

## Equine Matters

# Putting trauma behind

## Horses help in the rehabilitation of ex-soldiers

**F**ORMER marine Jock Hutchison and wife Emma are setting up a new therapy centre dedicated to ex-soldiers and war veterans who are suffering from post-traumatic stress.

HorseBack UK, located in the tranquillity of Cairngorms National Park at Aboyne, will open its doors next spring to soldiers returning from war who will receive a combination of equine assisted therapy, nature therapy and a chance to learn to ride Western Style - a chance for traumatised personnel to feel good about themselves and to bridge the huge abyss between life in a war zone and everyday life at home.

Jock and Emma, who have three young children, have both been passionate about horses from a young age. Looking for ways to enjoy an equestrian lifestyle in a commercial sense, they considered

from riding a horse. He said: "It's a wonderful concept. For young guys coming back from Afghanistan, having been through the war, it will be very hard to get back into the real world. This will help them to reconnect with life - to see the calm and beautiful side of life."

Explaining how horses can affect his potential clients, Jock commented: "The language in the military and the way of thinking takes soldiers away from stress - there's a bonding that you don't get any other way. The horse will respond to you - there's no such thing as a bad horse but if you are negative, they will be negative too. If you approach them in a calm and kind way, then the horse will come to you and will reward immensely with love and kindness."

"The rehabilitation process is progressive. Once they have been here other steps will follow. We aim to bridge the gap between military and normal life and ultimately bring them back into work."

Jock and Emma are keen to involve the community in their

