

RACING TO SUCCESS

A LOVE OF HORSES

writer **PETER WHITE** // photographer **ALAN STEVENS**

"I love everything about the job. I just love horses, I love working with them and I absolutely love riding them," says KATIJA CHERRIE. The 19-year-old has been a stablehand with Te Akau Racing, based in Matamata, for two years.

Te Akau is one of New Zealand's most successful stables. Last season, they topped the premiership with 101 wins and are proud of recognising the contribution each individual team member makes.

Katija loves working for them even though the job involves very unsociable hours.

"I am assistant foreman at one of the five barns and we have 50 horses (out of about 159 horses) in work at the moment. I also ride track-work in the mornings. We are at work at 3.15am, so early starts. It is not always easy, especially in the winter when it is cold and raining. We feed the horses breakfast and then get them all down to the track about 4.30am.

"The horses get worked every morning. They either get ridden or they go swimming in a pool and there is also a treadmill for them to use. Everyone has their favourite horses and horses they don't get on with. They are all so different."

Katija really enjoys race days when she travels to the meetings. She particularly likes parading the horses in the birdcage in front of the main grandstand before each race.

"It is nice when you have worked with a horse for so long and you finally get to go to the races with it. It is great if it wins. You can't beat the winning feeling."

Earlier this year, Katija went to the Gold Coast in Australia, which was a career highlight.

"That was my first time taking horses overseas. It was a great experience. We had three horses over there, two will be racing again this season and one has recently been retired to stand at Cambridge Stud. It was a great opportunity for me to be over there with them."

In Year 12, her final year at Hastings Girls' High School, Katija took Geography, English, Maths and an EIT Trades Academy course – as at that stage, she was keen to pursue building work.

She has no regrets about doing the trades course but her love of horses was always going to win out.

"My mum rode all the time and we always had horses on the farm growing up. I was involved with pony club when I was younger and as I got older I got



more competitive in the show jumping side. I was out competing pretty much every weekend in the summer."

Katija says working in the racing industry is very rewarding but you have to be totally dedicated to

the job to enjoy it and do well.

"You have to be willing to put in the hours. If you love it, it doesn't bother you. The key things you need are a good attitude, a hard work ethic and be willing to learn."

KEY FACTS



- **KATIJA CHERRIE** WORKS AS A **STABLEHAND** AT **TE AKAU RACING** IN **MATAMATA**.
- SHE THOROUGHLY ENJOYS HER JOB AND IS **PASSIONATE ABOUT HORSES**, SAYING THAT **RACE DAYS** ARE A **HIGHLIGHT OF HER ROLE**.
- **KATIJA** RECOMMENDS THE **RACING INDUSTRY** FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HORSES AND ARE **WILLING TO PUT IN HARD WORK AND ADJUST TO DIFFERENT WORKING HOURS**.



For more information on careers in the thoroughbred racing industry, visit <https://careers.loveracing.nz>