

Understanding Ailments and Better Foot care

What I typically refer to as “Compensating Ailments” in horses, are similar ailments we humans deal with which are caused by compensating action or motion we generate. Most folks recognize that when they have a chronic pain in their foot for example, often causes pain in their opposing diagonal hip, shoulder or neck. This seemingly unrelated pain often develops as a result of the compensating movements that we use in maintaining mobility. This is just as true for horses. The age-old adage of “No Foot No Horse” makes correctly trimming the hooves (including not over-trimming the frog), making sure the hoof walls are balanced and not over-trimming the hoof wall "bars". Not to forget leaving sufficient heel height to make sure the horse works toward the toe sufficiently and not straining the fetlock / tendon areas. In addition, avoid leaving the hoof walls "to extended or long" as that can create a bowl or concave effect which can prevent the frog from contacting the ground correctly. These points apply whether the horse is barefoot in the natural way or even when using metal or plastic shoes.

I have seen more than a few ferrriers who are not correctly trimming hooves with or without shoes, often in their rush to get to the next customer. I have had to call out ferrriers and podiatrists to correct improper trims far too often. Some of these were caused by insufficient practical knowledge by so called "qualified" ferrriers although they were technically qualified.

Example Re-trimming effort :

One of my clients in New Market has a Quarter Horse (a Rig) that runs naturally barefoot. He is a powerful and energetic boy around 7+ years old. My client had to change ferrriers when their regular Ferrrier moved away. The new Ferrrier was apparently trained (and qualified) more technically but without sufficient practical training plus lacked proper understanding of horses and their overall physical needs above the feet. Shortly following this new Ferrrier attending to the gelding in this example it became evident, due to the “numerous” negative changes which began to occur in the gelding (the handsome QH, rig). His hoof wall trimming was off balance, the bards were cut off and there lacked sufficient trimming of the frog. Imbalances in the hoof wall trims left them heavy on one side from the centerline of the hoof. As a result (1) his feet developed chronic thrush problems, which were hidden under the edges of overgrown frogs. (2) An imbalance in hoof wall trimming exacerbated an existing (previously modest) stifle strain problem on his left rear leg that then progressed to his opposite hip. (3) An incorrect / imbalanced wall trim on the front feet caused him to stand with his feet too close together in front and he somewhat stomped or slapped his feet down as he moved. (4) Imbalanced hoof wall trimming on rear feet caused him to swing his left rear foot in small circles as he stepped as well as dragging the toes of both of his rear feet at slower paces. When he was

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moving at extended trot and lope/canter/gallop there was insufficient adrenalin flowing in his system to mask the pain. When he departed for canter/lope, on the right lead, he used both rear feet to propel himself for three or more strides before allowing himself to use his left rear leg and foot to work correctly.

Prior to the initial trimming, misunderstanding of the horse's overall action was not sufficiently checked via in Hand walking, trotting and loping on a hard flat surface. Therefore, incorrect assumptions were made by the Ferrier and caused erroneous trimming decisions, causing multiple problems. Choosing a good Ferrier is sometimes difficult but owners must make every effort to research a potential Ferriers reputation.

I convinced my client to allow me to call out a Ferrier I trust (one for whom I work with. Once a balanced trim was accomplished, the gelding was quickly maintaining a balanced stance and began using his body much better. Then after a 2-hour rest, he began to walk/track correctly and the sound when his feet contacted the ground was much better. In only 2 days, he was back to moving correctly in walk, trot, rein back. His canter/lope departures and moving at speed were no longer a problem. The corrected trim has eased the stress on his feet, stifle and hip. He required a few more days to get more accustomed to his feet actually pushing "naturally" against hard flat surfaces but he quickly began showing great improvement.

Helping prevent mud fever:

During the wet winter months upcoming, I want to recommend owners and grooms not incessantly wash and brush the mud off their charges lower legs and feet simply for the sake of aesthetics. This can generate mud fever as when the small grains of stones are rubbed off they can leave nearly invisible cuts behind. If the mud is allowed to dry, it is more easily brushed off with much less abrasion. If mud fever becomes apparent, it is very important to extract the water trapped deep down inside the (near invisible) cuts where the bacteria live below the water trapped in the bottom of the cuts. There are many astringents one can use to extract the water before applying any salves or creams in aid of healing. I personally use sprits (rubbing alcohol) Otherwise, the cream / salve can trap the water in the bottom of the cuts/scratches which actually protects the bacteria and allows them to continue growing underneath.

Ya'll ride safely and I hope this information has been helpful.

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