AMERICAN FARRIERS JOURNAL

# *Hall of Fame Farrier Tips*


A collection of practical advice from members of the International Horseshoeing Hall Of Fame

# Advice From Hall Of Fame Farriers

If you could share one piece advice with another farrier, what would it be? What would you pull from your collected experiences as a footcare practitioner?

That's the challenge we asked of several members of the International Horseshoeing Hall Of Fame. We interviewed each on various subjects that they think every farrier should know. It is no easy task when you ask someone whose knowledge could fill hundreds of book pages to select a single item that will be a small portion of a report.

It is no surprise that these tips are all diverse. Some are hyper-focused on technique, others very generalized. Some are specific to the mechanics required to be under a horse, while others offer practical business advice. That in essence is farriery — so many items are critical to helping horses while building and maintaining a footcare practice.

We hope this report will become a regular publication from American Farriers Journal, and that different members will appear in the future editions, sharing the advice they pulled from their hoof-care careers. Let us know what you think about this report and who you'd like to see in future editions.

## Nominate A Farrier Or Veterinarian

We often hear from farriers who are curious why a mentor isn't in either the International Horseshoeing Hall Of Fame or the International Equine Veterinarian Hall Of Fame. We encourage you to nominate that farrier of veterinarian. Each year we collect nominations from farriers, trainers, horse owners, veterinarians and others in the equine world.

Nominations should be up to two pages in length. The deadline to nominate someone to either Hall for 2015 is July 31, 2014. Each year, we collect all of these nominations and send them to all living members of both Halls, who then vote on the entries. If a nominee receives a certain percentage of votes based on the members who return ballots, that person is then elected to that particular Hall. Email your nomination to lessitef@lesspub.com.

We realize how significant entry to either Hall is to both the elected member and those people who nominate them. Good luck to you all in that pursuit.

Yours for better footcare,

**Jeremy McGovern**

**Executive Editor**

# David Birdsall

## A Gauge To Help Guide Heel Trimming

### Using this tool and taking a conservative approach to your trim will benefit the horse

Balancing the heels is essential to good hoof care, but I'll admit it's a problem that has always eluded me. You can learn a lot about a particular horse by watching it while static or in movement, but you can't be absolutely sure of what you're seeing. A camera that would let you slow down the motion is a priceless tool for evaluation, but it's not always practical in the field.

For the last 7 years, I've been using a tool that helps me look at a hoof with greater clarity. I combined a simple T-square with a Jim Halverson frog plate.

I use the frog as a pointer and line the tool up with it. I do this before I trim the heels and it will show me if they are uneven (Figure 1). It also helps me to divide the hoof in half, although not 100% equally, of course.

When I've trimmed the heels back to the widest part of the frog (Figure 2), I place the gauge over the hoof to evaluate the heel balance again (Figure 3). Basically, this little gadget gives you a reference point right away.

Even if you've been shoeing for a long time, you might find a tool like this useful. It has certainly helped me read feet better. I usually find that even when I think I've got it right, the gauge shows me I'm just a bit off.

Even old guys can learn new tricks. When I first started shoeing, you didn't hear much about trimming the heels to the widest part of the frog, but what a good idea. When that idea started to be promoted, it made a big difference. Even horses that seemed to be going well showed improvement. I think it improves hoof

Figure 1

With this hoof before trimming, the heels appear a bit uneven, with the inside heel starting to roll under.

Figure 2

The heel gauge placed on the untrimmed hoof, lined up with the point of the frog. This helps show what needs to be trimmed.

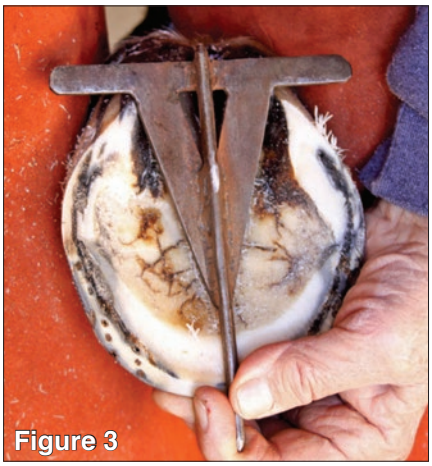

Figure 3

After trimming the heels to the widest part of the frog, the gauge is placed back on the foot. This often shows that heels still need a little more touching up.

With the final trim, it should be noted that the heels could be more even, but taking any more at this point might have been an issue. Full correction may take a couple of shoeings.

The trimmed foot with a shoe being placed.

function by allowing a more natural movement of the heels.

Getting the heels right might be the most important part of good trimming. I'm a firm believer that the heels need to be even, that the horse can't be "tipped" one way or another. This device helps me do that.

## More Thoughts On The Trim

It's important to think about what you're doing constantly as you trim. You can oversimplify some things in your approach, but it's also possible to make things too complicated. You have to find that balance.

You always need to self-evaluate your work. Talk to the trainers, the owners and the grooms — communication is a key. Listen to what they tell you about how the horse is moving or any problems it seems to be having. Then look for the why. I think if you follow this approach, you can be successful.

With a new horse, I'll trim it, removing any flares. I then shoe it and won't do too much at once at this time or in the coming cycles. If a horse has been moving well, the chief responsibility is to keep it that way. I don't like a foot that flares.

I've found that if you can keep flares under control, you can do a horse a lot of good.

I learned from my father to "leave a little in hand." He always told me to leave the horse some foot to deal with.

Remember the hoof is dynamic, so be patient with your adjustments. If you do need to change some things, do it gradually. Every time you see the horse, try to improve things from the previous job. I try to stick to a basic approach. I don't look for problems, I deal with what I have in front of me. And I commit and deal with it 100%. Ω

---

*David Birdsall of Water Mill, N.Y., can trace horsemanship and horseshoeing in his family back to when they first came to America in the 1600s. His grandfather and his father both were horsemen who shod their own horses.*

*Birdsall has been shoeing horses professionally for 50 years. He was the show farrier for the Hampton Classic for 22 years and, with his brother, Tucker, provided hoof care at the Winter Equestrian Festival in Florida*

*from 1987 until 2007.*

*Birdsall also developed the Water Mill Products line of hoof conditioners, creams and oils, including Farrier Barrier.*

*Although he considers himself semi-retired, he still spends a lot of time under horses and working with his son, Ike, and Craig Berkoski, a longtime family friend. And, as his development and use of the tool he describes here, he's still learning.*

# Doug Butler

## 7 Questions To Ask In Becoming A True Professional

**Earning a reputation as a professional will go a long way toward building a successful farrier career**

There is no reason for a farrier not to be qualified today as a professional. But whether others think of you as a true professional boils down to how you conduct your footcare business and the image you have among others in the equine industry.

When it comes to evaluating whether someone qualifies as a professional farrier, I have seven principles that I like to share with our students and other farriers.

