



Wilga Park Morgans

Red Bluff Paprika's Story

What does 'Laid-back', 'unflappable' and 'unfazed' mean when we describe horses? I can spell all those things in three different words ... Red Bluff Paprika!!

Our story of Paprika starts when she was just 15 months old.

We had travelled to Wagga Wagga, NSW, to participate in the Australian National Morgan Show in 2004. As was our custom, after the Show we headed to Haymeron Park Morgan Stud in Victoria, where Jo and Rick Hayes kindly looked after our horses, and us, as we took the opportunity to visit as many Morgan Studs as we could in Victoria.

Red Bluff Morgans was always on the visiting list and this particular year, as we drove around the paddocks with Jen Bird in her four wheel drive, Greg spotted a beautiful horse in a paddock in the distance. He could hardly contain himself whilst we visited each paddock and photographed and noted all the pure Morgans.

He is sure Jen was dragging the time out just to tease him, as every time he asked 'Can we go over to that paddock now?' Jen would head in a different direction to see more of her spread out herd.

We finally arrived at the paddock that held Red Bluff Paprika, Red Bluff Opal and a couple of other part bred mares and foals. Greg could barely hide his excitement. The beautiful filly that he had seen in the distance was even more glorious up close. Paprika was only 15 months old at the time, but was in such perfect proportions, it was easy to see the mature horse that she would become.

Jen told us that Paprika had been at the Australian National Morgan Show in Wagga Wagga and had won her age class, and so had her paddock mate, Red Bluff Opal! We were astounded! How had we missed seeing these beautiful girls. We were obviously so engrossed in our own classes with Mt Tawonga Natasha and Mt Tawonga Nepean that we were not around to notice.

Unbeknownst to me Greg was already planning our Morgan breeding program. He had witnessed my successes with Eagleview Skybeau (my beautiful Calypso) at competition, and the enjoyment of my friend, Jane, and I (she on our gelding Mt Tawonga Nepean), and also witnessed many women having battles with their horses. He had already formulated the idea that we needed to produce more of these Morgan horses so that others could enjoy their horses, rather than battle with them ... after all, isn't horse riding about enjoyment and the wonderful relationship we can have with an equine partner!

During our two day drive home, Greg told me of his plan ... and that plan included a couple of beautiful fillies that Greg had chosen whilst we were (as I thought) just getting to know the Morgans in Victoria. It didn't take Greg too much talking to convince me that we should purchase more Morgans so that we could eventually produce more of these fabulous animals for others to enjoy. Wilga Park Morgans was born on that trip home from Wagga Wagga!

A phone call from our overnight camp at Coonabarrabran, NSW, secured the purchase of Red Bluff Paprika (along with 15 month old part bred filly Red Bluff Opal ... as Jen would not see them separated - Opal has a story of her own, which you may read on Manyana Morgans website) and further negotiations with Jo and Rick Hayes at Haymeron Park Morgan Stud secured the 4 month old Haymeron Park Ruby Jane. Superb mares now producing outstanding babies each year for us.



The young Red Bluff Opal on the left and Red Bluff Paprika on the right - newly arrived at Wilga Park

Back to my story of Paprika ... Greg certainly has an eye for a horse!! By the time Paprika was 18 months old, I had thrown a saddle on her back and lunged her around a little at the trot to see if she would react to those flapping stirrups ... nope!

When she was two years old, we took Paprika to a show with our newly acquired three year old gelding, Mt Tawonga Oscar. Oscar had not been off the property where he was bred, so Paprika was the experienced 'show horse'! But neither had EVER experienced huge Clydesdales pulling a carriage and massive (and I mean MASSIVE) machinery roaring past them, before. Both those kids just looked with pricked ears and then went back to their hay nets. That spells 'unflappable' I believe:)

Greg asked our neighbour, who was Stud Master at a local Standard Bred Stud, if he would come and try hobbles on Paprika & Opal (those lunch time hobbles that are handy for trail rides), and also asked him if he would long rein them a little.

We will never forget the disbelief and amazement of David as he said ... " These horses have been started already ... they've done this before!" We assured him that this was the very first time these two fillies had been hobbled and long reined, and all David could do was shake his head in amazement, as the hobbles created not one iota of a reaction and the long reining was accomplished just as if 'these horses have done this before'. We could interpret that as 'Unfazed' I think.



A young Paprika showing us her smooth, travelling trot.

When it came time to start Paprika, we were feeling so confident with her nature that we decided we would try it ourselves. We had watched closely the process that Linda Shore had taken as she started our riding gelding, Mt Tawonga Oscar.

So one day, we saddled Mt Tawonga Nepean and with Greg aboard Nepean, leading Paprika around at the walk and trot, ensuring she stayed beside him, we began the starting process. Within minutes, Greg was happy that Paprika would travel easily with Nepean, so it was my turn to then ascertain if she would accept my weight on her back. To be sure that there would be no reaction, I put my foot in the stirrup and bounced up and down and dragged my foot across her rump from each side ... reaction? A look from Paprika that said, ' What on earth are you fluffing around for ... can't you get yourself into the saddle???!' I think that spells 'unflappable'!

Once on board, we walked, then trotted, around the arena with Paprika beginning to understand my turning, start and stop cues pretty well. We did that once more during the week with even more progress.

The following weekend Greg could not be there for the exercise and he was keen to continue the lessons with Paprika. He asked me if I could 'pony' Paprika around beside Oscar after I had finished my training sessions with him. I set out to do just that. I saddled and bridled Paprika, and as I was about to tie the reins so that they would not drag, I suddenly decided that it would be by far easier to just ride her!

I took Paprika into the arena, mounted and rode her at the walk and trot, just like I had ridden my gelding, Oscar, before her. She turned on cue, stopped on cue, came back to walk or halt on cue. Paprika was Started!! I think that spells 'Laid-back'!

Paprika is producing babies with that very same 'laid-back', 'unfazed', 'unflappable' nature and it gives us enormous pleasure to hear the stories from those who have purchased her babies and are experiencing the joy of owning their equine partner.

Greg's dream of producing horses that people could enjoy, rather than battle with, has come to fruition!