

NZ WAR HORSES WWI IN GERMAN SAMOA



A total of 141 New Zealand horses were transported to Samoa rather than Egypt. Of these, 25 were despatched with the Samoa Advance Party of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in August 1914. Most of the rest were sent in the second half of 1915 to support the Samoan Relief Force which had taken over from the Advance Party in March. The provision of these additional horses (and bicycles) reportedly 'greatly increased' the mobility of the garrison force. Another 20 horses were despatched in November 1916 after some of the horses already sent proved unsuitable or were impregnated by local stallions while on patrol.

The horses sent to Samoa from New Zealand were all described as 'riding' horses, but they appear to have been used for a wide range of tasks. Most served as mounts for troops and officers. Others were used to pull wheeled vehicles such as trucks, wagons, the nurses' gig and a meat van. A few became pack horses for the Machine Gun Section.

A number of horses became sick with 'tona', which was described by a member of the garrison force as 'a native disease which forms on the feet in the shape of a large sore which is very unsightly and causes the horse to be laid up on the sick lines. Throughout the war there was always at least one horse out of action suffering from tona.

A number of horses died or were destroyed during the war. Illnesses such as colic, and injuries resulting from kicks from other horses, were the most common causes. Horses considered unsuitable for military work were sold – usually because they were deemed too old, in poor condition or to have a weak constitution. Four foals born to the New Zealand

horses were also sold as they were too young for troop work. One horse was purchased locally but it was subsequently sold. At the end of the war the garrison force had 108 horses.



Captain Anderson and his gun crew on horseback in Samoa during the First World War.
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