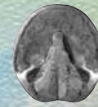
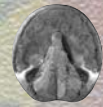


The Horse's Hoof™



In this Issue:



Jordan Peterson (Cont)..... 2	Dave Rabe..... 15
Healing Cracks..... 2	Intro to Bar Wall..... 16
From the Editors..... 3	Shoe Contraction!..... 17
Eventing Akhal-Tekes..... 4	Trimming Corner..... 18
Dr. Bowker-Bone Loss..... 7	Barefoot News..... 21
A Day in the Life..... 8	Order Form..... 21
Concave vs. Flat Feet..... 9	Advertisers Corner..... 23-24
Trimming into the Wind..... 10	Online Extras..... 25-30
Equine Frog P1..... 12	<i>(Online Extras in PDF only)</i>

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News for Barefoot Hoofcare

ISSUE 38 – SPRING 2010

Jordan Peterson: Barefoot in the Rodeo Big Leagues

By Johnny Holder

This past December, **Jordan Jae Peterson** rode into rodeo history by becoming the first barrel racer to compete at the prestigious **Wrangler National Finals Rodeo** on a barefoot horse. When the dust settled, Jordan and her great horse **Frenchmans Jester** (AKA Jester) finished in sixth place in the world standings.

They won the sixth go round, and placed in four more rounds. Their time of 13.72 in the sixth round tied for the fourth fastest time recorded during the grueling ten day event.

I visited with Jordan and her trimmer, Justin Briggs (Justin is also Jordan's fiancé), to learn how she and a barefoot horse came into rodeo's premier championship event, and didn't just compete, but proved they were legitimate contenders. The following is condensed from two interviews I did with Jordan and Justin in early February, 2010, in Fort Worth, Texas.

Jordan's mother is **Kristie Peterson**. Kristie and her legendary horse French Flash Hawk (AKA Bozo) qualified in barrel racing for 8 National Finals and won 4 world titles. Kristie was smart and selective of the rodeos they entered, and any time they had a break in competition, Bozo's shoes would be pulled to allow



Photo courtesy Jordan Peterson

Jordan Peterson and Frenchmans Jester prove that barefoot can win in big league rodeo!

his feet to recover from the negative effects of shoeing.

With Bozo's troubles in mind, Jordan's dad Chuck began looking for a better way. He read books and did research on the internet, where he discovered the teachings of Jaime Jackson and Pete Ramey. Chuck taught himself to trim using Pete and Jaime's methods on broodmares and young horses. He was soon getting great results, and the horses were growing good tough feet. When the young horses were broke to ride and began their training, the Petersons saw no need for them to be shod. Barefoot doubters told them, "When those horses start winning, you will need to shoe them." When those horses did start winning, the Petersons thought "why do they need shoes, if they are winning without them? Let's give them a chance to continue without shoes." The horses stayed amazingly sound, and kept right on winning. That was about 10 years ago, and the Petersons have never looked back.

Jordan says, "the greatest thing about having barefoot horses is no worries." She doesn't have to worry about her horse pulling shoes off, and doesn't have to worry about arena conditions. Jester gets great traction, and because he has a lot of feeling in his feet, he is able to adjust to varying ground conditions better than shod horses.

It becomes clear after speaking with Jordan that she is extremely confident in her barefoot horse, and it is the kind of confidence that comes only with experience. Jordan has ridden barefoot horses almost half of her life. She and Jester have successfully competed in arenas across the United States. They won the 2006 Barrel Futurities of America World Championships Futurity in Oklahoma City. Their wins at professional rodeos include: winning 1st in the deep sand footing at Odessa, Texas; 1st at the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo; 1st at Ellensburg, Washington in the mud; 3rd at Denver, Colorado; as well as her accomplishments on the hard and fast ground at the 2009 Wrangler National Finals Rodeo.

Jordan told me that she thinks there is a need for more hoof care professionals trained in proper barefoot techniques, and she wishes more farriers would be receptive to the barefoot movement. Justin is an excellent example, having learned traditional farriery first, then learning the mustang roll and natural trimming styles from Jordan's dad. Justin is a farrier who knows and understands that barefoot is a viable alternative to steel horse shoes. Justin transitioned his own team roping horse out of shoes when the horse was 9 years old. Justin still shoes horses for his clients who prefer it. He recommends those wanting to transition their

(cont. on page 2)



Photo courtesy Jordan Peterson

Jordan Peterson and Frenchmans Jester on just one of their many winning runs in 2009.

Photo courtesy Johnny Holder



A look at Frenchmans Jester's left hind hoof.



Jordan posing for a moment with Jester and her fiancé Justin Briggs, who is also her trimmer.

(cont. from cover)

horses out of shoes and into barefoot seek the help of a hoofcare professional to evaluate the horse and provide guidance.

When Jordan is not on the road at a rodeo or barrel race, you can find her at home in Texas, riding and training her young horses, preparing them for futurities, jackpot barrel races, and rodeos. Outside of one horse that competes with front shoes, all are barefoot, and she plans

to keep them that way. Jester is eight years old, and has never had shoes. He spends his time at home resting in a five acre turn out, with an open stall bedded in pea gravel.

Jordan is proud to be a leader in the growing trend toward barefoot horses. She thinks it is a great thing for horses, and she hopes others will follow the trail she is blazing. She has proven barefoot horses can compete in barrel racing at any level, from junior rodeo and open jackpots, to futurities and professional rodeos.

Congratulations to Jordan for her historic first qualification at the WNFR on a barefoot horse and best of luck to her and Jester in their quest for a second WNFR this year.

About the author: Johnny and his wife Liz live in Weatherford, Texas where they raise and train horses for barrel racing. Johnny has been trimming and promoting barefoot for about 10 years. He is a dealer for EasyCare boots and Equine Challenge supplements. He can be reached by phone at (817) 597-0129 or by email at rfcgf@hotmail.com

All photos courtesy Johnny Holder



Above, Jester's left front hoof. Below, Jester's right hind. 8 yo Jester has never been shod.



The Amazing Healing Power of Barefoot!

Horseowners Nevelle and Becky Hayes were at a loss as to how to fix their mare's cracked hooves. Candy, an 11 year old American Paint (registered name "Miss Candy Max"), had really severe cracks in both her shod front hooves, with no concavity.

Becky writes to us, "There were no local barefoot trimmers to help us, and we were scared to death. Long story short, we watched all the videos on your site and read all we could. Thanks to your help and others on the internet, Candy is much improved. Our farrier would not recognize her hooves today!"

See the dramatic results at right (Candy's Front Right), and see even more photos of Candy's hooves in our new "Online Extras" section (which begins on page 25 of the Online PDF issue of this magazine). These photos compare Candy's shod hooves from October 2009, with photos taken in February 2010. And this good work was all done by horseowners on their own! "We had no choice," Becky says, "Candy's feet were deteriorating fast with the shoes on. We have done the best we could do on 'our own,' but it would have been impossible without the information you have made available to us."

"They still have a way to go," Becky writes, "But I am AMAZED at how well both our horses are doing. Even with the extremely wet weather we have had. It has only been 4 1/2 months since they have been barefoot. The cracking has stopped and more than halfway grown out. Candy has, for the first time, good concavity coming back. She used to be toed out, but now stands straight. I could go on and on..."

Becky notes that they also improved Candy's diet, "Not knowing any better, we used to give her an apple a day, she ate lots of green grass, a scoop of Strategy and other 'treats' from time to time. Her eyes started draining continuously, and she sunburned very easily. We had to keep sunscreen on her in the summer and gave her an antihistamine to help with the eyes. Now, she only gets hay, her eyes no longer drain, and I don't think we will have near the sunburn problem we had before."—See "Online Extras" section for more photos of Candy.



The Horse's Hoof™

Barefoot Hoofcare Magazine

Issue 38 – Spring 2010

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Editor/Publisher

Yvonne Welz

Technical Editor/Publisher

James Welz

Contributors

Jordon Peterson • Johnny Holder

Nevelle and Becky Hayes

Jenny Rice • Amrita Ibold

Robert M. Bowker, VMD, PhD

Ms. Tara Calvert-Jackson

Maria Siebrand

Jill Owens

Mackie Hartwig D.C., C.V.C.P.

Jerry Huntsinger

Candace Platz DVM

Heike Bean

Cheryl Henderson

Ute Miethe

Eva Vacha

Jaime Jackson • Jill Willis

Claudia Garner

Laura Florence

Hiltrud Strasser DVM

Frances Guthrie

Sabine Kells

Editorial Office

The Horse's Hoof • P.O. Box 40

Litchfield Park, AZ 85340-0040

(623) 935-1823 • Toll-Free: 1-877-594-3365

website: www.TheHorsesHoof.com

email: editor@TheHorsesHoof.com

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Submissions are encouraged, including photos, articles and stories about barefoot horses. If you would like to contribute, please contact us. Material that is published **does not reflect endorsement** by *The Horse's Hoof* or any of its staff.

The Horse's Hoof is a **generic barefoot resource** that supports all hoof care which creates functional, healthy hooves. We believe technology can be useful, and we believe in compromise. We advocate more natural living conditions for all horses. We encourage all styles, methods, and techniques of hoof care that promote healthier hooves. *The Horse's Hoof* is a division of **Wishing Welz Equine, LLC**.

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From The Editors

10 Years for The Horse's Hoof!

This year, 2010, marks the **10 year anniversary** for *The Horse's Hoof* magazine & website. Hard to believe that when we began all of this, we had DIAL-UP internet, really big cell phones, and Facebook & Twitter were unknown! We had all just breathed a huge sigh of relief that we survived Y2K. It is amazing how quickly things evolve—and now we “can't live without” many items and concepts that didn't even **exist** in the previous decade!

Luckily, for many of us, some of those “can't live without” concepts now include natural hoof care and barefooted horses.

We have lots of **news** to tell you about! First, we decided to open up *The Horse's Hoof* to advertising. I did this with very mixed feelings. Despite the fact that I studied advertising design in college, I've always felt that ad-free was more “pure and noble.” However, economics forced us to reconsider, and it is **MORE** important to me to keep THH in print. Beginning with this issue, we now feature an **Advertisers Corner**. Don't worry, there won't be any real cut of content—ad space is very limited in the printed edition, while there is an economical option for the PDF edition. For more info about placing an ad, see page 23 for Printed ad rates, and page 25 of the PDF for Online Extras ad rates.

Beginning with this issue, **ALL** Printed subscribers now receive the **Online PDF version for FREE!** All you need to do to receive the free PDF version, which will be released on the first day of every new season of the year, is to supply me with your current email address. If I have that on file, you will then automatically receive an email from me with the full download instructions for the PDF version, for every issue of your subscription.

One reason for the free PDFs: how else are you going to see our new **Online Extras** pages? This issue features 6 bonus pages of extra content, both stories and photos, that continue on after the printed version ends. Online Extras gives me the opportunity to include more material that I normally can't fit in, with larger photos, all in full color! Online Extras also offers an inexpensive advertising option.

If you haven't joined **Facebook** and **Twitter** yet, now is the time! Please become a fan of our Facebook page and follow us on Twitter: just click right on the links at the top of our website,

Printed Subscribers: Send your Email!

If you are reading the printed issue right now, and you never received an Online PDF issue, you are missing out! There are 6 pages of extra content, stories and photos, and it is **FREE** for all printed subscribers! Send your email address to editor@thehorseshoof.com, and we will send you the download links for the Online PDF version of Spring Issue 38.

Photo © The Horse's Hoof



Yvonne and 6 yo Belle debuting at Second Level dressage. Most people call this stage the “beginning of real dressage.” This isn't about showing; this is about physically improving the riding horse.

thehorseshoof.com. We have a great group of folks on Facebook already, posting photos and talking about all sorts of barefoot and horsey subjects. It's just plain fun!

We are diligently working on **Hoof Help Online**, our future hoofcare education membership website. It is important to understand how separate this will be from *The Horse's Hoof*. THH is a melting pot; it is about bringing everyone's ideas together—we never intended it to be our “personal” platform. Hoof Help Online will be, quite literally, James' method. What he does is unique. There's nothing else quite like it, though central to our core philosophy is, indeed, the wild horse model. We are giving a **clinic** in Manitoba, Canada, in May 2010 (see page 23), where he will be presenting some of his information for the first time. Look for Hoof Help Online, coming in 2010.

In response to last issue's editorial: recently, a friend pointed out to me that *The Natural Horse* by **Jaime Jackson**, published in 1992, was actually the first barefoot hoof care book. In so many ways, that is true (the entire book is all about natural hoof and horse care), and the only reason why I didn't place it as the first is that Jaime wrote in it that he could not recommend riding barefoot horses. So I went to the source, and asked Jaime about this. He said that he couldn't, in good conscience, recommend barefooting riding horses at that time, when there was no support system in place. But even in 1992, he knew it was the way to go. In response to my question, he wrote up a whole new article about the beginnings of Natural Hoof Care and the barefoot movement—look for that article to be featured in our next issue! I've previewed it, and it is exciting!—Yvonne Welz

Addendum

Re: Ting Points of the Hoof, THH Issue 37

It was brought to the author's attention that the original research about the connection between toe angle, weight distribution to the coronet and stimulation of the ting points has been attributed to Dr. Hiltrud Strasser. The author, Claudia Garner, apologizes for not having named the original researcher.

Footin' It Cross-Country! with Akhal-Tekes

Natural Horsemanship, Barefoot Eventing, and the Amazing Akhal-Teke Breed

by Jenny Rice

When it comes to horses, I've never been keen to swim the mainstream, but I'm not embarrassed to dabble in it, either. About seven years ago, I found myself getting swept away by two trends in the equestrian world that I was initially suspicious of, but nevertheless, eventually sold on. This was the beginning of a series of events that would lead me to where I'm at today... which is, of course, far from where I thought I was going, back then.

It all began when I returned home (to San Juan Island, Washington) from post-school galavanting and started riding and working with Plumb Pond Natural Horsemanship. Plumb Pond is a riding center and equine sanctuary that had only recently caught the Parelli bug. I had just come from a dressage barn in New Hampshire, so this was a bit of a plunge. Due to the fact that I was learning it from people who were just learning it themselves, my introduction to **natural horsemanship** was somewhat muddled. I wasn't sure what the point was at first, but when the results were published in my horses' brains, I finally understood. *I was born a sceptic, but if proof is in the making, I'm all ears.* I'm also an obsessively good student, so I immersed myself in natural horsemanship and eventually progressed through Level 3 of the Parelli home study program.