### Are You Qualified?

Ask yourself how you measure up as a farrier. Have you practiced enough? Have you studied enough? Have you paid the price needed to be recognized as a professional farrier?

Being qualified as a professional is much more than just passing a farrier test. There is no excuse today for not being qualified, as there are many continued education opportunities through farrier schools and online courses, reading American Farriers Journal and gaining information from other sources of valuable information that can help you become more professional.

If you don't take advantage of the many continued education opportunities offered today to help you become more professional, it's your fault. And the horse owner's loss.

One thing I've noticed with new farriers is that they are able to gather information from various resources, but don't necessarily have a real sound foundation to build on. As a result, they sometimes get confused with all the ideas and don't always know how to use the information they receive.

A  sound footcare education is important to effectively evaluate what you hear, read and see.

### Do You Look And Act Professional?

As I travel, I've noticed huge differences in the way people groom and make themselves presentable. I believe attention to grooming, clothing and tools are very important in being recognized as a professional farrier.

I've even found a farrier or two who doesn't know how to use all the tools in their fancy rigs. Surprisingly,

this may include basic tools such as a creaser or fuller.

Set an example of professionalism for others. Don't swear or come to work dressed inappropriately. Answer questions and be service minded with clients if you want to be successful.

One thing that bothers me is that some folks say it's nobody's business what they do in their private life. To me, your private and public life today are one and the same. Trying to make a distinction between the two is not good for you or your business.

Remember that when you badmouth other farriers, you are hurting both yourself and the whole industry. There is a difference between badmouthing someone and telling the truth. If someone is hurting horses and you say something to some other folks, that's not badmouthing someone.

## Do You Use Good Business Practices?

Do you keep appointments, send thank you notes to clients and have a reputation for being honest? When show horses that you have worked with are sold or moved, do you pass your footcare records on to the next farrier so he or she doesn't have to figure out what works best on that particular horse?

**A sound footcare foundation is important to evaluate what you hear, read and see ...**

Many folks get into the farrier business without any business or education background. That's OK, but developing business talents are as important as trimming and shoeing skills when it comes to operating a successful and profitable farrier business.

In a highly competitive business, such as footcare, you want to be known as the best guy in your area and you will have to work hard to get there.

You can't do that by sitting on your butt and not doing anything. Taking the time to learn marketing, public relations, effective business strategies and other essential business practices are critical to your success.

Even a farrier who isn't necessarily the very best foot specialist will find clients appreciate his or her business sense and experience. You want clients who recognize you as a good businessman, someone who knows what it takes to make a business work and can explain to clients why you charge what you charge.

## Do You Operate Within The Law?

Are you honest? Is your business incorporated? Is your business sustainable? Will your business last the way it is set up? Do you pay the appropriate taxes?

We point out to our students the dangers of not declaring all of their income and not paying the appropriate

taxes. If you work for big barns or clients, they will send the federal and state governments a form that indicates how much they paid you during the past year. If your tax forms don't show the same numbers, you can be in a heap of trouble.

When clients and prospects realize your business practices are dishonest, they will start to wonder whether you are being dishonest with them. It is important for people in this business to understand that they always need to be honest. Learn what the laws are in your area and obey them.

## Are You Learning In Your Idle Time?

In the farrier business, there is plenty of idle time while you are driving to a job or wrapping up work early in an afternoon. We have a lot of time on our hands, so you need to make the best possible use of it. Don't spend your time playing video games or watching TV when you could be growing your skills.

One of the best uses of your driving time can be listening to CDs or audio files dealing with the farrier business and other information you can use as a self-employed businessman. There are also audio resources available from local libraries that you can use to educate yourself on business practices, such as business development, accounting, marketing and other topics.

In addition, set aside a period of time each day for reading in order to expand your farrier and business knowledge. Spend that time wisely while expanding your education.

I tell our students to read horse magazines that feature the type of horses they will be trimming and shoeing. If you are working with a particular breed, read that association's magazine so you know what your client is reading. This will help you understand the breed, know who the top horses are and their records and pedigrees. This makes it easy for you to have meaningful conversations with owners and trainers.

## Do You Practice Your Skills Enough?

Are you practicing when you have idle time to further develop your skills?

Farriery is much like the musical business. If you don't practice on a regular basis, you will know the difference. And if you don't practice for a long time, many people in the industry will be able to tell the difference.

Are You Grateful To Your Mentors? To Your Family?

Do you give credit to others who have helped in growing your career?

I tell my kids and farrier students that since you aren't born with knowledge or skills, you must develop them. When you learn ideas and techniques from others, make sure you acknowledge it. Give credit for

these ideas to others and appreciate what you've got and learned.

Many farriers have serious problems with work addiction. They need to learn to manage their time so their family can be just as important as their job. By doing so, they will leave a legacy and love for their family and find ways to pass along whatever they've learned to others.

In summary, equine footcare is a great career and you can earn a good income for your family. But you'll be much better off both financially and mentally if you take the necessary steps to become recognized as a footcare professional.

---

*Doug Butler has taught horseshoeing for more than 45 years and has authored the most widely used horseshoeing textbooks in the world, including The Principles Of Horseshoeing. He has shod world champions of almost every breed and has trained many of the top farriers and educators in the industry.*

*The holder of a Ph.D. in animal nutrition, Butler is also a Certified Journeyman Farrier and was the first American Fellow of the Worshipful Company of Farriers in Great Britain.*

*He and his wife Marsha and sons Jacob and Peter operate the Butler Farrier School at Crawford, Neb.*

# Ada Gates Patton

## Take Time To Measure Every Trim

### The eye isn't always reliable — use a ruler to properly balance the hoof during your trim

For me, my passion is the trim. I don't care what the horse does. Run, jump, dressage, rope, pull — the bottom of the foot has to be perfect. It doesn't matter if you could put a Coca-Cola can on the foot, the trim is everything.

But how to get the ideal trim? What is it? The universal principle of equal balance applies to the hoof. My safest, most accurate method is measuring the bottom of the foot to create a 50/50 balance front to back and 50/50 side to side. My goal is to have 50% of mass in front of the center of the hoof and 50% behind.

One can eyeball that, but the eye will lie. You must measure. Numbers don't lie. Did you ever see a contractor build a house and eyeball the foundation? Not a competent contractor.

To measure, I use a ruler. Any ruler will do, a piece of string or a spring divider. The first principle is to locate the center of the hoof. It's the widest part of the hoof, it's 3/4 inch back from the active tip of the frog.

Next, measure from the center of the hoof to the outside of the toe. Measure from the center of the hoof to the heel. What do you get? Before trimming it's a safe bet you'll have more mass in front of center than behind. For example, 2 1/2 inches to the toe and 2 inches to the heel does not equal balanced.

