499
4. *Cathy Treymane 464
5. Maree Lyndon 428
6. Lisa Cropp 347
7. Lee Rutherford* 340
8. Judy Lawson* 332
9. *Judy Cameron 323
10. Leanne Isherwood 265

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