During my years of Parelli-ism, I was given an off-the-track Thoroughbred who had been chronically lame for nearly six years. I had been learning to do my own barefoot trims, and knew enough to feel confident taking him on. **Barefoot trimming** was the other trend I initially had major doubts about. (My very first horse was a Thoroughbred mare with Thoroughbred feet, so I grew up thinking horses couldn't even walk without four shoes and toe clips).

I found out that trimming this new Thoroughbred's feet was like opening a can of nasty, stinky, thrush-breathing worms of the worst kind. He had the typical flat feet, run-under heels, and thin soles the racing industry is famous for producing. But they were also accompanied by seedy toes, paper-thin hoof walls, toe cracks that ran to his coronet bands, lots of flare, thrush, frequent abscesses, and soles the consistency of sponge cake. I literally pierced one with my hoof pick while cleaning his feet, and blood poured out. *Yuck.*

I decided I needed to learn from an expert, so I enrolled in a clinic given by a barefoot farrier who was a student of Jaime Jackson: Christina Cline, an AANHCP certified instructor from Sumas, Washington. The clinic gave me just what I needed to battle the bulge... of bad Thoroughbred feet, that



Amrita Ibold riding her Akhal-Teke stallion Pan Tau. There are less than 500 Akhal-Teke horses in the U.S., and Jenny Rice fell in love with these flashy, sure-footed, athletic horses.

is. By leaving the bottoms alone, trimming from the top, treating his thrush, backing up his break-over, and developing a new nazi-mom exercise routine, I was able to rehabilitate my horse's feet to the point where he was sound without boots. It was tough love, *but it worked.*

Within a few months he was sound on most terrain. And in six months he was sound everywhere. I performed with him in front of thousands of people at the Redmond, Oregon, Parelli Tour Stop in May of 2008, and took him to study at the Parelli Center in Pagosa Springs, Colorado, the following summer. He trotted happily over the rocky Colorado ground without taking a single sore step.

Things were going so well that, in the fall of 2008, I decided I needed jumping lessons. My previously unsound Thoroughbred was jumping small logs on the trail like the cow-jumped-over-the-moon, and projecting me nearly as far off his back every time. I contacted my neighbor, Amrita Ibold of Sweet Water Farm Akhal-Teke, for help. I knew nothing about her rare breed of horses, but I knew she was an eventer... so who better to call than your neighbor, the successful 3-day-er?

We set up a lesson on one of her geldings, and I was introduced to the horse that sparked my love affair with the Akhal-Teke breed: Dagjeir, a 10 year old purebred imported from Russia. I took one look and immediately knew I was gazing at some-other-kind-of-a-horse. He was handsome, flashy, sure-footed, athletic, honest, and very fun to ride. He also had the uncanny knack for *staring straight into my soul.* I was immediately impressed, and wanted to help Amrita promote the breed. I continued taking lessons and learned everything I could about these amazing and talented horses. One of the first things I discovered was how very rare they really are. An ancient breed from Turkmenistan that nearly went extinct, there are only around 500 Akhal-Tekes in the United States, and less than 5,000 in the entire world.

All photos courtesy Jenny Rice

What baffled me the most was their unbelievable level of catty athleticism. I watched Amrita's broodmares perform stunts in the field that would put Grand Prix horses to shame!

As luck would have it, the following December my beautiful grey gelding broke his leg in a tragic pasture accident and had to be euthanized on the spot. I had put a huge emotional investment in that horse, and saying goodbye wrenched my bleeding heart right out of its lonely little socket. On that snowy winter's day, I hugged my best friend for the last time. My only relief was knowing I had given him the best year of his life. Afterwards, I went home to cry for four days straight. You'll know I am a true barefoot trimmer when I tell you that I tortured myself thinking he had died with



Top to bottom, the 3 phases of Eventing. 1) Dressage, a test pattern of arena flatwork; 2) Cross-Country, a high speed course over natural obstacles, including water and ditches; and 3) Show Jumping, a timed course over standard jumping obstacles. Jenny on Dagjeir.



Dagjeir and Jenny Rice schooling at Sweet Water Farm, San Juan Island, WA.

(*finally*) perfect feet. (And I had known every inch of those tootsies by *Braille*).

But as things often go, there was a silver lining to one of my life's darkest clouds. In January of 2009, I started training for three-day eventing on Dagjeir and preparing for the upcoming competition season. Amrita and I hit it off from the very beginning. She liked keeping things natural, turned her horses out in herds instead of locking them in stalls, kept them barefoot during the off-season, and, true to her Dutch nationality, *she tells it like it is* and doesn't buy into popularity. Amrita gave me the opportunity of a lifetime... *and* the kick in the butt I needed to get my life on-track, and pull myself out of a dark and dreary hole. It wasn't long before I was riding at Sweet Water Farm full-time, using Natural Horsemanship to develop her young horses, and bidding *adieu* to my previous riding career as a Parelli *passenger extraordinaire*.

My transition from quasi-cowgirl to three-day eventer wasn't always a walk in the park. They say *a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step*... but that's not to say it's going to be all sweetness and light after that! It took months for me to wander out of the *horsey haze* I had been living in for half my life, and nearly a year before I finally *saw the light*, and knew I was destined for the upper levels of eventing.

Like most things you have to work hard for, it was extremely rewarding when my progress started to show, and from the very beginning, I was eager to give something back to my coach for all her hard work. I showed Amrita how to do her own trims, and the two of us were soon maintaining her entire barn. Akhal-Tekes are known for their good feet, and I was amazed at how much hoof wall her horses produced throughout the year. Within weeks, we were seeing more concavity, healthier frogs, and de-contracting heels. She was delighted with the improvements, felt a new sense of independence and control over her own horses' feet, and decided to give **barefoot eventing** a try.

Deciding to go barefoot in professional sports can be a daunting transition when you live in a wet

All photos courtesy Jenny Rice

climate like the Pacific Northwest. We were in the midst of the rainy season, we had only two months until our first event, and we hoped it would be enough time to prepare the horses' feet for the pounding on cross country. The challenge in keeping event horses barefoot is that they have to cross a variety of footings at high speeds, and land from jumps with incredible force. A horse that is sound under normal circumstances may not fare as well on a strenuous cross country run. In addition to this, a successful eventer is a horse that feels confident the landing after a jump will be pain-free *every time*.

Many courses are graveled, muddy, hard-packed, slick, and sometimes shaley... you just never know what you're going to get. For this reason, our conditioning routine involved riding over the types of terrain we were likely to come across at the competitions. We practiced our dressage and jumping on sand and grass, but we rode them out on rocky trails and gravel roads as often as possible, to condition their feet—as well as their bodies—for cross-country. Our riding schedule kept the horses in moderate-to-heavy work four to six days per week, with twenty-four hour access to hilly pastures during their time off. Because we were starting with horses who had genetically good feet, we only used boots for a short period of time during the initial transition. Boots are helpful when necessary, but, in my opinion, they are unsafe to use for cross-country jumping, and event horses are better off galloping on the feet they were born with.

Our season started out very successfully. It began with the Spring Fling Event Clinic and schooling show at the Northwest Equestrian Center (NWEC) in Rainier, Washington. The horses performed



Jenny Rice and Dagjeir over the Preliminary ski-ramp into water at the Whidbey Island Pony Club (WIPC) schooling show on Whidbey Island, WA, October 2009.



Jenny Rice and Dagjeir stadium jumping at the Whidbey Island Pony Club (WIPC) Schooling Show on Whidbey Island, WA, September 2009.

confidently, seemed comfortable on their feet, and our team won sixth place on the hunter pace course. Our first barefoot USEA competition was the Mother's Day Classic, also held at the NWEC, and the boys never missed a step, even with some graveled corners and landings.

Later that month, however, Pan Tau (Amrita's Akhal-Teke stallion) sustained a stone bruise after repetitive landings in a gravel-bottomed water jump at Nick Holmes-Smith's eventing clinic in Chase, British Columbia. Amrita treated him with Advanced Biological Concept's Poultice, and he seemed as good as new the next day. She outfitted him in a pair of Renegade boots, but they proved to be too slippery and had the habit of coming off in the water. Nick's clinics are famous for their rigorous jumping sessions, and this may have been too much to ask of Pan Tau's feet so early in the season.

In any case, Amrita returned with the decision to put front shoes on the two main competitors during the busiest part of the summer. With no shoes in the back, we trusted our horses would be sure-footed enough to compete safely without studs. Previous to going barefoot, Amrita already held the opinion that studs tend to do their job *too well*, preventing the natural slide of a hoof upon landing before it digs into the ground, thus sending the impact up the leg to destroy vital tissues in the tendons, bones, and ligaments.

Although it allowed for some relief from worrying, having our horses shod proved to be a frustrat-

(*cont. on page 6*)

(cont. from page 5)

ing ordeal, as we were then *both* accustomed to being able to trim as needed. We kept up with their hind feet, but felt exasperated with their fronts only three weeks after the shoes were set. With increased exercise and nutrition, their feet grew incredibly fast, and we were concerned about landing on angles grown longer than ideal. Even though we never used studs, we felt the damage may have been too big a price to pay, even for two months of heavy competing. We were constantly collaborating on how to condition their hooves so that shoeing would no longer be necessary.

On a positive note, competing at so many venues gave our rare Akhal-Tekes a lot of exposure, and promoting the breed was easy, as long as we could get to the events. It also gave us the chance to meet people from all over the country, and no matter where we went, we always ran into someone who was on a similar path. In June, we traveled to Montana for the “Olympic Experience Event



Amrita Ibold and Pan Tau at Aspen Farms Horse Trials in Yelm, WA, June 2009 (photo courtesy of Tim O’Neal).

Camp” with David and Karen O’Conner, Amy Tryon, and Cathy Wieschhoff. Wieschhoff has competed internationally and has ridden at Rolex Kentucky CCI****, and Burghley CCI****. We enjoyed her positive teaching techniques immensely, and were impressed to learn that not only does she have a **barefoot event horse competing at the Preliminary level**, but she has also schooled cross-country in a rope halter!

The following month we went back to Montana for the Heron Park eventing clinic and The Event at Rebecca Farm. It was at Heron Park that I met another person competing a horse **barefoot in the upper levels**. I was hosing Dagjeir after a sweltering cross country session when I noticed a person strolling by with a big, grey, *barefoot* Thoroughbred. I was amazed when the mare walked over the fist-sized river rocks surrounding the wash area without so much as *noticing* them. I immediately hounded her handler with questions, learned that they were preparing for the upcoming competition at Rebecca Farm, were competing at the Preliminary level, and that her horse was barefoot simply because she had “never needed shoes.” She had five other horses that

Photo courtesy Tim O’Neal

competed in shoes, pads, and studs. Looking back, I wished I’d had the chance to check out the bottoms of that brilliant mare’s feet!

After attending two clinics and five USEA three-day events, we decided to pull the shoes in the first week of August. Our horses’ feet grew so quickly that the nail holes disappeared in a month. We entered two Training-Level schooling shows given by the Whidbey Island Pony Club, on Whidbey Island, Washington, in September and October. This late in the season, the footing was packed, dry, and a bit gravelly. On both occasions, we stayed for an extra day to school Preliminary cross country with WIPC’s eventing trainer Linda Chatfield. We received our best scores all season, brought home three more ribbons to add to our collection, and our horses galloped soundly. We were thrilled with their stability and sure-footedness on course. After a busy summer of training and competing, we were elated to end it with success in so many aspects. Our horses had hooves that ate gravel for breakfast... and it was hard to believe how far I had come in such a short time. Amrita’s wily and courageous Dagjeir had brought me **from Novice to Preliminary** in a *single season*.

Performing barefoot is the icing on the cake for our amazing Akhal-Teke event horses, and we are looking forward to continuing this way in 2010 and beyond. In congruence with eventing and my work to promote the Akhal-Teke breed in professional sports, I endeavor to expand my career as a writer, and there’s nothing I like more than to expose the cultural *nitty-gritty’s* many people blithely ignore. And the deeper I delve into mainstream American horse business... the more aware I become of controversial issues concerning the complex biomechanics of the equine athlete. The internet is swarming with accounts of the injuries and skeletal deformities sustained by young horses put into strenuous work during crucial development stages... and the use of “corrective” shoeing, studs, joint injections, sedatives, pain killers, and any number of show-legal “commodities” administered liberally to competition horses all over the globe, in nearly every major horse sport from Pony Club and 4H to Rolex and the Olympics. However, there also exists a burgeoning community of like-minded equestrians yearning to enhance their horsemanship through non-conventional practices. I am convinced that the **barefoot revolution**—and its resulting overall health benefits—will eventually help solve most major sport-horse lameness issues, and riders will benefit from more confidence and better traction with a mount that can feel the ground.

And aside from all of this, barefoot *just makes sense*. Nature builds the best athletes. Horses don’t come into this world nailed to a set of iron shoes, so why is it believed that they cannot perform without them? The irony in this conundrum is blatantly apparent, yet conveniently overlooked. It all comes down to this: *Money can’t buy happi-*

All photos courtesy Jenny Rice



Akhal-Teke hooves—Pan Tau (top) and Dagjeir (center & bottom), who has 4 white hooves!

ness... but it *can* buy all the drugs & invasive farriery one needs to push horses past their limits. In the face of what we affectionately know as *tradition* and *success*, most horses are never given the chance to prove they can perform well, or even *better*, without shoes... *all drugs aside*.

Fortunately, there *are* professional athletes swimming against the current and succeeding like we’ve all dreamed of. *Without* sacrificing their horses in the process! And I think it’s only a matter of time before barefoot is big business at *a-horse-show-near-you*. As possibly America’s only-known barefoot Akhal-Teke event horses, I hope our own barefoot beauties will set a shining example of what’s possible for all. 🌟

For more information, please visit Sweet Water Farm’s website and blog:

http://www.akhalteke.cc
http://eventingakhaltek.es.blogspot.com/

Or contact us at:

Sweet Water Farm Akhal-Teke
2097 West Valley RD

Friday Harbor, WA 98250

Ph (360) 378-8386 • ibolds@rockisland.com

Regional Bone Loss in the Distal Phalanx of Horses

Part One

by Robert M. Bowker, VMD, PhD and Ms. Tara Calvert-Jackson

In previous communications, our laboratory has presented some findings suggesting that the **coffin bones** of our horses may not be as healthy as we think they are. We have been studying the coffin bones obtained from deceased horses that have died from numerous reasons, ranging from various acute traumas and severe colic distresses, to other common problems, such as laminitis, cancer and just “old age” issues. In this study we have been intrigued by the observations of a wide range of weights and bone densities of these coffin bones in apparently “healthy feet” (i.e. the horse was not presented to the veterinarian for distal limb problems, but for more generalized or other specific body issues). With these wide ranges of weights, there are also superficial markings on the dorsal surfaces of the bones that, at the very least, suggest some sort of **bio-mechanical strain** upon their surfaces.