Discern your flares and take them down to create an equal hoof wall all the way around. Trim only the toe to where you want it to be. Measure again (Figure 1). Now your toe might be back to 2 1/4 inches. Holding your ruler in place, mark 2 1/4 inches to the heel with a black magic marker on both sides. Exactly 2 1/4 inches or whatever is the same as the measurement to the toe. Make the heel the same.

Trim one heel to the mark and work down to the toe. Trim the other heel to the mark and work down to the toe. Dust with your rasp and, voilà, you have a perfectly balanced, level hoof. You don't even need to spend time

Figure 1

Figure 2

sighting down the hoof — you have perfect numbers.

Drop that foot and watch your horse. It will immediately put its weight on the foot, its head will drop, its eye will soften, its ears will go forward and it may lick and chew. In extreme cases, a huge blow of air will come out of its nose from the gut. All that tension from discomfort will disappear.

Do the other front foot and watch the horse walk away and back to you. Its head is lower, the neck is soft and the whole body swaying gently with the rhythm of his walk. The horse will tell you it's right.

## Show The Results

It is important that you present this to your owners, trainers and veterinarians. Show them where you started and the positive difference when done. Assess the horse before you do a thing — where is the knee? Is the hoof turned out? Is it in the center line under the leg? Where are the flares?

**It's not my opinion or the vet's opinion — the only thing that matters is the opinion of the horse…**

Is the coronary band all the way back to the heel or is it bumped up or flat and straight over the back quarter? Is the frog touching the ground or floating above it? Does the foot look like a long toe, low heel or is it really that the heel is high and way forward giving support up the center to the front of the leg (Figure 2)? Is the angle broken back? Is the pastern more upright and the capsule lower?

There is usually a distinct break in the angle between the pastern and the capsule. They won't match. Point all this out to the caregivers, and then do your measured, balanced trim and look at all this again. The angle will be perfect, the coronet may or may not drop immediately but it will later.

The hoof is more under the leg down the center line, the flares are gone, the bottom of the hoof is round and mirrors the coronet. The heel is not lower but has moved back to the widest part of the frog, and is under and supports the back of the leg, where it ought to be (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Most of all, watch the horse walk again. Before the trim, I'll bet the head is slightly up, the neck a little tense, the eye kind of back in his head, the stride short, the body straight and slightly stiff. Watch how it walks when even just the front feet are done. Even the most novice of horse people should see the difference. It's not my opinion or the vet's opinion — the only thing that matters is the opinion of the horse.

By the grace of God, I was trained by the great Harry Patton. He was a brilliant person, quiet, hard-working and an egoless servant of the

horse. One day his son Troy watched him scribe the bottom of the hoof with a spring divider.

"Dad, why are you using that?"

"Oh, that's when I can't trust

my eye." Ω

---

*In 1978, Ada became the first woman farrier licensed to shoe Thoroughbred racehorses in the United States and Canada. This unique status led to several guest appearances on television.*

*Her dedication to the industry included years of selfless service, such as farrier liaison for the 1984 Olympic Games, official horseshoe inspector for the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade and member of the California Thoroughbred Foundation Board of Directors, among others.*

*In 2008, Ada received the Edward Martin Humanitarian Award at the American Farrier's Association Convention.*

*She is the owner of Harry Patton Horseshoeing Supplies in Monrovia, Calif., founded by her late husband and fellow Hall Of Fame farrier.*

# Lee Green

## Gain Control Of Your Supplies And Inventory

### Working with your supply shop and determining where long-term savings can occur will benefit your bottom line

I've been blessed to wear many hats in this business. I've been a shoer, run a supply shop and a manufacturer. I know the business from all sides.

The very best thing a farrier can do regarding inventory and supply management is to learn to keep a list of what he or she needs. There are farriers who will have a complete list of what they use and when they call us, the order shows it.

These farriers send their lists in the same way every time. You know they are organized. They don't have to run out to the truck to see what they're out of.

Have your list written down and ready to go, whether you visit your supply store, order online or phone in your order.

Some suppliers will have about 3,500 different types and styles of shoes and maybe as many as 80 kinds of rasps. You and the supplier both need to zero in specifically on what you want. At our shop, we like to take an order down one line at a time. It eliminates errors and frustrations for both parties. For example, we'll write down 1 box of St. Croix Eventers, size 1, clipped, hinds. Then move on to the next line and item.

### Buy In Bulk If Possible

There are reasons it makes sense to order in bulk whenever possible. This is especially true with orders that are shipped. For example, a farrier may order a box of shoes and one rasp. That one rasp usually requires a separate box because of its size and that will cost that horseshoer about $8 in shipping. Had that farrier ordered a box of rasps — which will be five or six rasps — he'd save about $40 in shipping costs from changing that behavior.

Most suppliers will give a little discount if you buy a box of shoes instead of a pair. It won't be a lot, but it's worth it if you need that much inventory. Many suppliers will give you a break on shipping if your order is over 200 pounds.

Some suppliers may give discounts for volume buying. As an example, an order of over $500 gets a 5% discount and 10% for orders over $1,000. This may exclude larger items such as forges and anvils.

You should also be aware that it costs about 3% for a merchant to take a credit card, so that comes out of that discount (instead of 5%, you'll get 2%, instead of 10%, you'll get 7%).

Decide if it makes more sense to use a credit card or a debit card. Suppliers can often take a debit card when you shop in person. The supplier isn't charged a fee with a debit card, and you'll get the full discount. Even if you're getting a 1% or 2% refund on your credit card purchases, you may come out ahead with a debit card.

Another thing that is important for a farrier to do is establish good credit with the supply shop and keep it. That way you can order your supplies and get them shipped to you without a delay. You'll get a bill with it, that you can pay. Get in the habit of taking care of these bills right away. Credit cards, properly used, can be a good tool in helping you keep your credit clean.

A lot of supply shops will keep your information on file if you are a regular customer. Be sure to keep your information updated. Let them know if there is a change in your mailing or shipping address. Make sure to keep your phone number current. Many places will keep your credit card on file, so periodically check that the one they have is valid and has yet to expire. Let the supply shop know if you're updating it or want to use another one. If you don't keep that information up to date, your credit card may get refused and your supplies will just sit there.

**Buying more expensive but better tools is actually cheaper in the long run…**

## The Inventory You Need

Keep a decent stock of your supplies on hand. That's not hard to do with your routine horses, but try to anticipate problems as well. If you want a special shoe and need it right away, a supplier may have to order it as well. Know what your critical supplies are and always be sure to keep a supply on hand.

Know how long it takes to get your supplies. A shipment from the West Coast to the East Coast may need 5 or 6 days. If you're within 150 miles, you can get it the next day.

In the supply business, I like to place orders that will last me for 2 or 3 months. I think that makes sense for farriers, too. I see some people three times a week. That usually means no discounts, added fuel costs and time away from shoeing and earning money.

