

Embryo Transfer

by Jane Vallings, June 2002

How it happened and what happened next.



Above: Bates Duplicate, all grown up now, competing at HoY 2009

Many of you will have heard the story of Antipodes; nine months old, still on the mother, chestnut; a completely wild, unhandled filly by Allermund out of a Witzbold mare.

Having tamed her with much help, I showed her in hand for three years very successfully. She had a foal as a 4 year old, "Percival Gull". Antipodes started her showjumping career as a five year old with my son in law, Lance Blair. She was obviously special.

Last year, (2001), when she was 15 years old, my family and I decided that we had to try Embryo Transfer to reproduce the mare while she was still competing full time, every week-end, with long, long travel in between.

We chose Dream Boy to be the sire. He was near by and is very much built like Antipodes.

Now most breeders would elect to send the mare to a Veterinary Centre for this complicated procedure and she would be out of work for several weeks – this was not an option for us, as my Granddaughter, Emma, was competing with Antipodes every weekend in very competitive Young Rider events.

We worked out with our local Kumeu Vet, when we would P.G. the mare into season- we could not rely on her natural cycle. This is where Dan Shaw and his team came into the picture. Dan agreed to come up to Kumeu and carry out the flushing of the embryo.

The P.G. was carried out early in November:

Antipodes was served by A.I. five days later.

Meanwhile, Dan P.G'ed three more mares, one in Matamata, one in Clevedon and one in Karaka. These were the promising recipient mares.

We had to wait eight days from the service date.

On the 7th day I had no idea what would happen next. You can't scan at this early stage.

Day 8, Dan and his team prepare to come to Kumeu to flush Antipodes.

Dan checks the three prepared mares for the best probable recipient on the day and sends the best from Karaka to Kumeu, a Standardbred.

7.30pm: Antipodes is taken down the road to the clinic.

You will note that so far, all has been carried out at home. We would not risk the mare leaving home except to compete. Flushing was carried out with the mare lightly sedated and the subsequent fluid examined.

"DO YOU WANT TO SEE YOUR FOAL"?

Wow! It was there in the dish – a tiny blob under the microscope.

Exit Antipodes. – enter the Standardbred.

She was inseminated with the fluid containing the embryo. Then the wait - 17 days from the service date - a positive test.

So far so good: in foal. Almost too hard to believe. Scan Antipodes to make sure she did not have twins.

- No.

Now this all sounds too simple. I put aside \$5,000 for this. One flush cost me \$4,500. If it had not worked I could not have gone on, so a word of warning. Do not expect it to be cheap.

Make sure you have worked out all the costs, including renting the recipient mare.

This can be way over priced. If you intend to try to use your own mares as recipients you need to keep three productive mares plus all your other horses.

Watch out that the health of the rented mare is perfect. You do not want to be landed with a sick or lame horse when she arrives at your place. Antipodes did not miss a single show and did not show any sign of stress. **Our** life was pretty stressful and I would not recommend it to anyone who did not have a special mare, or one at the top of her career. We haven't done it again this season.

The foal was born in October. The standard bred "mummy " turned into a maniac and didn't recognize the foal was hers after an easy foaling. She managed to push it under a perfect fence into a creek on the first night.

Now we were in real trouble.

Three vets - as good as dead foal.

I slept in the barn for 5 nights.

We had to foster this very sick foal onto this mare.

She bit me at 3am. -God, that hurt!!

Colic in the mare.

Colic in the sick foal.

Finally we got them both out into the paddock. Now, we could not catch that B --- standardbred and she was running the foal ragged.

Legs were going to be ruined.

We couldn't confine her.

She went mad.

Only a standardbred - we put hobbles on her and she was quite OK.

She could only walk slowly. Vets bill of \$1800.

Now the foal is 5 months old.

A big strong 3rd cross Hanoverian chestnut filly.

A carbon copy of Antipodes.

And what a good looker - here 's hoping for another champion. I'd sure like to show her In hand, but I am far beyond that now.



Above: Jane vallings and Antipodes with her third foal, a filly by Dream Boy, born 2006.

Post Script 2009: The foal in this story was Bates Duplicate. She is now competing successfully in Show jumping. Jane did go on to produce a second embryo transfer foal from Antipodes - Ditto - which has recently been started in competition. Finally, Antipodes concluded her breeding career by having another filly herself. All three foals are by Dream Boy.