In an earlier communication, we have presented some of our findings dealing with the increased porosity of the **palmar process in older horses**, as the process elongates as compared to the younger horse, or those horses having relatively better feet. In these instances, the bone was much thinner and had areas of osteoclastic activity (*osteoclasts* are bone cells that chew up & remove bone as opposed to *osteoblasts* which deposit bone to rebuild areas).

This stage of our research is where we are presently collating the massive amounts of data into some generalized ideas or concepts that can or may be useful to the many horse people, veterinarians, farriers and trimmers alike. Interestingly, from our preliminary findings we are beginning to realize a more generalized concept that may be important in our thinking about the horse: we, as horse owners, field and academic veterinarians, trimmers and farriers, may see different aspects of **the same general horse population**. As a result, what we perceive to be the “**normal foot**” really is only the feet of horses that we routinely and commonly see everyday!

For example, if we all assume that the general horse population consists of many horses of various and different breeds, ages, etc., and have varying of conditions of “good, average and bad health,” due to many positive or negative reasons (nutritional status, climate conditions, hoof care, exercise versus stall housing, different husbandries, etc.), we can expect to have these many horses be represented in a “bell shaped” curve with “good footed” horses being represented on one end of the spectrum, and “bad footed” horses on the opposite end, with the majority of the horse population being represented in the middle.

Conceptually, the “good footed” horses would

rarely have foot issues related to repeated disease issues, such as navicular syndrome or other chronic foot problems, and have fewer secondary problems associated with the back, neck, and proximal limb joints, while the “bad footed” horses would be in constant need of good and proper foot management, as well as back, neck and other joint problems. This conceptual notion seems plausible to us, as the feet and coffin bones that we are obtaining from necropsies, regardless of the cause of the horse’s demise, appear to all have varying degrees of regional bone loss and defects within the coffin bones, with relatively few feet being very healthy (with few superficial defects and high bone densities).

Such a concept of the general horse population is reflected in the phrase “**no hoof, no horse**” that has been reiterated many times throughout history, although we would want to expand the phrase to “**no foot, no horse**”. In any event, as we are beginning to collate the data, we are beginning to think that such a phrase may well have some truth to it!

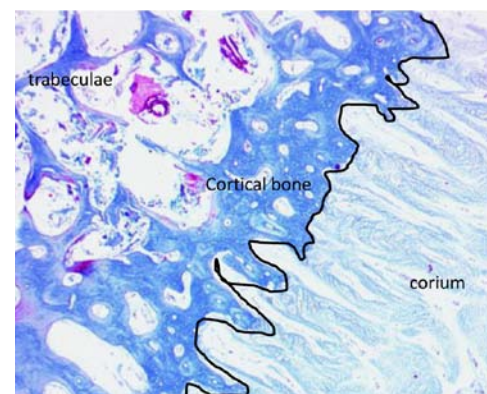
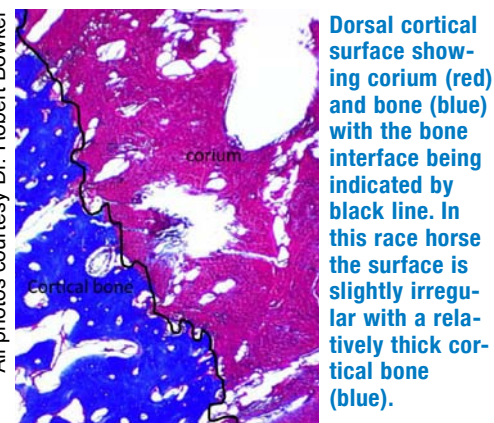
For our studies on the coffin bone, we have been working with **Ms. Joanne Griffin**, a fourth year veterinary student, and **Dr. Lisa Lancaster**, a veterinarian and former student from our laboratory from Denver, Colorado, in examining the coffin bones of three year old race horses that died on the race track, as to their structural features at the time of their demise. We are presently quantifying the morphological features of the coffin bones—specifically, the dorsal surface as to the histological changes and variations when compared to another group of horses of similar breed, but slightly older (it is difficult to obtain specimens from young, active, healthy horses for such examination of the feet!).

Briefly, what we are finding under the microscope are areas having the following features: there are areas which are thinner than other cortices of coffin bones, and have a greater porosity than many coffin bones that we have received from individuals around the United States whose horses have died from a variety of reasons. Also the trabeculae—the internal bony struts of bones that support the horse—are thinner than those trabeculae from other coffin bones. Interestingly, the dorsal surface has been **adapting to the activities of these young race horses**, as seen by bone being removed, and even areas of dead bone, as well as areas of bone being formed.

These areas of adaptive changes can be seen in the photographs of these coffin bones. In the first microscopic photographs, the dorsal bone surface shows the range of cortical irregularities in race horse bones, with some bones having only a moderate amount of cortical erosion, while others have greater amounts. We hypothesize that, with greater bone loss on the cortex, there will be greater clinical

signs related to regional bone loss (some form of **osteoporosis**).

All photos courtesy Dr. Robert Bowker



Dorsal cortex of another race horse showing greater irregularities in bone interface along with a thinner bone and greater trabecular space. Corium is bluish color on right.



Photograph of dorsal surface of coffin bone showing the vertical striations of bone surface when bone has varying amounts of regional bone loss. In horses with minimal bone loss the dorsal surface is relatively smoother with significantly fewer microforaminae in bone surface.

About the authors: Dr. Robert Bowker has spent the past few years studying the functioning of the equine foot in health and disease at Michigan State University, and is now working at his rehab center—Corona Vista Equine Center in Michigan (www.coronavistaequinecenter.com). Ms. Tara Calvert-Jackson is pursuing studies at MSU, and studying and researching the foot.

A Day in the Life of a Trimmer

by Maria Siebrand

Contrary to what might be the stereotype for us horsey folk, I am NOT a morning person. I won't lie to you and coax you to believe that I greet the sun's decided and undeniable ascent in the sky with any kind of enthusiasm. But once I have a large mug of hot coffee in my clutches, and the schedule for the day in front of me, things definitely improve. There are eight horses to trim today; not an especially long day, but long enough, with plenty of driving, probably a good deal of horse wrestling, no small amount of small talk, and a lot of discussion about the hooves I'm trimming.

The cases today will run the gamut of hoof pathologies, and the extremes from super healthy to gravely unhealthy. I take ten minutes to review each horse's history before I eat breakfast. When you trim something around 150 horses every four weeks, I've found it's a very good idea to take pictures of every trim, and make notes on your observations. I refresh my memory of each horse's progress while I continue to slurp my coffee. I also run through my checklist, and pile up any supplies I know I'll need today, like replacement parts for hoof boots, the custom mineral supplements I formulate for my clients, and plenty of drinking water for myself.

Once I'm sufficiently caffeinated, and my truck is stocked, I'm off. First stop is the local Post Office, where I ship out a set of replacement gaiters for some Easyboot Epics, and pick up a shipment of fresh hoof rasps and a few other goodies from my favorite farrier's supply. Then I'm off to my first client.

I usually try to schedule one of the more cooperative horses on my roster to start the day. Maybe it's a little superstitious, but I feel like if the first trim starts off on the right foot, the rest of the day tends to mirror that mood. Today, I start with a pair of well-transitioned Andalusians: a mare and a gelding, mother and son. These two are lucky to live in large, 60x80 sand pens. The footing and the room to move have helped them both develop almost text-book perfect hooves. I trim the mare first; she has lovely, wide, healthy frogs, excellent digital cushion, and well-calloused, uniform sole depth. Her wall quality is admirable, her bars self-maintain nicely, and her wear pattern is incredibly even: all hallmarks of a healthy, well-balanced hoof. The gelding's feet are almost identical to hers, but his wall quality is less spectacular; he chips much more easily than she. Diet is the likely culprit, as he is fed differently than the mare. I make a note to discuss some options with the owner.

The mare is a perfect angel for her trim. The gelding, on the other hand, is a little playful today... he steals my hoof pick from my back pocket three



The young Andalusian bra-snapper, Zander, looking perfectly innocent.

times, repeatedly fogs my sunglasses with his breath as he nuzzles me, and then snaps my bra strap as I work on his toes.

There are two horses to trim at the next stop. Once again, these are some of the lucky ones on my roster, in terms of their care and lifestyle. Pea gravel graces the front section of the pasture where the horses pull hay from a variety of slow feeders. Even the mare motel stalls have pea gravel, along with a section of river sand for lying down, and each stall is equipped with at least two slow feeder bags. Both of the horses I trim at this ranch were in a pretty bad state hoof-wise when I met them, and these changes to create a healthier horse habitat have helped tremendously.

A lovely Rocky Mountain mare wearing boots on her front feet trots to greet me. That's a thrilling sign, given that she was an acute laminitis case. Her initial x-rays revealed a frightening 15 degrees rotation in both front feet, paper thin soles, and high heels. Two months later, her comfort level is very encouraging, although she is still in boots and pads. I am a little disappointed when I see her new x-rays; although her sole depth is now a healthy 14mm, and her palmar angle is almost ideal, she is still not growing good lamellar attachment. Her owner and I discuss her diet, trying to find the reason for her still compromised laminae.

I trim her judiciously, bringing her wall back through lamellar wedge to a more appropriate breakover, and keeping her heels under control, as I have been every two weeks. The mare makes her concern abundantly clear, nipping at my hair as I bring her toes back from the top. Her owner, a thoughtful horsewoman, is dismayed at this behavior, but I'm nonplussed...after all, in this case, her condition was largely caused by her prior hoof care. Who can blame her for being defensive, and making her opinion clear? After checking to make sure her boots are still fitting comfortably, and providing her owner with several new pairs of pads, it's time to look in on her stablemate.

All photos courtesy Maria Siebrand

This horse's progress makes me proud. A 20-something, recently gelded stallion with Cushing's disease and chronic laminitis, he was no easy case. His feet were a mess... he wore reverse shoes, was unbelievably flat soled, his frogs riddled with thrush. Surprisingly, he spent several years unshod prior to the reverse shoeing, but clearly the trim was not appropriate. He crunches across his lovely pea-gravel pen to greet me barefoot. He is still not 100% comfortable, but then, it's only been 3 months, and he has made amazing progress in such a short period of time. With the help of the Equine Cushing's and Insulin Resistance Group on Yahoo, we have carefully controlled his Cushing's disease. After that, growing a healthier hoof for this boy was easy! He is the consummate gentleman for his trim. I make sure his boots are in good repair before I go, because he still needs them when out on rugged ground.



A 20 year old stallion with Cushing's disease: before, and 3 months later!

Up the road a piece to another excellent facility. Here, in large communal pastures on rugged, hilly, rocky ground, are my next two horses. Again, the difference their healthy lifestyle makes is obvious, although they are as dissimilar as two horses can be, apart from both being gravel-sound barefoot. The first is a big, flashy overo PMU. His almost draft-sized feet are beautiful, and he only needs a minimal trim after 4 weeks. His owner is enthusiastic about understanding the trim, and so I describe in



All photos courtesy Maria Siebrand

One of my own horses, Big Bad Leroy Brown, gets a tune up before we ride.

detail everything I do—and everything I don't do—as I trim.

The second horse (same owner), is a sensitive QH gelding. His feet, although he is very sound and comfortable on them, are growing out some pathology, and his “mom” is concerned and wondering what we can do to make them look more normal. It's just a matter of time, I explain, and sometimes hooves can look a bit odd, while things straighten themselves out. We discuss different hoof care theories, and I promise to send some links to more in-depth information when I get home later. His trim today is minimal, as well—all that movement really does pay off.

I'm off down the mountain, then, to the last two horses of the day. Twenty minutes and a protein bar later, I pull in to the next ranch. My young client greets me cheerfully, eager to recount how

her mare is doing since her last trim. The news is quite good... especially considering that the attending vet had recommended putting the mare down before I met her. The ten year old, dark bay Quarter Horse mare is a severe navicular case. X-rays and MRI revealed just about every harbinger of the disease possible. When I'd first heard the extent of the damage, I was not especially hopeful. But when I saw her feet, I knew I could reshape a healthier hoof capsule. Five months later, barefoot hoof care has done just that, and she is much more comfortable than I had dared hope. I watch her move with and without her boots before and after her trim, and I'm pleased with her continuing progress. Will she ever be 100% sound again? Only time will tell. I can only imagine what a shame it would have been if she hadn't been given the chance to heal.

One final trim today, a healthy-footed Haflinger who likes to use my back as a chin rest while I do her toes. A little tough on the spine after a full day of trimming feet, but she's a little cutey, so there are no hard feelings!

I pack up my tools and I'm on the road once more. My final stop is my home ranch, where my beautifully barefoot geldings stare pointedly as I pull in, as if to say “it's about time!” I open the gate that separates their 150x150 main pen from the pasture where they play, and watch them frolic, gallop, buck, and just plain float about on their excellent feet, while I get ready to ride. Nothing like a ride on a super-sound barefoot horse at the end of the day to unkink my lower back! It doesn't matter how many horses I handle everyday, or how tired I might be... these guys always



At the end of the day, it's still all about barefoot horses. Leroy dons his Easyboot Epics in preparation for a rocky trail ride.

make my day. They're not just my beautiful boys... they are the ultimate testament to the horsekeeping and hoof care practices I so fervently preach. 🍎

About the author: With a background in the life science and pharma industries, and a determination to make life better for our domestic horses, Maria Siebrand brings a science-based approach to horsekeeping, equine nutrition, and the field of barefoot hoof care. She offers barefoot hoof care services, nutrition consultations and diet formulation, and horsemanship coaching, as well as a line of supplements formulated to fit the typical Southern California equine diet. Maria is available for clinics, lectures, and mentorships on barefoot hoof care and progressive horsekeeping practices. www.thoughtfulhorseman.com

All photos courtesy Jill Owens

Concave vs. Flat Feet

My four horses live on 500 acres of hard, rocky, unyielding ground. I had always worried because they all had flat feet, while the ideal—or so I thought—was a more concave foot. Then I read Dr. Bowker's article in *The Horse's Hoof* about how the foot molds to accommodate the ground conditions, always trying to keep the sole in contact with the ground—therefore, soft, yielding soil will produce a concave foot and hard, unyielding ground will produce a flatter foot.

