

Tussock Buster 2010 Busted by the Army!

Words & pics: **Rob & Robyn**

TUSSOCK BUSTER –It just gets bigger and BETTER! And over 1200 riders agree...

What a weekend! With 273 km of trails available, including the less technical Waitangi trail right through to the extremes of Sniper Alley, Edinburgh trail, the 88km Dam Buster and 93km Tussock Buster trails, there was something for everyone. Hats off to the Off Limits team for providing great options for the kids as well - the shorter loops in the trees and paddocks in the area adjacent to the camp were well patronised but so too was the longer 15km kids 2 extension loop which provided a real adventure and real trail riding for a large number of younger riders in attendance.

This year, Tussock Buster was extended to a 2.5 day event, enabling riders to hit the trails on Friday at 1pm and ride through until late afternoon Sunday. This extension proved extremely popular with 530 riders on site on Friday, 1234 on Saturday and 1011 on the Sunday.



The 'Off Limits' chopper back from a mission.

According to the MNZ steward on site, this makes Tussock Buster the largest trail ride in New Zealand. However, the massive size of the Waiouru training area meant that the trails were not congested. At times, you thought you were the only one on the track yet statistics show that there were often over 1000 riders on their bikes at any one time.

A huge event requires huge logistics and with a team of 60, Off Limits had everything covered, including comms, catering, recovery quads, Unimogs, doctors, the Off Limits chopper and fuel dumps. 4000 litres of fuel was dispensed between the two fuel dumps, which was vital for those who chose to ride the Dam Buster and Tussock Tracks, and that was only a top up! All this preparation, staff and equipment formed a well-oiled machine that operated brilliantly to ensure the success of the second Tussock Buster weekend.

The Army training facility at Waiouru covers an area of 64,000sq hectares and with a climate that can change at the bat of an eyelid. The recovery of bikes and riders, injured or otherwise, takes some serious consideration when planning an event. Enter Barry Reiher from Helinorth and his 'Off Limits' chopper. Recovery from the two longer 90km loops using the conventional trailer and quad would take hours but with the sling chain under the



Some of the river crossings were deep!

chopper and a very experienced pilot at the controls, bikes and riders were back at base within 25 minutes from the furthest reaches of the ride area. Like the rest of the crew, Barry made a huge contribution to the weekend and he even managed a ride Sunday morning between recovery missions.

Injuries were few and far between and this is always a sign of a very well marked and prepared track. The MNZ steward indicated that as a percentage, Tussock Buster '10 had one of the lowest injury rates of any trail ride in New Zealand. Significant bulldozer work had been undertaken on the trails since the 2009 event and with the unrelenting rainfall in the days preceding the event the trails were in perfect condition with very little dust - primo! The tracks were fast and flowing for the most part but the old faithful Sniper Alley still proved a challenge for some with the river claiming more than a few drowned bikes.

The local Waiouru community supported the event with the local kindy and daycare centres responsible for the culinary delights emanating from 'Hell's Kitchen'. Catering from 7:00am until well after dark, the campers were well fed and watered.

It was great to see the industry supporting this ride, with Honda, Kawasaki and Yamaha all on site. Huge thanks to Gordon from Huka Honda who saved the weekend for a number of riders with his tyre changing skills and supply of tubes.

Ritchie Ebbet of Moto SR, was also on site all weekend - a real clever dude who certainly weaves suspension magic. A few clicks here and a tweak or two there makes a big difference when it comes to how a bike handles - the evidence of this was the 120+ bikes serviced over the weekend and the smiles and accolades from the riders.

And new on the scene - Mudtrack Limited - aka Luke Uhrle, a well known rider in the off-road scene, Luke was demonstrating and selling a unique range of bike stands and accessories not previously seen in New Zealand. The RR 1 Ride on Lift and the Lock-N-Load stand stood out as two very smart and innovative pieces of equipment. Check out www.mudtrack.co.nz for more information.

Warrick Furnell from Foto Web was on the job all weekend and he shot some amazing photos and video of the 2010 Tussock Buster event. Check it out at www.moneyweb.co.nz and follow the link.

With Tussock Buster '10 now done and dusted, a huge thanks must go to the New Zealand Army, and in particular the Commander of the Waiouru Military Training Area, Colonel Van Den Broek, for the use of the Waiouru Military training area for this event. A special thanks also to Mike Ross and Dave Greenslade and the crew from Off Limits for their vision in making this event an iconic trail ride - definitely one not to be missed.

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