



AWAY FROM IT ALL: Jock Hutchison, left, of Horseback UK, chats with war veteran Rick Anderson

Horses charity to help stressed soldiers

NEW VENTURE WILL ALLOW ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL TIME TO ADJUST

A FORMER marine is hoping equine therapy can help soldiers returning from war zones suffering from post-traumatic stress.

Aberdeenshire man Jock Hutchison, along with his wife Emma, has founded HorseBack UK and hopes that in two years there will be 10 centres around Scotland to aid those suffering acute stress after serving in the Armed Forces.

The centres will combine equine therapy, nature therapy and adventure training.

Mr Hutchison, 47, of Ferrar, near Aboyne, said: "We were going to set up a commercial operation and use horses and my experience in the marines to teach leadership.

"However, at Christmas last year a bunch of pals of mine from the military came to stay and I became aware of the problems that a very small minority of the guys serving face when returned from service or after leaving the military, and after a number of discussions we decided that we would form a charity

to help. There are two ways that we are going to help. The first is that we are engage with the units, like 45 Commando.

"The idea is they get time here when they return. In other words they get a two-week break. They will learn to ride and learn a bit about horsemanship and then they will drive cattle.

"When you are in Afghanistan you are living in a very different way - your adrenaline is pumping the whole time, you are near

death the whole time and a lot of people are getting hurt and you can't imagine coming back to this world. You need a little bit of time to come down."

He added: "The second reason we can help is that, because minimal contact is needed while riding, amputees can ride the horses."

The programme should be launched with its first participants next spring at the couple's premises.

For more information log on to www.horseback.org.uk