This fall, I sent one of my horses (a mustang, by the way) out for two months of full training. During that time, he lived on irrigated pasture. When he came home, he had a concave foot! I wish the photos showed this better—it was quite dramatic to see. The first one shows Rocky's concave foot just after he came home, and the others—taken on the same day—show the much flatter feet of the three horses who stayed at home and lived on hard ground.—Jill Owens



Top Left: Rocky's more concave hoof after living on soft ground for two months. Other three photos show the hooves of Jill's other horses, who stayed at home on the hard ground.

“Trimming into the Wind”

by Mackie Hartwig

It would appear that much of the Barefoot movement was, and continues to be, motivated and stimulated by horse owners who were and are frustrated with the state of hoof care and hoof wellness, where their individual horses were concerned.

Many arrive to the Barefoot experience expecting that getting the training of a proper barefoot trim via a professional barefoot trimming school, or barefoot clinic, or trim fest, or DVDs, would result in a wonderful win-win outcome—given a little time. But some, if not most, run into other problems that may or may not be perceived as hoof related, and we, as humans, begin to rationalize why the results of our efforts are less than expected or desired.

The #1 reason may just be poor client compliance with instructions for ongoing care and maintenance that have been recommended by the barefoot trimmer after the last trim, which, I might add, is fairly common. After 10 or so trims, and the horse’s feet still have not reached a desired degree of improvement, or certainly moving in the proper direction...do we as trimmers just blow it off, or just shut down and get back to trimming and collecting our fee?

Do we believe that all horses have equal genetic predispositions where feet are concerned? I, for one do not believe that all horses are genetically equal, where hoof production is concerned. We have all heard or read the wonderful stories of fabulous hoof recoveries. Is it fair to think ALL horses have the genetic capacity for the same wonderful results?

Since we do not have the ability to change genetics, it might be helpful to take charge of the things we **do** have control over.

We have all been told, and probably believe, that MOVEMENT is key for horses to have thriving hooves. I, for one, wholeheartedly accept this to be a true statement. Most will hope that their trimming client’s horses will have an abundant area to move and be horses. What if the horse has problems unrelated to feet and is reluctant to move because of dental, spinal, tack problems, or any reason for that matter—should we expect thriving hooves with access to great movement? Most seasoned trimmers would know right off the bat—absence of movement, for whatever reason, will decrease the successful results we hope for when trimming feet.

Case in point: Copper, a Quarter Horse mare, presents on 7/21/09 with significant right hindquarter atrophy, due to a kick from another horse. The barefoot trimmer/farrier, Jerry Huntsinger, evaluates the entire horse, even

through he was there to “just” trim the mare. After his evaluation of Copper, and consultation with the owner given the multiple issues at hand, the owner consents to send her mare, Copper, to the Huntsinger Rehab facility in Battle Ground, Washington, on 8/1/09.

At the Huntsinger Rehab Facility, Copper’s rehab started with nutritional support via Equine Challenge Supplements for horses, spinal and body work and trimming, of course, and when Copper was able, re-conditioning started. *More to follow...*

Just about every trimmer should know that in the absence of proper and timely **nutritional building blocks**, even with a correct trim and tons of daily movement, it is unreasonable to forecast a thriving hoof. Many a barefoot trimmer across the USA has entered the world of equine nutrition to better understand this issue and improve the chances of trimming a thriving set of hooves. This nutritional problem plagues more trimmers than not, if we are honest with ourselves.

We see horse owners with the wrong horse trying to do the **wrong job for this specific horse**. Sadly, far too often, we all see this. Can this scenario get in the way of thriving hooves? I, for one, believe this can interfere with a thriving horse, therefore it will interfere with thriving hooves.

When we continue to see the hooves in our trimming rotation that are going nowhere quickly, or moving soooooo very slowly that a glacier could pass the progress of the hooves, then I say... we are “Trimming into the Wind.”

Why do we do this? Is there a better way? Will

it make any difference if I say something to the owner? If I walk away, who is being hurt? Me or the horse? Is it better for me to get the trim money, rather than someone else? If we continue, does the barefoot movement suffer? Is “Trimming into the Wind” more about providing a living for the barefoot trimmer?

It is just a horse, right? I think when we continue down this same old path over and over again, for whatever reason, we become complicit in the destruction of the individual horse. Have you ever seen the look in the eyes of the horse, when the horse asks, “Are you going to help me? Or are you just like every one else?” If you have worked on any number of horses, you know what look I am talking about! Just how many times do you say to yourself, “Poor boy?” or “Poor girl?” Do you ever tell yourself, “I need to get in here, trim this horse or horses, get my money, and get the hell outta here.”

Without **proper dental care** to the horse’s mouth, there will be negative proprioceptive changes to the horses TMJ and spine. If movement is generated through this neuro-musculo-skeletal pathway, it is a safe bet that the overall movement of this horse will be negatively impacted.

If the horse has **neck, wither, thoracic, lumbar and pelvis problems**, then once again the neuro-musculo-skeletal system comes into play and the horse’s movement will be negatively impacted.

If the movement of this horse is negatively affected, would it be reasonable to think the **vascular system** would also be negatively affected? The answer to this question is... Yes! The greater the movement, the greater volume

All photos courtesy Jerry Huntsinger



BEFORE—August 1, 2009: Quarter horse mare Copper arrives at Huntsinger Rehab Facility with significant right hindquarter atrophy, due to a kick from another horse. Copper’s rehab included nutritional support, spinal and body work, trimming, and eventually re-conditioning.

of blood will be moved. Lymphatic flow will also be negatively impacted, if movement is decreased. Without movement, lymphatic flow will pretty much stop—muscle action provides the lymphatic pumping mechanism.

We all seem to recognize this phenomenon when the hooves are shod, so it should not be too difficult to see the more systemic affect of problems in the neuro-musculo-skeletal system. I will not go into the somato-visceral system of the horse... just be aware that there is more than one system of communication going on at the same time.

If the vascular system is compromised due to lack of movement, even good nutrition cannot be maximized. If the nutrition of the horse is poor or wanting, **and** the vascular system is compromised, then the horse is really behind the 8 ball. In a very short amount of time, the horse you introduce yourself to is more like an iceberg... the vast majority of the problems are not visible to the eye.

The whole horse should match—and generally they do, one way or another. If the hooves are poor, one should expect the eyes will be off, the coat will be off, the mind will be off. However, I see far too many horse with horrible feet, the eyes are off, but the coat looks pretty good. I ask, “do you feed rice bran?” The answer 99 % of the time is, “Yes.” Equine Stewardship will make it much easier to ascertain the depth of the “Iceberg” if you have the courage to be bold or strong, at the very least you will not be complicit in the further destruction of the horse.

Does this mean you may lose a few clients? Probably, but maybe not. Is it possible you may lose some money? Probably, but maybe not. Will some think you are a nut or crazy? Probably, but maybe not. Will your heart be less heavy when you make a pro-active deci-

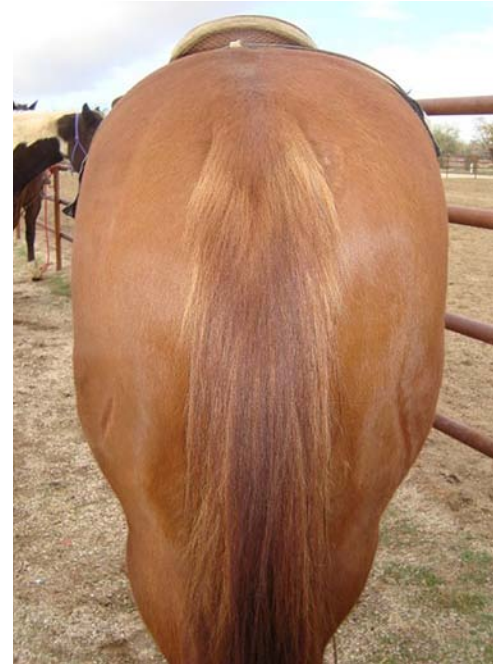
sion to not be complicit in the further destruction of the horse....Most definitely! When you get that look from that horse, you can tell him... “I am going to do my very best to help you, but I will not “Trim into the Wind.” This means at some time you may have to walk away, as the owner is not engaged in the well-being of the horse and wants you to join them in the slow destruction of the horse.

I know that some barefoot trimmers have stepped back and learned more about equine nutrition to help secure a better chance for thriving feet. The same with learning about spinal care or other forms of body work to help their client’s horses. Being aware of equine dentistry greater than “get’em floated once a year,” can go a long way to help the whole horse thrive, and that includes the hooves. It is helpful to know more about the horse than just how to perform a proper barefoot trim.

Telling a horse owner that their horse needs better nutrition to grow better hoof and being unable to give any better direction than talk to your vet, or put him on some brand of senior processed feed, is a disservice to the horse and is, quite frankly, lazy. Wouldn’t it be better to have the knowledge and the skills to say... instead of “poor boy”....that “I can help you.”

Back to Copper...

On 10/1/09, following two full months of dynamic whole horse rehab, Copper was released from the Huntsinger Rehab facility. The photos will demonstrate a significantly changed horse, relative to the horse which entered rehab on 8/1/09. The asymmetrical atrophy of this horse bespeaks a neurological component which would not have resolved on its own. It would have continued to decline, and the other biological systems would have followed this decline. Without the proper nutri-



AFTER-Copper, now under saddle and back in Arizona, with her hindquarters doing well.

tional support, spinal and body work support, it would have been virtually impossible to expect a “functional” healing recovery.

Without Jerry Huntsinger’s whole horse effort, this would be just another “Poor mare” story. Without the knowledge and skills to either recognize or address the multiple issues concerning this mare in a very pro-active approach—and to just focus on the hooves—would have nearly guaranteed a “Trimming into the Wind” outcome.

Copper is currently in Arizona and has returned to her performance activities.

We barefoot trimmers, who trim more than just our own horse or horses, need to rise to the challenge of “helping horses with people problems” by increasing our knowledge and skills in addressing the entire horse. If we do not, and instead concentrate on just the hooves, we will find ourselves... “Trimming into the Wind,” and sadly, unlike farriers, we as a profession of barefoot trimmers will be judged by our “Iceberg” failures, rather than our successes. ●

Jerry and Kim Huntsinger reside with their 2 children and animals in Battle Ground, Washington. www.jchoofrehabnw.com

About the author: Dr. Mackie Hartwig, DC, CVCP, is the President and CEO of Equine Challenge Supplements for Horses. He is also an Instructor at the OSNHC, teaching equine nutrition, diet and equine stewardship. He holds seminars on Whole Horse Stewardship using more holistic approaches. Mackie resides in central California with his wife Kathy. www.equinechallengesupplements.com

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All photos courtesy Jerry Huntsinger

AFTER-October 1, 2009: Following two months of whole horse rehab, Copper was released from the Huntsinger Rehab facility with a changed appearance. It is obvious that simply “trimming the feet” would not have led to the positive outcome that this whole horse treatment was able to accomplish.

Health and Disease of the Equine Frog

Part One: What Does a Healthy Frog Look Like and Why Does it Matter?

by Candace Platz DVM and Heike Bean

PROPERTIES OF A HEALTHY FROG

A healthy frog is essential to the optimal physiological and mechanical function of the horse's foot. Unhealthy frogs can significantly reduce a horse's athletic performance by causing pain, impaired function, inflammation, and by becoming a source of chronic infection. Yet the structure, function and appearance of a truly healthy frog is poorly understood by many hoof care professionals.

Veterinarians, farriers and barefoot trimmers are often taught using texts depicting "normal" frogs which are, in fact, atrophied, contracted or diseased. Therefore, what is taught as "normal" is not necessarily healthy. Understandably, with this image in mind, hoof care professionals too often fail to consider the unhealthy frog as an underlying cause of foot pain and lameness. The black malodorous discharge of classic thrush is often the only frog disease taught to veterinary students and farriers. But if we are to do justice to our roles as equine health care providers, it is essential to learn to recognize, treat and prevent the full spectrum of frog disease that affects domestic horses.

The healthy frog is made of very dense, firm and resilient tissue, strong enough to resist indentation by a sharp object. Its appearance is generally smooth, free of flaps, holes, fissures or undermining layers. It is divided by a central sulcus that is dry and solid. The central sulcus should be wide and shallow enough to be easily visualized, cleaned and probed throughout its entire length and depth without discomfort. There should be no slits, pockets or fissures on the side walls of the grooves or sulcus. Caudally it should widen and blend smoothly and strongly to form a solid connection with the heel bulbs.

Similarly, the depths of the collateral grooves where the frog horn joins the horn of the sole should be dry and firm. The collateral grooves should be available for cleaning, probing and inspecting throughout their entire length, including the deepest parts. They should be free of snags, rough spots or sensitivity. The junction of frog and sole horn should be tight, without any soft, discolored or punky areas. The frog should not "mushroom" laterally over the grooves, which obscures visualization and provides a haven for microbes. The frog should be tall enough to make ground contact throughout most, if not all, of its length, most importantly toward the back of the foot. It should not be so tall that it is forced to the side or split on weight bearing.

The frog should not be compressible by digital pressure, not even toward the rear of the central sulcus and near the heel bulbs. When palpated, the caudal frog should feel at least as solid as the soles of running shoes, in contrast to the heel bulbs which are much softer

The color and texture of the horn should be consistent throughout the structure, except for pigmented areas of light colored hooves. With this exception, dark areas are usually associated with underlying infection and loss of structural integrity.

EXAMPLES OF HEALTHY FROGS

Fig. 1: The dark area on this beautifully healthy horn is clearly pigmentation of a mark extending from the skin of the heel bulb into the horn of the frog and not evidence of disease.



Fig. 2: In contrast, the darkened areas in the frog of this light colored hoof are associated with compromised tissue, due to infection in the central sulcus and collateral grooves.

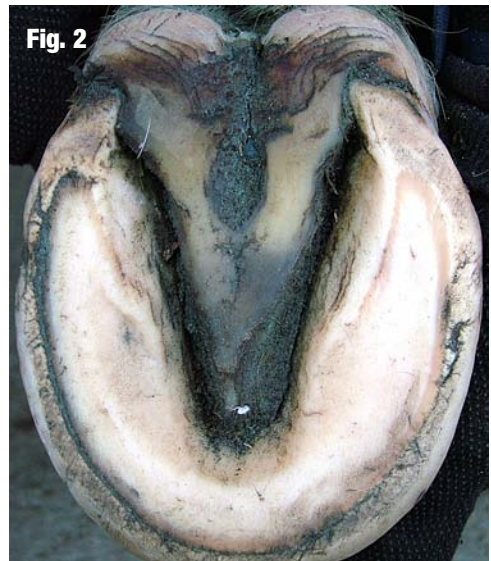


Fig. 3: Below is an exemplary clean, robust, pristine frog. The central sulcus and collateral grooves are wide, clean, and completely free of any sign of infection. What looks like it might be a layer is actually a mark left by trimming.