Be aware of the little things, especially in frequency of use. Most farriers understand what nails work best with a particular shoe. If you're using E-head type shoes, make sure you order plenty of E-head nails.

Buy the best tools you can buy. Some people figure they can get by with an inexpensive pair of nippers and then they wear out. Buying more expensive but better tools is actually cheaper in the long run.

Also, maintenance and repair are critical. For example, there is a big advantage to rebuilding nippers. You get more life out of the tools and many farriers find that they prefer the way the nippers work after being rebuilt.

There are two trouble areas with nippers, the blades and the rivet. When the rivet is worn, things don't match up quite perfectly and that makes a difference. Rebuilds usually take a couple of weeks. Have a back-up pair you can use during the rebuilding. A good way to do this is to have three pairs of nippers. One is the one you're using, one is your back up and the third is out being rebuilt.

Don't try to file the blades yourself. You won't get the added life out of them that you would by having them rebuilt.

Your horseshoeing suppliers could be viewed as a partner in your shoeing business. They work hard for you. Building a good relationship with your supplier is beneficial to both of you.

A busy farrier will use $14,000 to $16,000 worth of supplies a year. If you have a helper, it will be more. I'd like to see farriers treat their buying of supplies as just an important part of their business as they do the shoeing of horses. Ω

---

*A fourth-generation farrier, Lee Green of Yucaipa, Calif., has been shoeing horses and mules for more than 50 years. He was among the founding fathers of the Anvil 21 Club and was a charter member and early supporter of the American Farrier's Association (AFA).*

*He's shod literally thousands of pack mules and horses for trail use in California's high country and also provided hoof care for top Western and English performance horses.*

*Green has served as a judge for the AFA Convention contest and the Calgary Stampede.*

*He has run The Shoein' Shop, a full-line farrier supply house in Yucaipa, Calif., for more than 40 years and is also the manufacturer of the Ward & Story Hoof Protractor, Duval Pad Cutter, Jim Linzy Clinch Blocks, Farrier's Pride pads, Coxton-Poly Shoes, hammers and bar stock shears as well as other items.*

# Chris Gregory

## Ways To Improve, Fueled By Passion

### Here are a few ways to progress as a farrier, but without passion they will be fruitless

There are a lot of things farriers do out of bad habits or poor instruction. I often see these mistakes in forge work.

One of the most overlooked things is how to use the anvil horn. There are radiuses in a foot, and farriers try to recreate those with the shoe. Understanding how to do that on top of your horn is a difficult skill to learn, but is one of the most important to improving your abilities.

We can shape shoes through other ways, in what's called the "mystery tour," allowing you to create inconsistent results. Once you learn how to use the horn, it doesn't matter what temperature the steel is, you can use leverage to create the exact radius you need every time.

For forging practice, I prefer repetitive action to build the neural pathways for building a good toe bend, heel and branch consistently. Don't worry about the speed. Unfortunately, I used to practice speed instead of quality earlier in my career. That was a mistake because the speed will come in time after you focus on the quality of your work.

### Build Skills, Increase Revenue

When you are forging a piece of metal, whether it is bar stock or modifying an existing keg shoe, you are applying many of the same principles and hammer blows. If you start with a good quality keg shoe, then you can customize it for other needs, like drawing clips or extending the heels — the things you need to do for the particular horses. The keg shoe wasn't made specifically for that horse, but it doesn't mean you can't use it. Your ability will tailor it for the horse.

Modifications you apply to a keg shoe, like clips, will save you money in the long run. To stock enough shoes for the few instances when you need a certain modification, you'd end up carrying inventory you won't need for a long time.

I think clips are underutilized, although we as a trade are better about using them now then years ago when we didn't have pre-clipped shoes.

Building clips can greatly improve your ability. For practice, pull 50 clips a night for 10 nights. With 500 clips under

your belt, you will dramatically improve. Once you have that practice, it is part of your arsenal forever more.

## Competition Translates To Your Practice

Forging competitions have benefitted my career. These allow you to establish a goal that motivates you to practice. Think about it in terms of running. If you have a 5k race coming up, you are going to have a drive to get up in the morning and run in preparation for that competition.

Competition then benefits my business. For example, take a contest that requires a square toe, extended heels and clips. So then I practice those modifications, add them to my everyday work and be much better and quicker in applying them.

The time invested in practice for the competition made me a better farrier on that daily basis. I recommend competition for any young farrier. You don't have to be a hammerhead to see the results; you don't have to win the competition to see the true reward. Compete for the learning experience.

## Always Stay True To Anatomy

I think too many times, gimmicks mislead us. Shoeing decisions should be based on anatomy. If it doesn't make sense anatomically, then it doesn't make sense when shoeing the horse. It is possible to make a living in this industry without thoroughly understanding anatomy. Knowledge of anatomy allows you to evaluate a shoeing theory to determine if you want to apply it to a particular type of horse.  It also allows you to avoid applying theories that don't make sense, even when they are marketed well.

To learn anatomy, I have a simple method that has worked for many of my students. Use flash cards. It is simply a case of memorization. Because it is true and constant, you can learn it as such — as long as there isn't a deformation or abnormality.

The act of making flash cards is itself a learning opportunity. A traditional anatomy flash card, for example, may list a deep digital flexor tendon. On the backside is a basic drawing and a brief description.

## Find The Passion

The best advice I can give a young farrier about this is to find one mentor who has a style that you can mimic, and then work with that person as much as you can for as long as you can to perfect that style. Early in my career, I made the mistake of getting input from too many sources who contradicted each other. I wish that I had started with only one master instead of trying to put together too many styles.

If horseshoeing is your job, it has to be more. If it is your passion, then you are always looking to improve. You will always examine your work for flaws. Every time I finish a shoeing job, I think about what I could

have done differently. Passion pushes you to be better than what you are.

Every industry has people who do a job that is just average because it is good enough. They are willing to show up and possess enough ability to get metal onto the feet. The horses stay sound despite the shoer's ability. Fortunately, horses are very resilient.

If the minimum to pass a test is a score of 65, you'll have someone celebrating getting a 65. On the other hand, there is the person who is disappointed in getting that 65. This isn't something you teach. But your passion can inspire others.

Never underestimate passion — it is the separator. I've seen farriers who I didn't expect to be shoeing 5 years later. But they developed a passion for the job and excelled. I've also had those with all the natural talent to succeed but lacked the passion and were better off selling hot apple pies at McDonald's.

At times, your passion may dip. Years ago, when we moved to Missouri, we were so poor that we couldn't pay attention. As a result, I didn't go to clinics or contests — I only worked. By overworking, I started to think maybe I should do something else for a living. Fortunately, I attended a couple of clinics and contests, and recharged my batteries. They stay charged through continued exposure to other professionals every chance I get.

