



Wisdom of the horse whisperer

The amazing skills of “horse whisperer” Gary Witheford will be on show at the East Anglian Game & Country Fair this month. He tells **Abigail Saltmarsh** why he is so passionate about his work.

How old were you when you first became interested in horses?

All my life I have wanted to be around horses, which was strange because I didn't come from a family that was into riding or keeping them. I was nine when I first started working with them. I went to boarding school and often couldn't go home in the holidays, so during the day, I would go down to a yard to work with horses instead. Then when I was 12 I started working weekends and evenings at Beckhampton Racing Stables, under Jeremy Tree.


So you decided to make a career of it?

When I was 14, I was taken on as a full-time apprentice by Stan Mellor, who was in the

process of setting up a National Hunt yard in Lambourn. While I was there I realised I was never going to be a jockey because of my weight, but it was also recognised that I had this ability to work with difficult and often dangerous horses. So they encouraged me in that direction. After a while however, I had to find better paid work elsewhere; I had a young family to support. But I would still be called in from time to time to help out.

So how did you become a full-time “horse whisperer”?

I was invited to train with Monty Roberts, who was the inspiration for the film *The Horse Whisperer*. I knew I wanted to go back to working with horses full-time but at

that time I was earning money as a double-glazing fitter. One day I was fitting windows for famous rock drummer Cozy Powell. We got chatting and he told me he had a horse out back with a broken pelvis. I worked with the horse, and Cozy said: “You have to 

EDP Norfolk stand

Meet the magazine team at Countryside Drive Stand One (opposite the tea and coffee area), near the Dereham Gate entrance. We will have lots of money-saving special promotions on the magazine and subscription offers that are only available at the show.