Fig. 4: This frog is from a wet terrain front hoof. Note the clearly defined sulci, the robust size and width, and the clean uniform appearance of the horn. The strength in this frog allows for broad, plump and strong heel bulbs, with an ideal distance between the lateral cartilages.



(photos on next page)
Fig. 5: This picture of the same hoof illustrates a strong solid disease-free connection between the frog and the heel bulbs. Also evident are the height and strength of the heels that is created by a fully-functioning frog.

Fig. 6: Here is another example of a healthy wet terrain forelimb frog. Notice the consistent light color throughout the entire structure.

All photos courtesy Candace Platz DVM and Heike Bean



Fig. 7: This is an excellent example of a strong healthy hind foot frog living in damp conditions. There are no “secrets” in these collateral grooves or central sulcus.



Fig. 8a and 8b: Below are pictures of the left fore and left hind, respectively, of a sixteen year old horse, shod for most of his life, who has been barefoot for less than a year. A strong disease-free frog such as this in a deshod horse

All photos courtesy Candace Platz DVM and Heike Bean

contributes to correct, pain-free hoof function, soundness and improved quality of gait. The heels will continue to expand in the front hooves if the frog is maintained in this condition of pristine health. Too often horses “flunk out” of deshoeing programs because unhealthy frogs are not recognized as the culprit in causing persistent soreness. Notice the clean, solid dry depths to the central sulci and collateral grooves, as well as the robust structure with uniform color and texture throughout.



Fig. 9a and 9b: The horse belonging to this strong healthy frog lives in a dry area. Although the collateral grooves were not thoroughly cleaned for this picture, and theoretically could harbor infection, the robust appearance of frog and heel bulbs make this unlikely. The second view of the same foot illustrates a solid connection between caudal frog and the strong heels that can develop in the absence of disease.



WHAT DOES A HEALTHY FROG DO?

Mirroring the shape of the underlying digital cushion, the frog determines the width of the foot across the heels by creating a wedge between the flexible heels of the hoof capsule. A healthy frog maximizes the ideal mechanical and energy absorbing capacity of the digital cushion by serving as its functional extension, transmitting concussive and weight bearing forces from the ground to the digital cushion, while protecting it from trauma.

The digital cushions of domestic horses, particularly those stabled during the first two years of life, typically have less fibrous connective tissue than those of wild horses, and so do not have the same supportive strength. The relative flabbiness of domestic digital cushions makes the frog’s role in maintaining correct hoof mechanics even more important in this population. Bearing in mind that the heel of the horse’s hoof is so flexible it can be manipulated with bare hands, it is easy to see that the width of the back half of the foot as well as its resistance to horizontal distortion and torque depends on the size, quality and pain-free function of the frog.

(cont. on page 14)

(cont. from page 13)

Frogs are also apparently important to sole concavity, since flat feet do not regain concavity without the support of healthy frogs. No matter how good the trim, without adequate frog support, concavity cannot be reestablished.

Figure 10: Cheryl Henderson's superb collage from ABC Hoofcare illustrates how the wedge shape of the frog is ideally designed to perform these functions. For further detail please refer to www.abchoofcare.com anatomy studies.

The frog provides mechanical support to the joints of the distal limb. Because the frog and digital cushion are important factors in limiting the descent of the coffin joint upon impact and during weight bearing, inadequate support from these structures can allow the coffin joint to over-extend. When this occurs, the result can be inappropriate stresses on multiple structures in the distal limb, including joint capsules, cartilage, tendons and ligaments. Especially vulnerable are small ligaments associated with the navicular bone. It is interesting, but hardly surprising, that increasingly sensitive imaging studies using MRI technology are revealing degenerative and inflammatory lesions in this ligament and other structures deep within the hoof capsule, and that these are now being implicated in chronic lameness.

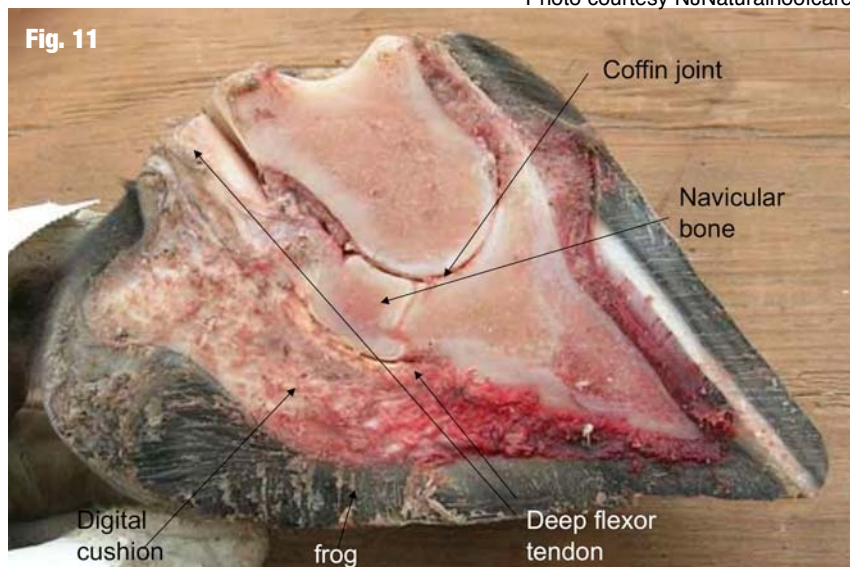
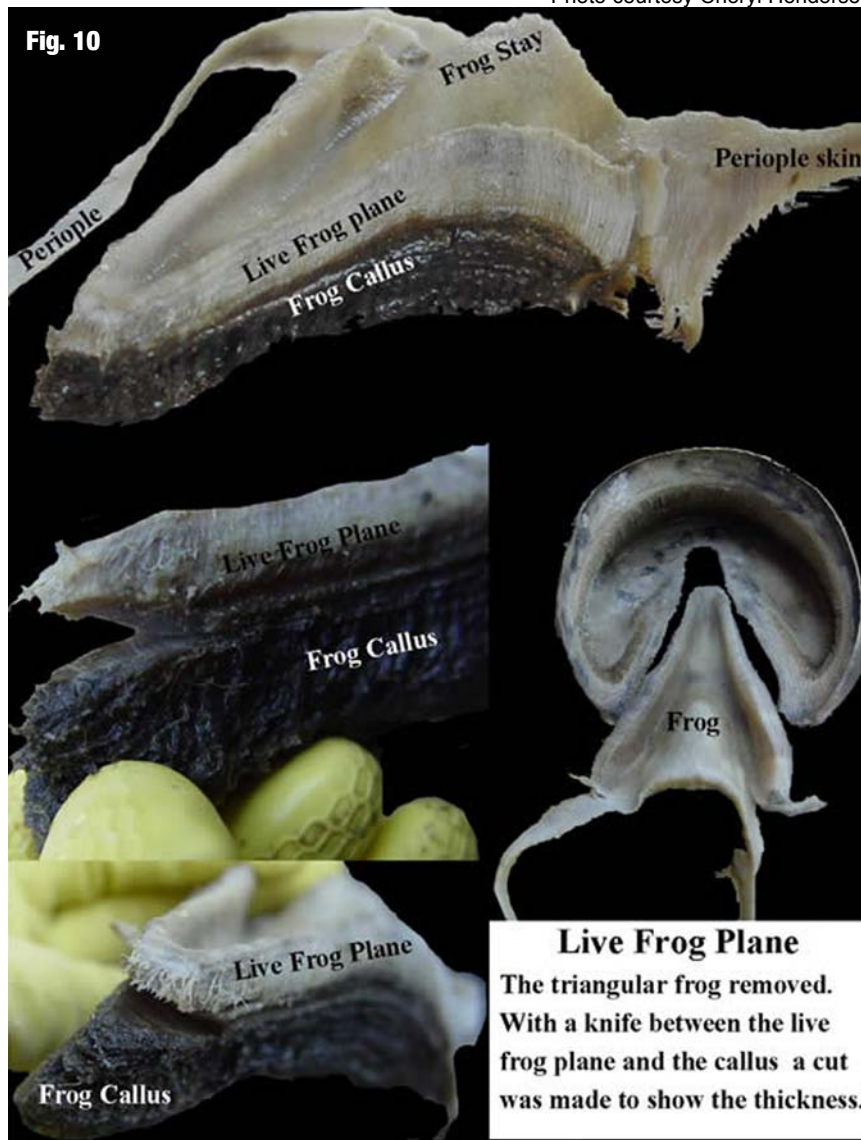


Fig. 11: The cross section below shows the relationship between the frog and the digital cushion above it. Although there is plenty of frog mass to support the digital cushion in this specimen, it is easy to see how the coffin joint could descend too far on weight bearing if the frog is not adequate. The

Photo courtesy Cheryl Henderson



bones of the loaded coffin joint would not articulate properly, the deep digital flexor would be overstretched, and there would be excess strain on the navicular bone and its attachments.

View also this video clip: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fd77zwRRYL> M&feature=related

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF FROG DISEASE?

Many chronic cases of “caudal heel pain” and “navicular syndrome” are likely manifestations of this proposed vicious cycle:

- 1) Infected, incompetent frogs create impaired internal and external hoof/foot/leg mechanics, due to either frog structural inadequacy, frog soreness or both.
- 2) Ongoing inappropriate loading or stress on one or more internal structures, such as the impar ligament, results in inflammatory, then degenerative changes.
- 3) Pain from these changes causes further alteration in gait mechanics.
- 4) Altered gait mechanics contribute to structural changes such as contracted heels and frog atrophy, which add to mechanical stress and inflammation within the foot.
- 5) Because of these alterations in morphology, circulation within the foot is compromised, impairing the horse's ability to heal mechanical and inflammatory damage, as well as infection. Infection can persist, becoming chronic and deep seated.
- 6) Because of his chronically sore feet, the horse may be thought to require shoeing, often therapeutic shoes, which may provide some immediate relief but also may further compromise function and healing by limiting frog contact, heel expansion, and circulation. Without treatment of occult infection, heel pain persists, and the horse becomes increasingly dependent on the external support of shoes. This “proves” to owners and practitioners that the horse cannot be sound without corrective shoes...

Eventually the horse may become a candidate for pain medication, injections, surgery, or nerveing. Alternatively, the horse could reach a long term equilibrium between inflammation, degenerative changes, chronic infection and level of dysfunction. The weakened foot may only be able to function with the external support of shoeing. If the horse's discomfort is relatively symmetrical, he may not be considered lame, and his loss of athleticism attributed

to aging, bad riding, poor training, improper shoeing/trimming, or the demands of his job, depending on who is giving an opinion (some of these factors could be contributing to the problem, complicating the picture). Many professionals are so accustomed to the appearance of compromised frogs that they consider them normal, and thus overlook frog disease as a possible initiating cause of loss of performance leading to lameness.

Frog disease and its negative consequences can be subtle and insidious in onset and progression. Decreasing fluidity, power, suppleness and suspension in the gait may continue unnoticed until there is overt lameness. Like the frog (pun intended, sort of) who stays in a pot of water until he boils to death if the heat is turned up slowly, the horse owner may not be aware of a gradual decline in the horse's performance. The same owner would be quite alarmed if this deterioration happened overnight, just as the frog would immediately jump out if plopped into a pot of hot water. By the time the problem is recognized, degenerative changes secondary to the initiating frog disease may be evident, and the frog disease is overlooked.

It has been argued that frog disease and lameness is a "chicken and egg" situation, where it is difficult or impossible to say if poor hoof mechanics cause frog disease or vice versa. However, it is the authors' experience that effectively treating frog infections has restored soundness to lame horses whose only options were thought to be pain medication and/or nerving, significantly improved the quality of movement in virtually every horse treated, decreased ouchiness on hard surfaces for horses with sensitive feet, and stopped longstanding bouts of hoof abscessation that had persisted for

years. With these results, the debate becomes academic at best. Considering that treating frog infections is relatively noninvasive (compared to joint injections and nerving) and inexpensive (compared to MRI's and lifelong corrective shoeing), frog disease should always be included in the differential diagnosis of performance loss and subacute or chronic lameness.

To summarize, frog infection causes impaired frog structure and function, which in turn can compromise other structures in the distal limb as well as systemic health. Because unhealthy frogs are so prevalent, diseased frogs which are not obviously "thrushy" are often considered normal and are not treated. Frog disease may be an important initiating or contributing factor in many degenerative changes in the equine digit. Since we rarely find what we aren't looking for, being able to recognize frog disease is an important skill for hoof care providers. ●

About the authors: Candace K. Platz, DVM of Maine Equine Associates in New Gloucester, Maine, is a graduate of Tufts University and the New York State College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell. A lifelong horsewoman, she is a certified Instructor/Trainer with the United States Dressage Federation, and a successful dressage competitor/trainer with multiple regional and national championships through the FEI levels. As an instructor, clinician, lecturer, trainer, competitor and author, she works to promote healthful ethical relationships between people and horses.

Heike Bean has owned horses for close to 50 years, is a German certified riding instructor, and has been competing in riding and driving for many years. She wrote the book "Carriage Driving—A Logical Approach Through Dressage Training" together with Sarah

Blanchard. She has also written numerous articles, as well as the Guidelines for Driven Dressage, as dressage chairman of the American Driving Society. She used to teach, train and judge, but has been retired for 10 years now, and dedicates all her time to learning all she can about horses, hooves in particular.

Part Two of this article series will cover, "What Exactly is Frog Disease and What does it look like?" and "Why Do Horses Get Frog Disease?" **Part Three** will address Frog Disease Prevention, Treatment, and Maintenance.

Below, an example of classic common thrush in the hoof. Although this frog is readily identified as having "classic" thrush, this is not the appearance of most infected frogs. Part Two of this series will explain how to identify more prevalent and subtle infections. Don't miss the next THH issue for lots more examples of frog disease!

Photo courtesy Candace Platz DVM and Heike Bean



Dave Rabe Inducted into the AERC Hall of Fame

Dave Rabe is a familiar sight at many of the endurance events in the western states. And he should be: Dave has collected more than 46,000 competition miles, including a staggering 55 100-mile events. He also has managed to bring three horses over the 5,000-mile mark.

He is best known for participation at multi-day events such as the XP rides. Dave clears trail, marks trail, competes on the day of the event and will either take down the trail marker ribbons or load up his horses and drive to the next event to start all over again. He does many of the miles on foot, running next to the horse or tailing the horse along the wilderness trails. Dave is also known for his riding attire. Rain, snow, summer or winter, Dave can be seen riding his horse in a pair of jean shorts and a tank top. It's his own unique brand.

