

Extreme Cowboys bring the rough, tough side of horsemanship to Caledon

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Headwaters Extreme Cowboy Association President Bradley Matchett with one of his favourite roping horses, Smokey. - Danielle Marr

Horsing around has taken on a whole new meaning in Caledon. An Extreme Cowboy Association has set up north of Palgrave – and it's only the second such association in Ontario.

Extreme cowboy racing started in Texas about a decade ago and is becoming increasingly popular in Canada, particularly in Alberta. It challenges horse and rider to manoeuvre through a series of obstacles at speed. Obstacles to emulate those one might encounter out on trails or while working on a ranch consist of anything from tarps on the ground, to brush hanging from the roof, or a dummy calf to rope.

The Headwaters Extreme Cowboy Association has been founded by Bradley Matchett, a Caledon local who has worked on ranches in California and Alberta.

“I have been around horses all my life and I believe that you've gotta switch it up,” he said. “We have kids that are in the pleasure world and show world and just wanted to expand and give people something else to do and give the horses something else to do.”

Matchett is joined by Kelly Solowka, the owner of Stable Relations, the facility out of which the club is operating, as well as friends and boarders Kathy Moulton and Christine Shepherd.

“My plan this year is to get a team together and go out there to show them how it’s done,” said Matchett.

Participating in clinics or getting a club membership is open to all levels of horse and rider, and those from all disciplines, but competitors must use Western tack and riding wear.

The club hosted their first ever clinic last weekend and are already planning more for the summer and fall seasons. It is also planning to host an official race before the year is done.

“I decided to get this started because I am just not a believer in the show world in the sense that there are too many horses ruined doing it and it’s just not practical,” he said. “I want to get on and rope something and drag something. I want a horse to be bomb proof. It just makes for a better all around horse.”