

Shirley Camilleri

Camhaven Farm

Before dawn breaks, Shirley Camilleri and her husband Tony are already on the road, leaving their immaculate Camhaven Farm on Horseshoe Hill Road in Caledon Village and heading to Woodbine Racetrack. There, alongside their private trainer Steve Flint, they put their racing string through morning exercise. By lunchtime, Shirley is back at the farm, meeting prospective clients and designing custom conditioning programs for horses staying at Camhaven. Farm work fills the afternoon, and by evening she is juggling media interviews, just another full day in the life of one of Ontario's most ambitious equine entrepreneurs.

"It took us eight years to build this up," said Camilleri, who entered the world of Thoroughbred racing when Tony decided he no longer wanted to manage the couple's trucking business. Their first step into ownership came in 2018 through Shirley's uncle and cousin, Anthony Spiteri and Anthony Jr. Their very first horse, Big Black Storm, won, a thrilling introduction to the sport. Tragically, both men passed away in accidents shortly afterward. By then, the Camilleris were already looking for a farm to build their next chapter.

What began as 50 acres has grown into one of the most impressive equine facilities in the country. Camhaven now boasts every therapy and conditioning tool imaginable, including an aqua treadmill, cold saltwater spa, vibration floor, and magnetic therapy, along with indoor and outdoor arenas, gallop tracks, and a 55-stall barn with a Kentucky-style flourish.

"When we first started, we were focused on establishing the rehab side," said Camilleri. "We wanted to promote and sell our services to the horse industry. That developed into people wanting to send their horses here for lay-up, or breaking and early training. So our tentacles were going in all different directions."

Along the way, the Camilleris built their own boutique racing stable and broodmare band. In 2023 they hired American trainer Steve Flint as their private trainer, and last year they brought retired jockey Gary Boulanger on as farm manager.

"Steve sets the bar higher every year he is with us," said Camilleri. "Tony and I go in about four times a week to work with Steve and we make decisions together. Gary's focus is on the horses at the farm and the equine therapy. He deals with clients and leads the early training of the young horses."

The program has already delivered results. Since Flint arrived in Ontario, the team has celebrated roughly 30 wins. Standouts include maiden allowance winners Social Code,

who was third in this year's Ruling Angel Stakes, homebred Ready to Dream, Criminal Intent, One True Gentleman, and 2025 winner Miss Demanding.

Camilleri now owns around half a dozen broodmares and boards several more for clients. One U.S. customer who foaled a mare at Camhaven recently sold a Maximum Security yearling at Keeneland, only for Camilleri to buy him herself for \$75,000. At the same sale, she purchased fillies by Maxfield and Epicenter to race and eventually join the broodmare band. "We are working on developing a stronger group of mares, and we want to buy horses who have residual value."

Demand for space is strong. Currently, more than a dozen client horses are on a waiting list. The farm serves a variety of breeds, from Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds to hunter-jumpers. And by mid November, the Camilleris will head south with their racing stable to winter at Fair Grounds in New Orleans, where they base themselves each year.

"We are very much involved with our horses," said Camilleri. "And we like the direction we are going as we continue to get better quality horses."