---

*Chris Gregory has been a professional horseshoer since 1987. An American Farrier's Association (AFA) Certified Journeyman Farrier, he has successfully passed this certification several times since first doing so in 1991. The AFA has recognized Gregory with its Jim Linzy Outstanding Clinician Award twice, and Outstanding Farrier Educator Award five times.*

*He earned the title of Fellow of the Worshipful Company of Farriers (WCF) and is the first American to serve as an examiner for a WCF exam.*

*An educator, clinician and lecturer, Gregory has appeared at farrier and equine footcare events around the globe. He has presented numerous times at the American Farrier's Association Annual Convention and the International Hoof-Care Summit. He also has been involved in certification and testing in several countries.*

*Gregory's writings have appeared in several publications.*

*A farrier school operator since 1991, Gregory and his wife, Kelly, opened the Heartland Horseshoeing School in 1995.*

# Gordon Haight

## Paying Attention To Details Paves The Way To A Successful Career

### No two horses are the same, so good results depend on figuring out the best way to shoe each individual horse

The most important thing is to understand the anatomy of the horse you are trimming/shoeing and working to balance. There's a lot of emphasis on forging and iron working — most of what I do is that kind of work — but none of it makes any difference if you can't correctly trim the foot. You must have a good foundation before you put the shoes on.

Now deceased veteran Florida farrier Jack Miller told me years ago that you could nail a garbage can lid on the bottom of the feet as long as you have the foot trimmed right. More than anything else, that's helped me pay attention to the individual horse and deal with its particular needs.

There is no standard way to shoe a horse since no two horses are built the same or move the same. Figuring out the best way to do each horse comes with experience, seeing a lot of horses and paying attention to anatomy.

The most common mistake I see is farriers grabbing a foot and whacking on it, then nailing a shoe on without paying attention to the horse's anatomy and its way of moving. These farriers are in too big of a hurry to get the job done. And then they wonder why they're just putting beans on the table and can't afford a steak once in awhile.

### Customers Will Pay More For A Good Shoeing Job

Many farriers depend on their wives having to work in order to pay the bills. If they become really good, they will have plenty of customers because the demand is there. For farriers who really know what they're doing, price isn't a factor.

When you are working on horses that are worth several hundred thousand dollars, the price of shoeing isn't an issue. Owners would rather pay more for a good job, have their horses stay sound and perform to optimum ability.

A few years back when I was shoeing in the San Diego area, I did a lot of work for veterinarians. A woman

called and said that one of the vets had recommended that I work on her horse because it had a problem. She'd bought the horse, a hunter, a few months earlier. She paid more than $70,000, thinking she could improve the horse and double her money, but the horse wasn't sound.

She asked me how much I'd charge and I said, "Right now the horse isn't worth anything because he's not sound. I won't charge you any more than what's necessary for me to do the job. But there's no way I can shoe a horse as cheap as what you've been paying if you want me to fix it — and make it worth more than what you paid for it!"

She did bring the horse and I fixed him. I then told her, "I can't continue to do your horse because you don't need me at this point, as long as you get a competent farrier to follow up."

I didn't hear from her again and I heard she sold the horse. I don't know if she doubled her money, but the horse was sound.

## Continue Learning And Share Your Knowledge

The most important thing when trimming and shoeing is to pay attention to what you are doing and never stop learning. Never think you know it all because then you'll be stuck in a rut and won't improve.

There are farriers in my area who only charge $60 to $70 to shoe a horse and can't understand how other farriers earn twice that much money for the same shoeing. They think they are just as good as the more expensive farriers, but the guys who are making twice as much pay attention to details and produce good results. Word of mouth is the best advertising you can get.

In addition, farriers shouldn't be afraid to share their knowledge. We've accomplished a lot with farriers' associations, but I still run into people who don't want to share knowledge. Perhaps they are afraid someone will take business away, but I've never had that happen to me and I've helped a lot of young farriers.

You gain more by sharing and it keeps you on your toes. In this business, you can never quit learning. Ω

---

*Gordon Haight has been a farrier for 53 years, studying shoeing at the University of Missouri. In the early 1970s, he met Jay Sharp and the two manufactured tools and horseshoes together.*

*"I mentioned to Jay that we needed to share our knowledge, so we helped start the California Farriers Association," says Haight.*

*Haight lives in Eagle Point, Ore., and still has customers in Southern California.*

# Donald Jones

## There Are More To Tools Than Meets The Eye

### Selecting the correct equipment will save time, money and your body

With farrier tools, it's not just about knowing how to get the job done — it's about selecting the best ones to fit your business, using them correctly and taking care of them.

### Bigger Isn't Better

Taking care of your anvil is very important. You don't want to strike the anvil with a hammer. There has to be hot or cold metal between the hammer and the anvil face or horn. The horseshoes themselves aren't that hard, but the hammer face is as hard or harder than the anvil, so it's important to make sure there is always a shield to protect the anvil face.

The other thing to remember is to make sure the anvil is anchored securely to the stand it is set on. Stability is the secret, not size.

### Safety First With Gas Forges

In 1982, I started making forges featuring a Venturi burner that did not require a blower.

The advantage of a gas forge that doesn't use a blower is that it does not require a lot of maintenance and it heats quickly. They can start cold and get to 2,300 degrees Fahrenheit in 3 minutes due to the ceramic lining material, which reflects heat.

The main thing to remember with gas forges is taking safety precautions:

Propane gas has a strong, distinctive odor. Never continue to run the unit when the smell of gas is present. Shut the unit down and check all connections with soapy water for leaks. Also, remember the dangers of leaking gas.

Propane is heavier than air and will gravitate to the lowest area. It will accumulate in any crevices or pockets that are present. Once this happens, it can be easily ignited with a spark or static electricity. Never take the smell of propane as unimportant. Find the source of the leak, and have any necessary repairs made by a qualified technician.

Never close gas exhaust ports.

Never leave gas pressure in lines when not in use. Always cut the ball valve and tank valve off for storage.

Do not allow the hose to come in contact with hot steel or flames.

Periodically check all valves, gauges, regulators and hoses for wear. Replace any worn parts.

## A Perfect Fit

One important thing to ensure with fire tongs is that they actually fit the piece of metal they are holding.

When fitting fire tongs, there is a certain process I follow:

1 The handles need to be set where they're close enough together, which is maybe no more than a 1/2-inch apart where you place your hands. This allows you to grip the shoe, but by the same token, you can also turn the shoe over and roll the tongs in your hand.

2 Place the tongs in a gas forge and heat both jaws to the rivet. A dull red heat is required. Care must be taken not to get the rivet red. Move the tongs back and forth under the ice blue cone flame directly under the burner to heat. Grip the shoe, and lay the jaw and handle flat on the face of the anvil. Grip the end of the handles and strike just to the rear of the rivet until the handles come to about a 3/4-inch gap at the handle ends.

3 While there is still black heat in the jaws and the material is locked firmly in place, lay the jaws flat on the anvil and strike a few blows. This assures both jaws fit flat to the shoe or material being gripped. It may be necessary to reheat the jaws for this last step.

