

# The Kiwi equivalent of a horse whisperer

By PHIL MURRAY

HE is the New Zealand equivalent of the Horse Whisperer.

Andrew Froggatt doesn't exactly whisper to horses, but by using a method called natural horsemanship he can persuade the large animals to do his bidding without using force.

Andrew, 25, encountered the technique about four years ago when he was doing a horse management course in Geelong, Australia. He later worked there for about eight months, breaking in and re-educating problem horses under the supervision of an expert.

When he felt he had a good understanding of the art he returned to New Zealand to spread the word.

"Basically it is a matter of understanding horses. They are talking to us all the time. It is just a matter of reading the signals," he said.

The training involves the subtle use of pressure to make the horse understand what is want-



**HORSE PLAY** - Andrew Froggatt tests the obedience of his horse Rocky.

ed. Ultimately it leads to the rider having full control, so that the horse won't do anything unless it is asked and the rider is able to guide the horse without reins or saddle.

Before he even attempts to get on a horse Andrew takes it through six "pre-flight checks". These are manoeuvres where the horse must

learn to respond quickly and accurately to Andrew's command.

"Once the horse is doing that correctly it is saying it is ready to be ridden," he said.

"Once you have gained their trust there is nothing they won't do for you."

Andrew is based at the Cleveland Stables in Ohariu Valley, but he has been busy travelling to Waikanae, Otaki, Upper Hutt and Wairarapa teaching owners how to handle their animals.

He said that while the horses learn quickly, their owners take more time.

"Most problems with horses are caused by people," he said. "There are not many horses that are naturally inclined to harm people."

He said there is no breed that the training won't work on.

"Even thoroughbreds are no problem. They are highly strung but trainable."

● For more information ph 479 9408 or 025 230 0881.