In 2009, Dave completed 3,080 miles in 56 rides.—and all of them in **Easyboot Gloves** and **Easyboot Glue-**

Ons. The nominations submitted to AERC were prolific, but their comments were consistent. Dave can ride just about any horse, especially those that others give up on; he can pick various lost tack and equipment up off the ground without even leaving the saddle; and he will never pass up the opportunity to help another rider out, no matter where he is placing in the event.

Dave has been an Easyboot user since the mid-90's and has been instrumental in helping EasyCare test and develop various boot designs. What better way to challenge the product than with a rider who consistently racks up between 2,000 and 4,000 miles annually?

When he accepted his award in February at the annual AERC convention in Reno, NV, he said, "I suppose I really like a horse that bucks and runs away with me. That's why people give me their horses." He went on to say, "I like to ride point to point because before you know it, you're crossing state lines."

Please join EasyCare in congratulating Dave. We think there is no-one more deserving of AERC's ultimate award.—Courtesy of EasyCare Inc.

Introduction to the Bar Wall

by Cheryl Henderson

The mechanism of the hoof operates to sustain itself in truly amazing ways. As trimmers, we strive to understand what is needed to balance, strengthen, and repair the hoof wall, the heels, the frog, and the toe. If, however, we misunderstand or ignore the importance of the bars, we deny them the credit they deserve for sustaining hoof mechanism—and the trimming they should have, to maintain hoof health. Knowing what the bar wall is helps us to understand the hoof’s structure and care. Knowing what the bar wall does is to understand the hoof’s mechanism. This article, the first in a series of articles about trimming excess bar horn, defines the bar wall and its importance to hoof movement. From this point, to avoid confusion, this article will refer to the capsule wall as “the wall” and the bar wall as “the bar.”

At the back of the hoof, adjacent to the back of the frog on both sides, the capsule wall appears to turn sharply and continue inward toward the center of the hoof, forming the bar. In actuality, the bar wall and the capsule wall are separate structures that merge to form the **heel buttresses**, the flat areas of wear at either side of the frog. These heel purchases support landing pressure and weight bearing at the back of the foot. (See **Photo 1**).

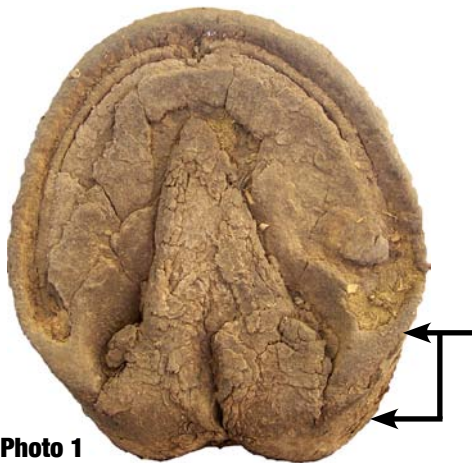
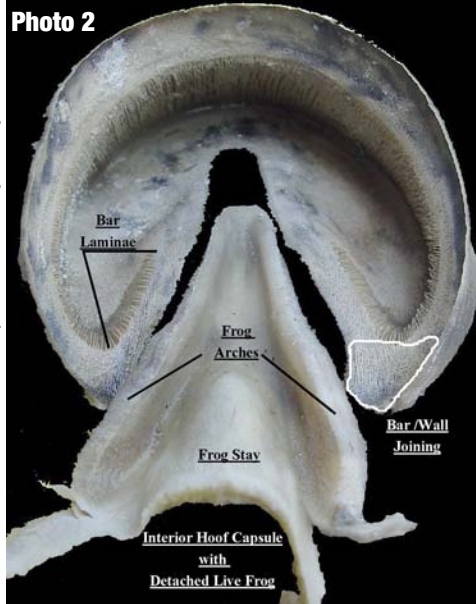


Photo 1

The capsule wall joins the bar wall at the heel purchase with no apparent delineation, making bar and wall appear to be one structure, when they are actually two separate structures growing from different areas of the hoof. (See **Photo 2**). The bar grows from its own papilla root source at the base of the lateral cartilage to form the portion of heel purchase facing the collateral groove. (See **Photo 3**). The capsule wall growing from the papilla at the coronary band forms the portion to the outside of the hoof. The visible evidence of this assembly is the **white line**, which can be seen changing direction away from the outside sole edge and turning at this junction.

All photos courtesy Cheryl Henderson



From here the white line is created by the bar defining the location. This merging of sole and bar is clearly visible and stops where the bar ends. The triangular area of sole outlined by this turning, which I call the **wall-bar triangle**, is commonly called the seat of the corn, for that is where “corns” develop as the result of incorrect shoeing at the back of the foot, including the bar.

Extending from the heel, the bar, acting as a wall, lies at an outward leaning angle, creating one side of the collateral groove, running from the back of the hoof alongside the frog.

The opposite side of the collateral groove is made up of frog padding which tightly abuts the bar at its bottom to form the collateral groove’s “V” shape. As the hoof flexes during flight, the

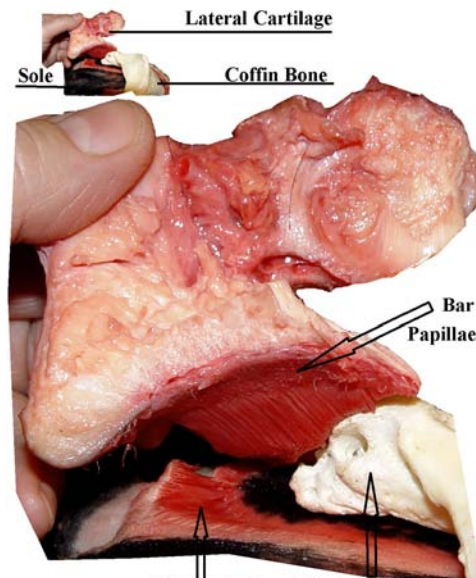


Photo 3

back of the hoof expands, contracts, and flexes up and down. During this movement, commonly called “**hoof mechanism**,” the “V” design of the collateral groove protects the internal hoof from damage by encouraging moisture to escape out the back opening while allowing dirt and debris to be packed in and then expelled. The rigid bar wall also helps retain the triangular shape of the frog. (See **Photo 4**).



Photo 4

This protective function of the collateral groove is compromised if the bar is weakened or left to interfere with the other hoof structures. Inside the hoof, the frog’s triangular shape has two distinct ridges created by the bar and digital cushion running from the heels forward. These **flexible arches** function like leaf springs on each side of the frog, lowering on weight bearing and returning to their natural shape during flight. It is these structures that can be damaged when the bars grow to excess and jam inward. (See **Photo 5**).

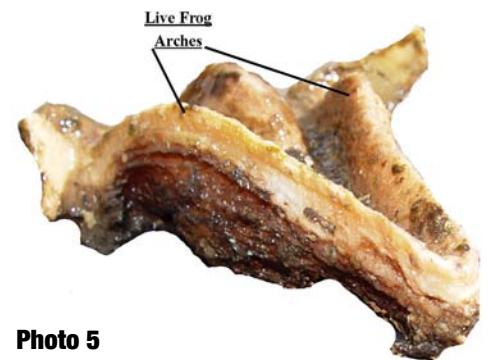


Photo 5

The excess bar’s upward pressure changes the shape of the live frog, decreasing its width and pushing it and the flexible arches upwards pushing against the digital cushion. As the bars grow in excess, the collateral grooves deepen, causing the twin internal arches to become rounder, further compressing and deforming the digital cushion above them. Such deformity compromises the hoof mechanism that helps maintain healthy feet during movement.

Current practice advocated by many trimmers is to leave the bar alone, even though none of them would fail to address the health of the wall, toe, or heels by judicious trimming. We routinely maintain good wall connection, clean frogs, shorten heels, and create a mustang roll at the toe in an effort to maintain health in these structures, which are compromised by a domestic lifestyle that too often requires horses to stand in their own feces and urine for long periods of time. The hard keratin tubules and inter-tubular horn of the bar require no less care. If manure, urine, soft stall bedding, and dirt tightly pack up against the bar and frog padding, both bar and frog are weakened, allowing plugs of ammonia rich, fungus laden, and diseased material to seep deep into the collateral groove, eventually sending disease into the live frog.

Without proper ventilation and sufficient movement, hoof damage and disease will rob the natural strength of the bar and protective callus-ing of the live frog. Once it is weakened by disease, the bar becomes thin and flexible, bending under the stress of weight bearing and creating bar flare. This damages sole tissue and decreases the confidence and comfort of the horse during loading and weight bearing in the heel region. Navicular syndrome can result from this loss of strength in the heel as fungus and bacteria permeate the area.

Adding to this destructive environment, the horse is often deprived of other conditions required for hoof health: movement, firm ground, and rocky terrain. The free-ranging life-style on concussive ground combats disease by providing maximum hoof mechanics, which help dry the hoof by excising dirt plugs, allowing manure to escape the hold of too deep col-lateral grooves.

It is trimming that compensates the hoof for the loss of movement that comes with domestica-tion, keeping the walls, heels, toes within the bounds that would otherwise be dictated by a wild environment. The strength and health of the bar, so essential to the hoof's overall function, heel comfort, capsule strength and wear is no less important. It can be achieved in exactly the same way, by informed trimming. This article, the first in a series, has attempted to define both what bars are and what they do. Future articles in the series will help trimmers recognize and know what to do when bars grow to excess and begin to interfere in the horse's movement. ●

About the author: Cheryl Henderson is the co-founder of the Oregon School of Natural Hoof Care, where continuing studies support and rein-force this information. The research is providing fascinating new insights into the mysteries of the equine hoof—its form, function and recovery to a healthy state in a domestic setting for the aver-age horse owner in the twenty-first century. Visit her website at: www.abchoofcare.com

The Speed of Shoe Contraction!

All photos courtesy Ute Mieth



Marshal-BEFORE in shoes: May 2008
Before the initial shoe removal.



Marshal-AFTER barefoot: September 2009
The hoof has decontracted after over one year without shoes.



Marshal-AFTER in shoes: January 2010
Only 2 months after shoes were put back on. Reapplication of shoes quickly contracted and distorted the entire hoof once again.



by Ute Mieth

Marshal (photo above) is a right-side dominant Saddlebred gelding in his twenties, who is sometimes used for pleasure riding. He lives in a paddock area with pea gravel and an open stall. His diet consist of mainly grass hay and a vitamin supplement, in addition to “salads,” which include other edible plants, like lettuce, kale, chickweed, etc.

In May of 2008, his owners asked me to take over his hoof care because he was in obvious discomfort, constantly shifting his weight side to side in the front. At the time, he wore **reversed shoes**. Marshal was much more comfortable immediately following the shoe removal (photo above after shoe removal) and very little trim-ming (balancing heels and applying a bevel).

It took roughly a year for the hooves to open up and heal, although they still looked like they needed more time to fully improve. This could also be, in part, because Marshall may have Cushing's disease. Since I have known him, he has shown subtle body changes, like a slower shedding hair coat, ventral edema and sheath swelling, crest in his neck and hoof issues that led me to believe this might be a strong possi-bility. However, so far, he has not been tested for the condition.

One of the signs that indicate he may have Cushing's disease is the fact that he abscessed in the left front for the last 2 years at about the same time in the fall—this is when we also see a natu-ral rise in ACTH levels in horses. If a horse has Cushing's disease, the fall rise of ACTH levels often create hoof problems, such as abscessing, or worse, laminitis and/or founder, depending on disease progression.

His last abscess occurred the end of Oct. 2009, and a veterinarian opened it up. The veterinarian suggested packing the resulting wound and pro-protecting it with a pad & shoe. Unfortunately, this is causing the hoof to contract again. It took approximately a year for his hoof to open up **but only about a couple of months to contract** (and distort) the hoof capsule with a shoe once more (see photos). It is a good example of how much damage shoes can do to a hoof. ●

Ute Mieth's website: www.balancedstep.com

Improving the Trim on Flat Feet

Welcome to our **new trimming series!** Each issue, we will take a case example from submissions that we receive, and pose the trimming questions to several experienced barefoot professionals. Their answers will represent a **wide variety of trimming methods**, and they will do their best to explain their system of correcting the particular problems. If you'd like to be featured in a future Trimming Corner, email your photos and questions to editor@TheHorsesHoof.com

Our horseowner featured in this issue is a young owner-trimmer who would like to improve the trimming on her mare with **flat feet**. Her horse is a 13 yo Haflinger mare who is a bit **pigeon-toed**, and moves by rolling over the outer walls. Other problems include soles that are thin and flat with no concavity, and flaring outer walls. The mare lives in an open stables with other horses, and moves fine in the paddock or on soft ground, but is sore on the gravel roads, and must be ridden in hoof boots.

This mare had been barefoot and trimmed by a barefoot professional for 4 years, with little improvement in these problems, so her owner took over trimming after taking several hoof trimming courses. She would like to know whether this horse can ever be sound barefoot on gravel roads, and what she can do to improve the problems. She also wonders if the hooves can ever be balanced, with the horse's movement problems due to being pigeon-toed? Let's hear ideas from the trimming pro's:



All photos from October 2009. Front hooves.



Left front.



Right front.



Left front sole.



Right front sole.



Mare is slightly pigeon-toed, with a wide chest.

Laura Florence

An American Farrier's Association Certified Farrier, Laura has been providing hoof care to horses since 1993. Throughout her career, she has had a strong interest in treating lameness, both chronic and acute. She served as Resident Farrier at the Univ. of Penn., New Bolton Center, where she treated a broad range of hoof pathologies. As a Special Research Fellow of the Dorothy Russell Havemeyer Foundation, she conducted research describing the characteristics and morphology of the hoof within a herd of semi-feral ponies. Laura is in private practice, offering holistic hoof care for horses which is informed by concepts of natural hoof care. She has studied many of the natural hoof care techniques and developed a synthesis of methods that is ultimately guided by the individual horse's needs. www.holistichoofcare.com

Laura Florence: First, I think this owner has done a splendid job maintaining her mare's feet. They look to be well balanced—the coronary bands are parallel to the ground when viewed from the front and have a nice, straight, even slope to the ground when viewed from the side. They look very nice!



A nice, even hairline running around the hoof indicates good balance. The coronary bands have a nice, straight, even slope to the ground when viewed from the side.



Coronary band parallel to the ground shows a well-balanced foot. Slight rising deviations at the hairline in the medial and lateral quarters are a result of the persistent flares.