4 Once the handles have been set, let them air cool before you water quench.

Another common problem I often see with fire tongs is a rivet that's too tight. For this, I have a simple hint some farriers may not know about:

1 Place a loose 5/8 bolt nut on the anvil face.

2 Open the tong handles to the widest point.

3 Strike the rivet on the brad side with a couple of sharp hammer blows to free up the jaws. A few drops of oil will also help.

## A Cheaper Alternative

The rivet problem mentioned earlier also can be a problem with hoof nippers, so I suggest following the

same steps.

While there are many farriers who will touch up their nipper cutting edge with a file or hone, there are people who actually rebuild, resharpen and reset the handles to give their nippers a complete overhaul.

While a professional is typically needed for this task, a complete reworking can cost half the price of purchasing a new pair. Keep in mind, though, that after two or three rebuilds, the nippers are typically used up. Ω

---

*Donald Jones has been an innovator in the farrier tool industry since 1976. Owner of NC Tool in North Carolina, Jones shod horses from the mid 1960s until 1985. Since then, he has primarily manufactured tools, which NC Tool distributes throughout the United States and in Europe.*

*Jones also ran his own private horseshoeing school for 8 years and trained more than 360 students in that time.*

# Jim Keith

## Hammering Is More Complicated Than It Appears

### You can improve your work at the anvil with proper mechanics and plenty of practice

A hammer appears to be a very simple tool, but it's actually really complicated.

I've always thought that you could probably teach a person to be proficient with the latest computer technology quicker than you can teach a person to be proficient with a hammer and anvil. The subtle variations and combinations that you can get from the use of those two tools would be, well, it's tremendous. I haven't been able to explore the depth of them, and I've been doing it for about 72 years.

When I first started shoeing horses, about the only hammers we had were hardware store ball-peens, then occasionally an engineer's cross-peen-type hammers. Those were all pretty effective if you hit something hard enough and long enough, you could modify it enough to fulfill your wishes.

It wasn't until the farrier competitions had a revival here in the United States and North America that a different style of hammering evolved. That was a lighter hammer with a longer handle.

### Changing The Shape Of Forging

Mass times velocity equals momentum, and momentum is what changes the shape of the metal being forged. What that means is you can take a larger mass and do more changing of that shape, or you can increase the velocity and accomplish the same task.

My view departs a little bit from our traditional blacksmithing area. They all used a big hammer and took hard blows. They were in the 4-pound weight area, but they had to use a shorter handle to make the hammer controllable and also to lift that hammer and strike something with it.

My problem with the big hammers is you had less rebound. When you have a lighter hammer and you're hitting a much more massive object, then you'll get more rebound.

One of the things that was keeping me from reducing the workload was the hammer rebound. When that hammer comes back up on its own volition, you don't have to lift it. That was a big turning point for me.

My philosophy toward hammering is: Do what you can to get that rebound.

Of course, hot metal is a damper. You could hit a cold anvil and really get some rebound, but when you put a piece of hot metal under there, that dampers it quite a bit. Still, you get some rebound.

The way you grip the hammer will modify the rebound. A very tight grip will serve as a damper and will not allow it to rebound as well. If you're taking 80 blows a minute or more, using a lighter hammer with a longer handle increases the velocity of that hammer head. It's a lot more efficient in the long run than using a big, heavy hammer and it's less work because of the rebound factor.

## Lighten Up

**Momentum is what changes the shape of the metal …**

You probably heard this quite a few times from old craftsmen — let the tool do the work. It's very true with a hammer. I see so many people who really clamp down on the hammer handle, and that dampens the rebound. It also is fatiguing and leads to joint and muscle damage. I don't think the amount of hammering that you do is as detrimental as the type of hammering that you do.

If you hammer with a death grip on that handle, you're forcing the hammer. You're not letting the hammer do its job. You're restricting the rebound.

A lighter hammer is more efficient and helps your control. Of course, with a lighter hammer, you can choke up on the handle and it's much easier to do finesse work. If you watch any good hammer men, you'll see that they more than likely use the entire length of that hammer handle at one time or another. They get on that back end for power blows and then they get up closer to the head for finesse blows. It increases the versatility of that tool.

Very few people are strong enough to take a 2- to 4-pound hammer back at the end of a 16- to 18-inch handle and whip that thing. The blow is more akin to poppin' the whip. A whip pops because of the extreme velocity at the end of it. So, with a hammer, if you increase the velocity, you do it with less expenditure of muscle. You're doing that more with the wrist action as the hammer descends. It speeds up and bounces back nicely, so you need less effort to lift it.

## Au Naturale

**My philosophy toward hammering is: Do what you can to get that rebound …**

There are quite a few people who are really great to watch use the hammer. The finesse they have, the ability to move that tool, reassess their work, and the effect that the tool has on the work after each blow is amazing. It's easy for them to make immediate adjustments. In fact, that's part of forging — the ability to reassess the effects of the previous blow and adjust for the succeeding blow.

The more natural a swing and the more comfortable a swing, then the better one is able to make these assessments. You don't have to concern yourself with the mechanics of the hammering part. You're looking at the effect your hammering has on the work. The person who is comfortable with the hammer usually will

produce superior quality work.

The ability to operate a hammer, just like anything else, is directly proportionate to the amount of time spent doing it. A lot of people have spent so much time practicing that hammering is not a conscious effort at all, it just happens. They can talk. They can carry on a conversation while forging out a roadster horseshoe. They're breathing and without consciously thinking about it.

If you're not supplying your body with oxygen, you start getting a little apprehensive. When you start getting apprehensive, then your body's not relaxed and you grip the handle too tight. It becomes a vicious cycle that will negatively effect your work and your physical well-being.

Body posture is important for breathing. I see a lot of people start dropping a shoulder and they're coming up, and that compresses a portion of your lungs. A lot of people just forget. They get so intent on what they're trying to do that they forget to breathe. Of course, that starts a downward spiral in your ability to hammer and produce good work. Square your shoulders up while you're standing in front of the anvil.

One of the things that farriers need to do is become conscious of talking while they're hammering. Talk to your partner. Talk to your neighbor. It's not something you need to do to get the job done, but it makes you aware when you're running out of breath. If you can't talk while you're working, you're not breathing properly.

## Stay Nimble

**The person who is comfortable with the hammer usually will produce superior quality work …**

You need to be mobile around the anvil. Many beginners crowd the anvil too much, which restricts their ability to use the mechanics of their body properly. If you're standing too close to the anvil, you cannot hit with accuracy and with power. With power blows, you take a step backward.

Don't plant your feet in one spot and keep them there. You see pictures of Draper, Utah, farrier Shayne Carter and several others who keep their feet real close together. They use their knees for elevation and to adjust the way the hammer contacts the metal — they are mobile. They'll strike that pose for a while, they'll move when they need to. I see people staying in that one position. It works great for some hammer blows, but it doesn't work well for all of them.

