

HORSE WHISPERS

Healthy Hooves makes a Healthy Horse!

Last month I wrote about whether or not you should shoe your horse or not. I'm hoping to get enough information out there, so that people will start to do a bit of research on their own. This month I've decided to write a bit more in detail about the health benefits of going barefoot.

As you know from last month's article and photo, shoeing cuts down the circulation in the legs, and makes the horses quite numb below the knee. Which is why you can go anywhere with a shod horse. They can't feel anything. But this lack of circulation goes much further than just making your horse numb.

Shoes gradually deform the hoof, coffin bone and lateral cartilage, which prepares the hoof for coffin bone rotation, laminitis, thrush, navicular syndrome, white line disease, ossifications, muscle problems, pain and arthritis. See the example below from Bracy Clark, of how the foot changes over time.

It destroys horn wall through its nails, making for a loss of elasticity, insulation is breached, and reduction in metabolism due to the drop in temperature caused by insufficient circulation which also over stresses the heart, makes for protein imbalance, skin, liver, kidney problems and colic.

Shoes make vibration which is damaging to the corium. Changes weight bearing and break over, thus making for muscle and tendon problems. Can cause horn cracks, white line separation, keratomas and impairs

shock absorption, causing ossifications, joint damage and again, arthritis. Luca Bein a scientist from 1983 did studies on the shock absorption of shod hooves. According to his findings, a normal horseshoe and nail on the hoof made for a lack of 60 to 80% of its natural shock absorption. He also found that a horse walking on asphalt had 3 x the impact force as an unshod horse moving at a trot. The vibrations caused by the shoe was equivalent to about 800 HZ, (a concert tuning fork vibrates at about 468 HZ). These vibrations can cause all kinds of abnormalities, such as Ring Bone, Ossifications and Arthritis.

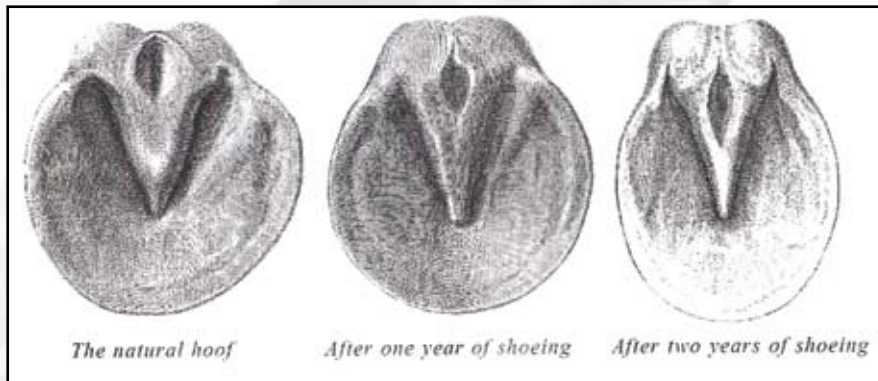
Shod hooves grow slower than barefoot hooves, and therefore have less horn growth. When there is less horn growth there is also less exertion of protein. This affects the skin giving often problems of eczema, colic and poor shedding. This can also influence chipping and braking hooves and shoes that will not stay on correctly. Many times people think if a horse like this has such bad feet with shoes on,

then he'll never be able to go barefoot. Often horses like this are put down. You must also remember that a horse that has been shod, and then is all of a sudden barefoot, will start to have feeling coming back to him. Much as a person who has been in the cold and can't feel his fingers any more, it is painful to regain sensation. This can cause him to be lame at that moment. But with the proper trim, much movement and time, even hooves like this can be brought back to normal.

On top of all of this, shoes on your horse makes it so he cannot sense the ground, therefore unable to move safely in snow or on wet pavement.

These days, a horse's hooves are more of an oval shape, but their natural shape is round. The hoof shape is of the utmost importance for proper movement, (the hoof should move heel to toe and not toe first). When you have proper movement, you have correct shock absorption, blood flow and heat in the legs. Each hoof acts as an auxiliary pump for the heart and you also have no joint or ligament problems. In fact Dr. Strasser explains that Navicular Syndrome is brought on by the un-natural shape of the hooves, and can be CURED if the correct shape is brought back. An unshod contracted hoof

cannot move correctly and therefore is not much better than a hoof that has been shod as far as circulation goes. And an orthopedic shoe will only give a band-aid affect. The horse will be better for a while, but the real problem is not gone, so his seemingly well being will not last. So many health problems diagnosed can be solved or at least



helped by getting to the BASE of the problem. The HOOF! Budras & Marks has shown that when a horse's hooves have a fully functional movement and circulation, they will not experience all the common complications such as founder, thrush, lameness. It's commonly suggested that founder is caused by toxins, excess grain, etc. but now scientists and veterinarians are seeing it's not actually the cause, but a trigger for an underlying function of the hoof. If left alone, there could be a sign of a reddened white line after 6 to 8 weeks. Your horse may be sore for a few days, but should resume normal function as long as it is not subject to shoeing, chemicals, box rest, etc. (My own rescue horse had thrush, my barefoot trimmer got a correctional trim going on her, and her thrush went away all by itself. I did nothing else to her feet).

Now there are horses that live to be in their 20's, and have been shod all of their lives. But when you look at them closely, usually there are reasons for this. 1) The horse has been used or

worked extensively. In other words he is moving 8 to 10 hours a day. 2) The horse has been shod after the age of 5, (this is when bone development is complete). Shoeing before this age could damage the coffin bone, causing chronic lameness for later on in life. 3) The shoes come off during the winter for 4 to 5 months. (This allows for their feet to recuperate). 4) The horse was used mostly on soft ground, so no shock or vibration problems from the shoes. 5) The horse was shod every 6 to 8 weeks, no time for the corium to be under extreme pressure. 6) The horse was shod with the correct form. (Very important your Ferrier knows what they are doing). Conditions such as these can help minimize the damage caused by shoeing.

When you look at all of the problems that can arise from shoeing, you can't help but wonder why we humans always seem to have the need to Reinvent the Wheel, when mother nature has been showing us all along with our wild horses what is best for them. I do realize that going barefoot is not as easy as it sounds. You need to have the right environment, the time and the patience for the transition of your horse. And each horse is different on how long that will take.

One thing we must realize is that shoeing horses comes from the mid-evil times, and has NO scientific proof that it's what is best for the horse. Back then, they didn't have all the anatomical knowledge as we do now. Now we have the proof, of what shoeing does to the hoof and the horse. Laminated problems have arisen throughout the world, mostly because of the shoe. (Although there may be other living conditions to take into consideration).

Yes, with shoes, you can go anywhere, but at what price to your horse's health? Maybe a better alternative would be boots? Or if going barefoot is really not possible, then maybe you can just give your horse time out from being shod, in order to give the feet a rest. Just ideas, thoughts and facts to think about, from one horse lover to another.

Everything that is written above can be found in the studies of Dr. Strasser, Professor James Rooney, Bracy Clark, Jamie Jackson, Chris Pollitt, L. Bein.... Just to name a few. The scientific proof is there, it is up to us to learn more about it.

by Heidi Toussaint

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