I would ask a few questions:

1. Is this mare overweight? Does she have any metabolic or other health challenges? Flat feet are often not resolved until overall body issues are addressed. The combination of (possible)

overweight and the effects of (possible) insulin resistance or Cushing's disease seem associated with poor wall/coffin bone connection. The persistence of flares and the flat soles lead me to question if there are metabolic issues that need to be investigated.

2. Does she have access to pea gravel? Pea gravel is nothing short of a miracle worker and just about essential for good hoof development and maintenance. Dr. Robert Bowker suggests 3-4 inch depth of approximately 1/2" diameter pea-sized rounded stone. It should be placed in areas the horse will spend time (around the barn, around the water, under a shelter, shed, etc. Most will elect to stand on it, dig in it, and even roll on it! I often wonder if it is giving them a way to self-acupressure or massage?! I have had horses in my practice that have been getting good natural hoof care for years and good diet management that seem to plateau at a certain level. Then once pea gravel is installed in their environment, tremendous improvements in concavity and overall hoof quality occur within months.

3. Does the mare get enough movement? It is often a challenge to provide sufficient movement. The movement of our domestic horses cannot compare with the constant movement of wild horses. Increasing movement will contribute to the improvement of hoof form and function.

Some ways to increase movement for domestic horses include daily exercise (riding or ponying), 24 hour turn out, and living a "herd life" to motivate movement.

Let's now examine the technical details of how this horse is being trimmed, based on the pictures presented. The flares are very noticeable on both feet, but most especially on the right. I would remove most of the flares at each trimming, and I would place a very strong bevel (aka mustang roll) on any portion of the wall with a flare. However, without addressing the poor attachment issues, these flares will continue to develop.



Re-occurring wall flares indicate possible poor wall attachment. Wall flares can be removed to reduce stress between the hoof wall and ground and encourage proper growth.

Based on the solar views, I would shorten the toes with a stronger bevel. The goal is to shorten the break-over without shortening the foot! So the main addition to this excellent trim job would be to increase the wall bevel all around.



Shortening toes with a stronger bevel (aka mustang roll) will increase break-over and reduce leverage at toe.

Another feature I would call attention to is the frog. Both frogs lack definition; they are flat-ish and have deep central sulci—particularly the right foot. The frog will become fuller and the cleft will become more shallow as better hoof function is achieved. It will be an important area to monitor, as an indication of improving hoof form.

Note the deeper groove throughout the entire white line of the right foot, as compared to the left foot. This as another indication of a less than ideal wall connection.— Laura Florence



Deep central sulcus and the flat, poorly defined frog demonstrate possible weak internal structure and connection.

Claudia Garner

Claudia owes her initial education to Dr. Hiltrud Strasser. Shortly after reading *Lifetime of Soundness*, she changed her successful dressage training barn into a "natural training barn," and enrolled in Dr. Strasser's school. Her main mentor, Todd Merrell, ran the International Center for Equine Arts in British Columbia. Intrigued by his teachings and a different take on trimming, Claudia continued her studies with Todd and developed an online hoof care course based on her education and experience. She changed her barn into a fully equipped hoof clinic, and in 2007, founded Equine Soundness Inc., a unique school, where teaching is not based on a certain method, but on the needs of an individual horse at any given trim day. Teaching theory on an Internet platform allows for incorporation of the newest research into the curriculum. www.equinesoundness.com

Claudia Garner: Observation: Both hooves appear to lack toe height. Lateral hairline visible on left front looks straight, but the medial hairline on right front appears pushed up in the quarters, or could be a dip towards the toe. From the little bit of cannon bone that is

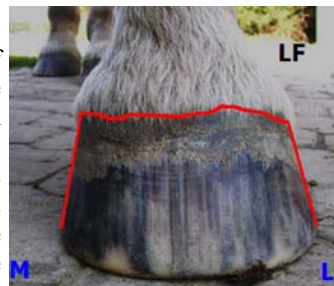


shown in the photo, it appears that the horse is standing slightly under, more so with the left front, but then again, that also may be because of the camera angle. There appears to be sufficient heel height.

Frontal view of Left Front: Appears a little imbalanced, with the medial side slightly higher. The hoof is breaking over to the lateral side, but needs to break over centrally of the toe. I deduct from this that the medial heel may be slightly higher. The hoof is a little bit turned out, which is not congruent with the description of the horse being pigeon-toed.



Pigeon-toed—Toes of hooves face in toward each other. Pigeon-toes cause excess strain on the outside of the lower structures of the limb, as the horse hits hard on the outside hoof wall. This often leads to high or



low ringbone. The horse is also predisposed to sidebone and sole bruising. The horse moves with a padding motion, wasting energy and hastening fatigue, so that he has less stamina.

Frontal view of Rt Front: Seems to be fairly balanced. In my

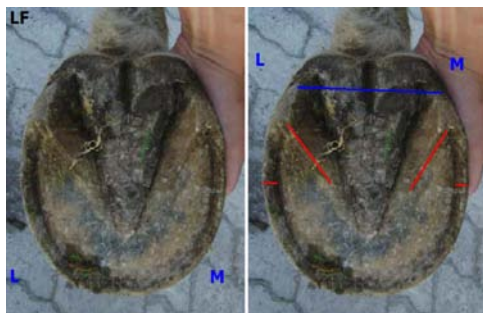


opinion not so important, but worth mentioning: both feet show some feathering of periople, possibly indicating inflammation.

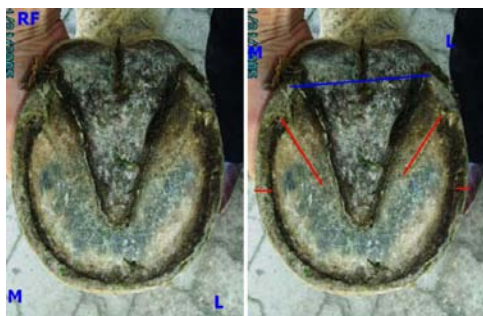
Left Front solar view: Without seeing heel view for confirmation, it appears that the heels are a reasonable height; however, heel landing point is a little too far forward, and hoof appears to be slightly drawn forward. Bars are long and too high, beginning to overlay the sole and running towards the apex of the frog. Frog is reasonably wide, heel bulbs look well developed.

(cont. on page 20)

(Claudia Garner, cont. from page 19)



Hoof is narrow in quarters, indicating contraction, sole is contracted and full, and there is some separation of the white line evident. There appears to be plenty of depth in the collateral grooves, so there is room to work with. Toe wall on lateral side is thicker. There seems to be more pressure on the sole at the toe on the medial side, and toe back to frog apex appears fairly flat.



Right Front solar view: Again, full sole, bars as long but not as high as in LF, and overlaid on the sole. Heel landing point too far forward but seems to have reasonable heel height. Frog is a good width, heel bulbs look sufficient, maybe not as much depth in the co-lateral grooves. Separation seems more pronounced on this foot. It looks as though there is more wall height on the lateral side and the wall also is thicker. Frog appears as though it is weight bearing, and there may be some thrush.



Frontal view of both front feet: Hard to judge pigeon-toed or otherwise from this photo, but she is standing with the left front slightly back, consistent with the first photo. I can also see that the right hind is higher on the medial side, and is turned out as a result; this hoof is probably the one that the horse will rest more when dozing.

Trim recommendations:

LF: Lower the bars, then bring the heel points a bit further back to enable a straight bar, and bring the end of the bar to about midpoint of the frog, making sure the bar is as straight as possible (as a straight bar provides more resistance to the pressures of the heel upon landing). Check carefully that both heels are the same height.

Now, or by the next trim, there may be bruising evident under the bar in the sole of the heel-bar region. Check that no bar material is pushed under the frog, which is often very painful.

Insert a very short scoop to help the heels to stand more upright. A scoop running too far forward would take off much needed toe height.

As to preserve toe height, at this time do not lower the medial wall at the toe, and from the top back up just enough to allow the hoof to break over more centrally, rather than to the medial side.

Bevel the walls around to the quarters, being

mindful that you don't contract the foot any further, which brings up the question of terrain. To make better trim recommendations, it really would be helpful to know on what kind of terrain the horse lives and works.

RF: As above, check for heel height and depth of collateral grooves, trim bars and balance heels, bringing the heel point further back without taking any height except to balance the heels. Do not trim any sole forward of the quarters (apex of the frog). At this time do not lower the medial wall from the quarter to the toe; you can do that once you have gained more toe height. I think at this point gaining toe height should precede the correction of the medio-lateral imbalance. Bevel the walls, being very careful of the lateral wall, as it appears to be thin and breaking.

After trimming, walk to assess hoof mechanism, flight of the limb and breakover, and observe if the winging left front leg is now moving a little straighter.

After assessing the movement, you may be able to adjust the balance a little more.

Check the balance of the hind feet, especially the right hind, as imbalance in one hoof usually affects the other hooves as well.

The primary aim with this horse is to regain toe height by lowering the bars and bringing the heel point back, reducing the pull on the outer wall by backing up the toe, and restoring more effective hoof mechanism, as a result. Once the horse is more comfortable in her heels, she will weigh them more, and the toe will have a chance to regain its physiologically correct height. More than likely, a correct anterior-posterior balance will not be possible in the first trim; however, over a few months there should be an improvement in toe height.

Respectfully submitted by Claudia Garner under collaboration of Mandy Etherton, Equine Soundness Inc.— Claudia Garner

Jaime Jackson

Jaime began his professional farrier career in the 1970's, quickly became interested in the concept of a natural hoof model, and finally had an opportunity to observe wild hooves first-hand in 1982. He was able to extensively study wild horses for the next 5 years, and out of this experience he wrote his ground-breaking book, *The Natural Horse*. He applied this wild horse knowledge to his work with domestic horses, and developed a wild hoof model for trimming. He soon ended his horseshoeing business, and became America's first "natural hoof care practitioner." He has continued to be the pioneer in promoting natural horse and hoof care through his many Natural Hoof Care books, videos, articles, and the creation of the AANHCP organization. www.aanhcp.net

Jaime Jackson: A quick glance over suggests that the hooves are very balanced, showing symmetrical wear patterns, nice thick walls, a hard sole, and well-developed frog. Appropriate measurement data would give us a better indication if the hoof is a tad too short—but, at face, the length, overall, seems okay. Whoever has been doing the trimming has done an excellent job.

There are potential indicators of laminitis present, however. There appears to be possible separation at the sole-wall junction (although it could be embedded dirt) around most of the white line. Faint lamellar stress rings in the mediolateral view support this possibility. A lateral view might also reveal a broken axis down the dorsal median plane (what I call "DTAs" in the NHC language), another positive indicator. It is hard to see from the views provided, just how flat the

sole is—but if it is, then founder is consistent with the laminitis possibility. Hypersensitivity is reported over more abrasive surfaces—yet another arrow pointing towards low grade laminitic pain. Very possibly, this horse is in an off/on, chronic laminitic state—not acute, but low grade.

The horse's toe-in conformation should not interfere with his mobility or soundness.

I see nothing wrong with using hoof boots. But they should be professionally fitted.

I recommend a clinical evaluation of the horse for laminitis, preferably by a professional NHC practitioner with AANHCP certification, and an equine vet, of course. If laminitis is diagnosed, then the AANHCP practitioner can recommend a holistic path out of the inflammation and a return to soundness.— Jaime Jackson

THH Barefoot News welcomes information about various groups, associations, publications, and products concerning barefoot horses and natural horse care. We welcome submissions from everyone, and will print as space is available. If you don't see your particular group included, please ask them to contact us!

Palmer Foot Study PowerPoint Presentation for Download

Visit **Pete Ramey's** website located at www.hoofrehab.com, where you can download a **PowerPoint presentation** from the Adam Cooner LC/DC study at Auburn University. It's a large file (11 MB), but fantastic. Animations, illustration and photos show the **lateral cartilage and digital cushion development** of 3 cadaver hooves: two with severe problems, and one that is fairly healthy. Don't miss this! To find the download, look for the "What's new on this site" box, and then click on the Adam Cooner PowerPoint presentation.

Update on Feral Horses: New DVD on Australian Brumbies

In 2008, the University of Queensland Wild Horse Research Unit began travelling to the most remote areas of Australia to study herds of feral horses (**Brumbies**), in hopes of improving the foot health of the domestic horse through their research.

As a proud sponsor of this 4-year project, Cavallo Horse & Rider Inc. is pleased to announce the Wild Horse Research Unit's release of *The Desert Brumby*, the first in a series of DVDs documenting the life of the brumbies.

This first film features brumby Christine and her 4-month stay in the desert. There is footage of her darting, capture and initial handling; how she joined up with her new desert band; the GPS track of where she went for that 4-month period; and how long daily distances over rough terrain sculpt the desert foot.

This DVD will be watched repeatedly by general horse people and wildlife enthusiasts, and will make a great teaching tool for equine courses and foot trimming clinics. Proceeds from DVD sales help fund the Wild Horse Research Unit's ongoing studies.

Brumby research is confirming that brumby hooves quickly adapt to their environment. Our domesticated horses, especially those who are often in paddocks and soft grassy areas, acclimatize to the soft or smooth surfaces. Try a little tenderness... be sure to boot up your horse before you take that walk on the wild side... you'll both be glad you did.—Cavallo Horse & Rider Inc.

Information about purchasing this DVD is located at www.wildhorseresearch.com (ships from Australia) or www.hoofwatch.com (ships from United States).

NATRC proposed rule changes to allow hoof boots with gaiters!

On March 4, 2010, Garrett Ford reported on EasyCare's blog that, "EasyCare had the opportunity to speak at the NATRC (North American Trail Ride Conference) National Board Meeting in Reno, Nevada over the February 18th weekend. We were asked to show the board members the new hoof boot styles that have become so popular for trail riders and endurance riders. The Easyboot Glove, Easyboot Epic and Easyboot Bare all contain 'gaiters.' Gaiters help keep hoof boots in place, but in the past have not been permitted in the sport of NATRC."

The proposed **membership rule changes** for NATRC in 2011 now include boot gaiters. Comments already indicate that this may mean a huge increase in membership for the NATRC!

EasyCare's blog is available on their website at www.easycareinc.com - click on "Our Blogs."

There is a new "hybrid-wrap with plastic sole" system available from **KC La Pierre's** company. Not really a boot, nor a wrap, nor a shoe... Hopefully we can get more info in the future: Visit www.appliedequinepodiatry.org and click on the link to **Perfect Hoof Wear System**.