I used to think we were bound by tradition to stand in one spot by the anvil. No, move — make that tool work for you. That increases the variables that you have. Keep the shoulders square. Use your knees to control the one axis of the hammer in relation to the anvil face or the workspace. Normally, it would be parallel to the anvil face, but for tapering blows, you can go up or down to adjust the dynamic very easily. That has no effect at all on how your arm and upper body are moving — your legs can change the way that

hammer addresses the work.

## Practice, Practice, Practice

Hammering is just like driving a vehicle, especially if you learned how to drive with a stick shift. There were a lot of things to think about at one time in order to get that vehicle started off smoothly. You have the gas, clutch and need to pay attention to where you are going.

There were a lot of things to think about and it was pretty difficult the first time you started.

If you spent as much time swinging a hammer as you do driving, you probably have a pretty natural swing down. It all becomes second nature, especially if you do it enough.

So, practice, practice, practice. Ω

---

*Jim Keith likes to hammer. It wasn't long after birth when he first picked something up and started beating away on another object. He hasn't stopped since. Keith pulled double duty as an electrical lineman for the city of Tucumcari, N.M., and shoeing horses part-time until establishing himself in a four-state area.*

*Keith competed in shoeing and blacksmithing competitions around the country, which led to invitations to speak at clinics all over North America, the Caribbean, Brazil and Japan. He has placed in the top 10 in the world at international competitions in 4 different decades.*

*Keith and his wife Carole operated a horseshoe manufacturing business, sold the successful venture and are enjoying retirement.*

# Myron McLane

## Hands-On Work Is Key To A Successful Farrier Career

### Being able to execute the job, rather than just knowing the theories behind it, is what makes top-notch farriers

Several years ago I went to Italy to lecture at a veterinary meeting. While walking through the Zurich airport on layover, I saw a billboard featuring Tiger Woods. At the time, he was a spokesman for the big company on the billboard. It showed Tiger Woods standing over a golf ball, getting ready to hit it. The sign read, "There comes a time when execution is more important than theory."

### This applies to the farrier world.

I've been involved in so many meetings and lectures and hear a lot of theories, but that statement really applies to our trade. I don't think you could say it in a better way.

When you have to shoe a horse with a foot problem, you can know all the theories in the world but if you can't get under that horse and do what it needs, it doesn't mean anything. You can write all the books in the world, but if you can't get under that horse like most farriers do on a daily basis and do the job appropriate for the horse you are shoeing, then you are not worth a quarter.

### Improve Your Skills With Forging Contests

After I retired from forging competition, I ran the contest for the American Farrier's Association (AFA) for 29 years. One of the reasons I did that for so many years was that I realized farriers have to learn how to actually do the work. There is nothing better than a contest to get them to practice.

I'm not saying that lectures and meetings where they talk about theories aren't important, because they are. But bottom line is this: if you can't do it when you get to the horse — even if you know everything there is to know — you are useless as a farrier.

### Work With Other Farriers

I've trained a lot of farriers and the ones who turned out to be top notch spent the time to figure out how to get it done. I tell farriers to work with as many good farriers as they can so they can see the actual work and shoeing being done.

I've been shoeing horses for 51 years and learn something all the time. It doesn't matter where I go or who I watch shoeing a horse, even if it's the wrong way, I still learn something. I see what happens when it's done, and learn from that.

I've had men come to me who thought they were going to work for 6 months and know how to shoe a horse. I can teach them to nail on a shoe in 6 months, if they are really good, but I wouldn't send them out at that time to shoe one of my horses.

I shod Standardbreds on the racetrack for 18 years. There are books and all kinds of advice on what you can do to stop a horse from hitting itself. New Jersey farrier Bruce Daniels and other top farriers could actually do it.

Nevermind what it says in a book or the theory behind it. Can you actually shoe that horse, stop it from hitting itself and keep it sound?

Execution of the job is what it's all about. I know guys who can shoe a horse as well as anybody else, but they can't tell anyone how to do it. They can't put it into words, but it's in their minds and they know how to do it. You don't have to be able to express it verbally if you can express it in your work.

I learned the farriery trade from Bob McCarthy. I started working for him when I was 21 and apprenticed with him for 8 years. I remember him telling me that your work speaks for you. You don't have to go around patting yourself on the back.

## Plan Ahead For Your Future

### Today's Performance Horses Need Experienced, High-Level Farriers

Farriery is not a dying art. "All you have to do to realize this is go to some of the contests and see the work these farriers are doing," says Myron McLane.

There are many performance horses in various sports today, and it takes a good farrier to keep them performing optimally.

"A lot of horses in every breed and discipline have bad feet. They've never been bred for feet. They're bred for what they can do — run fast, jump high, slide far or whatever their job is.

"If they do their jobs with lousy feet and a good farrier keeps them going, then they'll be bred and perpetuate the bad feet. There are a lot of horses today that require a higher level of competency from their farriers."

One of the things I've learned is that after you get to be 50 years old, it starts to be hard work. McCarthy told me years ago that if there is not something physically wrong with you and you are not broken down by then, you have not shod enough horses yet.

One piece of advice: young farriers should save enough money so that when they get to be 50 they can slow down and take it easy if they are still sound, or just quit and do something else that they like.

The problem with most really good farriers is that shoeing is what they like to do and they are in high demand, so they keep on doing it. I thought about retiring and taking it easy, but some of us can't do that because this is who we are. This is our passion and what we like to do. Ω

---

*Myron McLane started shoeing horses at a riding stable at the age of 14. "We didn't have enough money to pay a farrier, so I learned how to shoe horses and realized this was the only thing I ever wanted to do," recalls the Somerset, Mass., farrier.*

*McLane worked 18 years at a Standardbred racetrack. "I got into a rut for so long and then I met Texas shoer Burney Chapman in 1984. We became best friends and he taught me everything he knew about working on lame horses," he says.*

*"I was fascinated and had the background to be able to execute this. I'd shod horses for many years, but didn't understand the anatomy and the way things worked. Once I started taking feet apart and learning the anatomy, that's when I really started to understand things."*

*"Farriers should remember where they came from and the people who helped them," he says. "If you ask me a question about shoeing and I give you an answer, I can usually tell you where I got that answer from — the person I got it from or the situation I learned it in."*

# Mark Milster

## Know The Difference Between Toe Length And Toe Height

### If you don't, you could be putting the sensitive structures too close to the ground

I see a lot of farriers who don't seem to understand what they're dealing with when they approach a horse.

When they look at a hoof, they're not sure whether it's toe long or toe high. Is its heel long or heel high?

### Taking Measure

It seems like some are confused by the difference. If you measure from the coronary band to the ground, straight down the dorsal wall or right down the front of the hoof wall, that's how you determine how long the toe is. If you have a straight edge and you measure straight down to the ground, that's how high the toe is.

