



# National Thoroughbred Week Pilot *Exceeds Expectations*

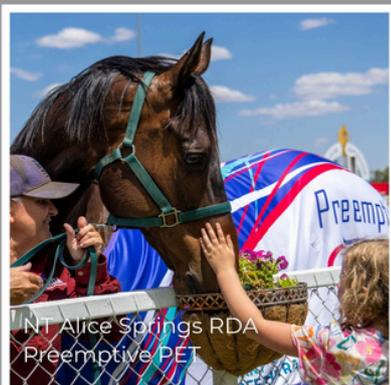
ARTICLE BY **TAI RYAN** | IMAGES COURTESY OF **NTW'S NETWORK OF VOLUNTEER PHOTOGRAPHERS**

**T**he inaugural National Thoroughbred Week has been hailed a resounding success, with over 5,000 people attending events across Australia and New Zealand, and early signs indicating significant growth in future years.

Delivered as a pilot program, National Thoroughbred Week invited the general public behind the scenes of the thoroughbred industry, with operations such as racing stables, breeding farms, retrainers, and race clubs opening their doors free of charge. Modelled on Britain's National Racehorse Week and New Zealand's Open Farms Day, the initiative aimed to increase transparency, education, and community connection while highlighting the care, professionalism, and welfare standards underpinning the industry.

Across the week, 84 host events were delivered, involving a total of 105 hosts and partners across Australia and New Zealand. Events were staged in every Australian state and territory, as well as across both the North and South Islands of New Zealand. Host sites included 33 trainers, 26 stud and broodmare farms, 21 race clubs, as well as pre-training centres, veterinary clinics, education providers, syndicators, auction houses, and nine Off The Track and rehoming facilities.

Fifteen officially registered Off The Track Thoroughbreds were part of the events, reinforcing the week's strong focus on life after racing. Audience engagement was high, with more than 650,000 reached across social media and 97.6 per cent of attendees indicating they would attend a National Thoroughbred Week event again.



NT Alice Springs RDA  
Preemptive PET



NSW Strathearn House  
Godolphin



NSW Strathearn House  
Godolphin



Volunteer-led organiser and committee member Vicky Leonard said the response exceeded expectations for a first-year pilot.

*“This was only the pilot, so we learned a lot, but given it was year one, we were very pleased with how it all went,”* Leonard said.

*“People were genuinely curious, asked thoughtful questions, and really valued the chance to see the industry up close. The willingness of participants to collaborate and the passion they clearly have for the industry made the entire week incredibly rewarding.”*

Across Australia and New Zealand, many events reached capacity, including those hosted by major trainers such as Chris Waller, Ciaron Maher, and Gai Waterhouse and Adrian Bott. Educational experiences also proved popular, with facilities such as Thenford Farm drawing strong interest from attendees keen to understand how a horse begins its riding or racing journey.

In Australia, other participants included Yulong Stud, Swettenham Stud, Godolphin Northwood Park and Woodlands, Aaron Bain Racing, Gawler and Barossa Jockey Club, North Bloodstock, Gold Coast Turf Club, Racing Hearts Therapies, Silverdale Farm, Alice Springs Riding for the Disabled, The Industry School, Armidale Stud, Perth Racing, and the Australian Turf Club. Victoria’s JW Equestrian saw a record-breaking 1089 people walk through their gates.

In New Zealand, hosts of their 23 events included Trelawney Stud, Kezia Murphy Racing, Cambridge Stud, Pukekohe Park, Little Avondale Stud, Monacurragh Lodge, Ritchie Murray Racing, Byerley Park, and Jess Land Equestrian.

Leonard said moments of genuine education and perspective-shifting conversations were among the most powerful outcomes of the week.



VIC Three Bridges Thoroughbreds

*“Gai (Waterhouse) and Adrian (Bott) invited a small group to learn about barrier education, and the people there were absolutely blown away by it,”* she said.

*“At another event, trainer Jack Pilkington took the time to walk through concerns raised by someone who was anti-racing. By the end of the session, having seen the horses and the processes in place, she had completely changed her view. That’s exactly what the week was about.”*

The organising committee is now focused on building on this momentum in 2026, with ambitions to expand the program, increase participation, and continue strengthening public understanding of the thoroughbred industry at a grassroots level. Based on feedback from attendees and participants, the dates for 2026 will be expanded across two weeks from Friday 20th to Monday 30th November.

*“Even though it’s a national program, it’s really built community by community,”* Leonard said.

*“Now that word is spreading, and we understand what resonates most with audiences, there’s huge potential to grow this into something truly special in the years ahead.”*

Sponsors and partners of the inaugural event included New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing, Thoroughbred Breeders Australia, Godolphin, Arrowfield Stud, Rick Gold, Thoroughbred Racing NT, Racing Victoria, Go Bloodstock, Melbourne Racing Club, Agrifutures Australia, Racing South Australia, Racing Queensland, Thoroughbred Breeders NSW, Racing WA, and Apteum. A full list of sponsors and partners can be found at [thoroughbredweek.com.au/sponsors](http://thoroughbredweek.com.au/sponsors).

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*“We absolutely loved the events we attended and were on a high for a few days. We have recommended friends and family to attend in the future. We are extremely grateful for these wonderful experiences.” - Attendee at Yulong Stud & Avenel Equine Hospital, VIC*

*“Pear Tree Farm were absolutely amazing hosts. Their farm is incredibly beautiful and the care and love the horses receive there, is evident as soon as you drive through the farm gate. Anna and Michael pour their heart and soul into the horses at their farm, and it shows. So interesting to hear more about Anna's great work with the Foal Foster service she passionately works with. Brilliant day!” - Attendee at Pear Tree Farm, NZ*

*“I think we all have a responsibility to demonstrate to anybody who wants to come and have a look how our industry runs and how good custodians we are of livestock. I hope they come away with an experience of awe and share that experience going forward.” - Brent Taylor, Managing Director, Trelawney Stud.*

*“Having the local community come in and see how we work and how we operate and what we do is very important to us, and it's opened up a world maybe they've never seen before, and opened their eyes to an industry, and the jobs and roles that are created within this industry, which is something that could be very interesting to them, their children or grandchildren to possibly be involved in.” - Claudia McDougall, Marketing and Communications, Yulong Stud.*

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To get involved in the next National Thoroughbred Week as a sponsor, host, or planning sub-committee volunteer, please contact: [hello@thoroughbredweek.com.au](mailto:hello@thoroughbredweek.com.au)



NZ Byerley Open Day Nov 2025