The Equine Sciences Academy now offers a 20% discount "Equinomic Stimulus Package" www.equinesciencesacademy.com

Photo courtesy AANHCP



Photo above, left to right: Lucy Priory (U.K.), Rose Souza-Bricker (Colorado), Michelle Bevelock (Florida) and Angela Corner (U.K.), pictured here with Jaime Jackson were the first students to sign up for the **AANHCP's revised Natural Hoof Care Practitioner Training and Certification program**. The women completed the two-week training camp segment of the program in December 2009, and have since embarked upon their field mentorships. Assisting Jaime at the Texas training camp was CP and Field Instructor, David Darnell.

Spring Gateway To Natural Hoof Care Clinics, April 16-21, 2010 in Warrenton, Missouri. These clinics are the foundation for Liberated Horsemanship's Natural Hoof Care Training programs for horse owners & aspiring professionals. www.liberatedhorsemanship.com

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2009 Strasser News from Europe

In Germany, the final practicum in the SHP (Strasser Hoofcare Professional) course recently had 3 Germans and one German-French woman graduating.



3 Germans and one German-French woman just graduated from the SHP course in Germany.

Chris Gehrman is very successful with his **Institut Equine Physiologic**. Not only the “poor horse owners” who want to save money by not shoeing, but also big schools such as the Ethiopathy School, have invited Chris to hold seminars.



Chris Gehrman's seminar in France.

There are constantly ongoing Strasser seminars and courses in Europe, including in France. Chris, who is licensed by Dr. Strasser, organizes the entire seminar and education aspect of Strasser hoofcare in **Germany** and **France**, while Dr. Strasser comes to teach certain days. Chris' German company is called Institut fuer Orthopaedie und Pferdephysiologie.

There is also an SHP course underway in **Norway**, and Dr. Strasser regularly flies there to teach.



Dr. Strasser regularly travels to teach in the SHP course in Norway.

All photos courtesy Dr. Hiltrud Strasser

In **Chechnya**, the final exam for the current SHP course was on December 3rd, and once the students have completed their apprenticeship days, 5 new SHPs will graduate in Chechnya.

Chechnya also has an amazing horseman, Vaclav Vydra, who has an incredible rapport with his animals. They follow him everywhere, even without a lead rope, such as in the photo below. His second horse follows him along in the hunt without any kind of tether. He also rides the hunts bareback and with only a string



The Chechnyan horseman Vaclav Vydra is an actor and celebrity whose second horse (see far left) follows him freely on the hunt without a lead. www.vaclavvydra.cz

around his mount's neck. This is not a unique occurrence for him, as there are photos and film from many occasions, where his horses follow him as though they were well-trained dogs. He is an actor and celebrity in Chechnya, and a stout supporter of Dr. Strasser. He was also one of the guest speakers at last year's world conference in Tuebingen.

Poland has its first official SHP, Tomasz Swiatek, who travelled to Germany for his SHP education and now organizes the Strasser seminars in Poland. Tomasz is also organizing the **2010 World Conference**, which will be held in Gdansk, Poland, from Sep 29-Oct 3 (including association meetings and CE). Conference website at: www.worldconference.pl

Running concurrent to the Conference in 2010 in Poland will be a multi-discipline horse show (dressage, jumping, etc.) in which only metal-free horses (bitless and barefoot) can participate.



Dr. Strasser held her first Basic Seminar in Lettland (Riga), at the veterinary clinic of the University of Riga.

This fall, Dr. Strasser held her first Basic Seminar in **Lettland** (Riga), at the veterinary clinic of the University of Riga. There were close to 30 attendants, including 7 veterinarians. The entire seminar was translated. It is expected that several of the attendants will go on to become SHPs.

Dr. Strasser also traveled to the **Ukraine** for the first time, to help a horse owner with an acute problem in a horse. This has led to planning the first Basic Seminar in this country in March 2010 in Kiev.



Barefoot and the Bitless Bridle in New Zealand.

Since Dr. Strasser imported the possibility of barefoot performance and the Bitless Bridle to **New Zealand** many years ago, both of these concepts have grown successfully. —Translated by Sabine Kells

International Wild Equid Conference

“The Australian Brumby Research Unit presents the worldwide Wild Equid Conference which will be held at Kings Creek Station, NT, Australia on the 21st-26th June, 2010.” Only 50 spots are available—it sounds like basically an Australian Safari into the desert to observe the Brumbies and listen to scientists. www.wildhorseresearch.com

Rider Distinction Awards with the AEBM Australian Equine Barefoot Movement

If you are a barefoot rider in Australia, you can compete for some really exciting awards! **Rider of Distinction Awards** are given out to members of the AEBM who compete barefoot horses in just about any discipline, showing, performance, etc. You may also be eligible for an award if you are a barefoot-friendly instructor, breeder or rescuer, or do something special with barefoot horses. Winners receive a pair of Cavallo SIMPLE Boots and a Cavallo Total Comfort System Saddle Pad. All the entry forms are available on AEBM's website: www.aebm.org.au

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Welcome to Online Extras!

This **NEW** section is an extension of our publication, *The Horse's Hoof Magazine*, that is available **only** in our Online PDF version. More pages, more hooves, more fun!

Online Extras will feature some of the content that I can't quite fit into our regular printed magazine, with that tight constraint of only 24 pages! It is also less formal, with room for lots of full color photos. I will be formatting it to optimize the online viewing experience, with larger type whenever possible. (Of course, you can still print it out, just like the rest of the PDF file.) Although there is no limit to pages, I don't want the PDF file to get too large to download, so I am anticipating that Online Extras will be around 4-8 extra pages, each issue.

We also now have the opportunity—and space—to offer very economical advertising inside of Online Extras. See the Online Extras ad rates in the box to the right. Advertising is open to all, so whether you have a clinic or event going on, a new product to sell, or trimming services to offer, you might consider an Online Extras ad, which will be featured in this PDF section. (Regular Magazine ads are more pricey and space limited, but will also appear in the printed version.)

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Online Extras Table of Contents

Issue 38, Spring 2010

Amazing Hoof Crack Photos.....	26
African Zebra Hoof Photos.....	27
AANHCP's Nick Hill Visits Ireland.....	28
English Barefoot Success Story.....	29
Barefoot Reader Photos.....	30

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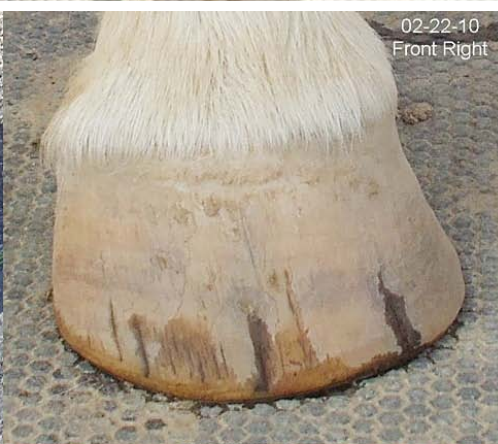
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“The Amazing Healing Power of Barefoot” Hoof Crack Photos

Isn't it amazing what Nevelle and Becky Hayes were able to accomplish, simply as determined horseowners? These photos go along with their story on page 2. All the before photos are in the left column; after photos in the center column.

11 year old Paint mare Candy is pictured above with their granddaughter Naomi. What a sweet horse!





African Zebra Hoof Photos

On a recent family outing to the local outdoor superstore, **Cabela's**, right here in Glendale, Arizona, I discovered quite a hoof find.



Many interesting museum-quality displays decorate their store, including African animals (real stuffed ones). My visiting parents thought I was nuts when I demanded photos be taken of the zebra's hooves. Although the zebra's history is unknown, the hooves appear to be in fairly good condition! Above is a photo of me in front of the lion and zebra display. Below are the hinds, all other photos are of the front hooves.—Yvonne Welz



Barefoot Trimming Trainer's Visit to Northern Ireland

With more enlightenment nowadays concerning the natural keeping and training systems for equines, there was a good turnout at the meeting organised by local horse owner, Laura Webster, at whose invitation barefoot practitioner and field instructor from the U.S. based Association for the Advancement of Natural Horsecare Practices (AANHCP), Nick Hill, came to speak on the evening of Tuesday, February 2nd.

Nick trained with the association's founder, acclaimed barefoot trimmer, Jaime Jackson, and is himself based in Scotland. You are invited to visit his website at www.cloverroseequine.co.uk. His principal engagement was a seminar at the Temple Golf and Country Club, Boardmills (near Lisburn), and all profits from the admission were donated to the excellent cause of The Crosskennan Lane Animal Sanctuary, which is currently experiencing an unprecedented demand on its resources. The following two days were taken up by his attending ponies and horses around the country, when he enthusiastically imparted advice and demonstrated his skills. He will be back again through the year, and interest has already been expressed by some owners wishing to learn the skill of barefoot trimming themselves. Nick is willing to train a group on a regular basis. Anyone wishing to register their interest in such training should contact Laura on 077 9654 0475.



All photos courtesy Northern Ireland Connemara Pony Breeders Association

Above is Nick Hill, explaining aspects of his craft to NICPBA member, Lesley Harvey, whose daughter Jenny recently qualified as a barefoot trimmer.

More information on the holistic approach to horse-keeping and the natural method of hoofcare can be found on www.jaimejackson.com and www.hoofrehab.com, the site of fellow barefoot specialist, Pete Ramey. The philosophy behind natural horsecare systems is to keep domesticated horses in as near as possible the conditions which the horses themselves would choose if they were living in the wild. That means freedom to move over a variety of country, to eat a natural (grass or hay based) diet, to have others of their own kind for company, and therefore achieve all the advantages of physical and mental health which a wild life would offer.

A major part of this is the relation of structure to function in the horse's foot. Studies conducted in the wild laid the foundation for the barefoot method—with trimming to attain the shape and structure of the “wild horse model” or mustang foot. Left unshod, the foot is able to flex and function as evolution has fashioned it in the millions of years before man first nailed iron upon it. It only makes sense that



something so well designed for species survival is better not interfered with any more than it must be. Since, however, domestic horses are not free to choose to move as far and wide as wild stock, the barefoot trimming method effectively mimics the wear which the foot ought to receive in nature, thus resulting in the best possible foot.

Above are the hind feet of the bay mare shown in the first picture. The nearer hoof has been trimmed by Nick to the “wild horse” model, and the middle one is yet to be trimmed. The white hoof belongs to the colt foal. Despite appearances, the actual amount of hoof removed was minimal—the method is completely non-invasive—but emphasis is on balancing the foot and achieving the correct angle of growth (as is evident just below the coronary band) and the correct height of the heel, which should be low. All crumbling tissue is removed, (as it would be naturally worn away if the horse were travelling over varied country), thus allowing the hoof to flex freely and be the dynamic organ it is meant to be, functioning properly, and is not just like a block of solid wood on the end of a leg!



The photos above show a laminitic hoof before and after being trimmed by Nick on Feb. 3rd in the method pioneered by Jaime Jackson. The improvement in the form of the foot gives the owner real hope that the hoof can, in time, be returned to normal. The mare was a little tender for a few days, due to the old material being taken off the sole, but was soon going much better again. As her comfort in movement increases, the healing should increase in pace. On the base of the foot, the sole, frog and separated white line are to be scrubbed daily with a wirebrush and vinegar, to cleanse and gently disinfect the foot. ●

Reprinted with courtesy from Northern Ireland Connemara Pony Breeders Association Newsletter, 20 Feb. 2010, www.nicpba.co.uk

Barefoot Success Story from Rainy Old England

My daughter, my friend and myself have 6 horses between us, ranging from 11 to 26 years young; they are all now bitless, treeless and barefoot, each one with a story to tell, but that's for another day.



All photos courtesy Pat Voisey

We are always in awe of the fabulous stories we read in *The Horse's Hoof*, and are very jealous of the wonderful dry ground and miles and miles of track available to many of your readers. We look on in wonder at the rock-crunching hooves, fantastic frogs, stupendous sole, wonderful tight white line, bulging bulbs, need I go on?

All our horses had the old familiar “formerly shod” problems and a bit more, and went into boots for their transition, and thanks to boots, I have to say that we never had to compromise on our riding.

We changed their diets, and Ross and Mell Barker, our barefoot trimmers, got us on the path to recovery and keep us on the sometimes stony path to rock-crunching hooves.



Last June, we were lucky to find a little yard with 7 areas of grazing. At last we could move away from the rules of livery yards and keep our ponies as we thought

best. Unfortunately, we rent the yard, and the owner isn't happy for us to stone over areas of the field to make a paddock paradise, but in everything else, he is very agreeable.

They live out 24/7 all year, and all of them have improved by it. The grass is not rich cow pasture, and all of them look much better. Our only problem, and what a problem it is, is “THE MUD,” which is mid-calf deep in places in what we call “the runway,” the area used to get from the yard to the field and vice versa (although most of the main field is not bad).

This year, we have been blessed with the wettest November in decades and the longest coldest snowy, icy period for many a year. Yet through all this, the horses' hooves have



survived. We were really worried because their frogs had diminished somewhat, and we were sure their feet were going to fall apart. With all the time off work, due to the ice and constantly being on

soft ground and in mud, we expected the worse. Yet whilst their frogs were suffering, they grew more concavity and their sole depth increased; clever hooves (see photos!).



When the ice and snow had gone, and we were able to start riding again, we were amazed how good their feet were. We almost put them back in their boots, and it was only because we didn't want to wet their legs to wash off the mud that the boots didn't go on.



So, whilst we may not be blessed with the lovely dry weather and hard dry ground, our horses' hooves seem to adapt. It may be far from perfect, but it proves that horses can be barefoot and

live out 24/7 even in rainy old England. ●

Thank you for all your inspiration and advice,
Pat Voisey, Derbyshire, England
ABRS riding instructor and BBI (Bitless Bridle Instructor)

Barefoot Reader Photos



From Carol Peat of Arizona: great in-gait shot of her Tennessee Walking mare, Nina.



Left hind, 9/08



Maxine Doner of Colorado said that her farrier left her with this left hind hoof (above left) after a trim, and never even commented on its oddness. Above right is the same hoof after Maxine worked on it herself for a year.



Kathy Scaramella of California: "Photo of my horse (Handsome) soaking his hooves. My natural trimmer (Marci Lambert) wanted me to soak his hooves. He didn't like the idea of buckets, so I came up with this idea. Gets all four hooves done at once. Usually feed him his grain while he soaks."



Betsy Merritt of Massachusetts shows off her human barefoot running shoes. She says that she cannot run in regular shoes without knee pain, but the pain is gone with these special Vibram 5 finger shoes! Barefoot is better for humans, too!



Nancy Slater, Lake Wales, Florida: "Here is the left front foot of my horse Minnie. She is 38 years old! Very sound and happy, thanks to the trim."