You can do the same thing with the heels. If a horse is standing and you take a ruler, put it on the ground and you measure to its heel, that's how high its heel is. If you pick the foot up and you measure from the coronary band along the angle of the heel to the end of the heel, that's how long the heel is.

The reason that's so important to know is because when you start trimming, a lot of people who see a toe that's long will approach it like they're going to trim it from the bottom and get that toe off there. When they're trimming the height of the toe more than they are the length of the toe, they start getting a flat foot. When you get a flat foot, you're putting the sensitive structures closer to the ground and changing the angle of the coffin bone when you still have a long toe.

**A foot doesn't grow straight down like a fence post. It goes out …**

If you trim a lot off the bottom, you're affecting the height of the foot. So, you're putting all of the sensitive structures close to the ground. As a result, you took away the foot that the horse has to stand on. All you have left is that length. Then, if you put a shoe on that foot, set it back and dress the foot back, you have no foot at all for the horse to stand on.

When you look at it from the bottom, some people call it depth. I call it height. Other farriers know it, they just don't know what it's called.

## A Little Bit Of Both

Some take a lot of foot off the front, a lot of length. Others take a lot of height or depth away. But you can't do a lot of both. You have to do a little bit of both. It's just a matter of walking up, looking at that horse, and saying, "OK, is this toe long? Is this toe high? Is this heel high? Is this heel long?"

A foot doesn't grow straight down like a fence post — it goes out. When I say you do a little of both, it grows out and grows down. When you're trimming and shoeing a horse, that foot grows out front.

**If you trim a lot off the bottom, you're affecting the height of the foot …**

When you get done shoeing a horse, draw a line on the pavement where the toe is and draw a line where its heel is. In 5 or 6 weeks when you come back, those marks on the pavement where you stood the horse are going to change.

They're going to grow out. So, you have to trim a little bit of both. You have to bring it back and take some off the bottom. Ω

---

*Mark Milster is the son of a horseshoer and grandson of a blacksmith. In his early teens, Milster started helping his father on weekends and during the summers. His tutelage under the elder Milster continued until he graduated from college.*

*International Horseshoeing Hall Of Famer Jim Keith of Tucumcari, N.M., took Milster under his wing in 1994. "I went out there and paid him $500 to spend 5 days with him," Milster says. "I went back out there just about every weekend for many years."*

*With hopes of making the American Farriers Team, Milster approached Keith about coaching him. "He told me it would take about 4 years, and that's exactly what it took. He's a huge influence on me."*

*The hard work and dedication paid off for Milster. The Purcell, Okla., farrier was a team member from 1998-2001.*

# Grant Moon

## Modify Machine-Made Shoes For An Even Better Fit

### Knowing how to make adjustments to purchased shoes is just as important as having the skills to forge a shoe

Even though I've forged thousands of handmade shoes in my career, I still nail on many machine-made shoes. And I modify more than 80% of these machine-made shoes before they're nailed on a foot.

Even with hundreds of styles of shoes on the market, most machine-made shoes still need some simple modifications to fit a particular foot.

When deciding what shoe adjustments may be necessary, nothing beats looking at the wear found on an existing shoe. I may widen the heel, extend the heel, double fuller the shoe, clip it, roll the toe, rocker the toe, add breakover, blunt the toe, square the toe and even concave half the shoe if necessary.

A shoe can be widened, narrowed and the branches widened to adjust the ground reaction force. Sometimes a horse needs a wider shoe on one side and a narrower shoe on the opposite foot.

We can modify posterior, medial or lateral support. While we can purchase many styles of bar shoes, we can also create numerous orthopedic bar options and supports by making modifications of machine-made shoes.

### Continual Learning Process

When I moved to the United States 25 years ago, farriers were using various shoe styles I was not familiar with. I had to quickly learn how these shoes were used, what shoes worked best with various sport horses and the shoeing rules for different competitions.

It was important to learn where to punch the nail holes in these new-style shoes. When a shoe was used with a pad, the nail holes could be punched coarser. With a Thoroughbred-type horse that didn't need a pad, the nail holes could be much finer.

When modifying shoes, you can punch new holes in the creases or punch nail holes inside or outside of the crease depending on how you want to position the shoe on the foot. New nail holes are often needed with lateral or external extensions.

Working with long-footed Arabians, I had to learn where to correctly place the nail holes in their shoes. You can't look at a photo of an Arab foot and know how to fit the foot properly. Instead, you must understand the sport, how the horse is used and how it should be trimmed and shod.

Does the horse need a thin or thick hoof wall? Is it a short- or long-toed horse? Do you need to fit the shoe loose or tight? How will heel width and length affect the fit?

With some sport horses, you may want to blunt the toe on a hind shoe so it fits the thickness of the hoof wall back toward the end of the toe. Instead of rasping the hoof to fit the shoe, round off the hoof so a small bit of it sticks out at the end of the toe rather than dealing with an overreaching shoe.

**Sometimes a horse needs a wider shoe on one side and a narrower shoe on the other foot...**

## Clips Vs. Shoe Position

Even though you can buy pre-clipped shoes, you still have the option of grinding off the clips and adding new ones in a more appropriate position. For me, discussing the pros and cons of toe clips, side clips or quarter clips aren't as relevant as talking about the shoe position at the toe.

Are you going to have the shoe fit the perimeter of the toe, set the shoe back a little or set it back a lot? This will depend on your evaluation at the trim stage on how the bottom of the foot will react against the ground.

Once you've trimmed the foot, you can decide whether breakover is needed. There's no single breakover option that fits all horses, but remember that most horses will benefit from adding breakover and some type of lateral or external support.

## Modifying Bar Shoes

Bar shoes can solve many problems, but make sure you use the appropriate one. When sport horses have weak hooves or are lame, a straight bar shoe or an inverted bar shoe may keep the shoes from being pulled off.

As soon as you place a bar in a shoe, the shoe becomes more rigid, so you need to understand the impact a bar shoe can have on the foot.

As an example, an egg bar shoe doesn't provide support to the foot — only ground support to the leg. A bar has to be placed in the middle of the shoe if it is going to provide support to the foot. So using an egg bar on a collapsed heel or flat foot that leads to increased pressure can cause more damage.

To support the foot, you need a bar shoe that will provide needed frog support in one of three ways:

1 By providing positive pressure when the support mechanism touches the frog and a gap is left under the heels when a shoe is nailed on the hoof.

2 Passive pressure offers support to the frog without leaving a gap under the heels. This type of pressure becomes functional only when the horse places weight on the foot.

3 By adding protection when a gap is left between the frog and the heart bar.

With heart bar shoes, the most important thing is to trim the frog appropriately to allow proper setting of the heart bar. Leave the top of the frog flat to increase the surface area where the shoe will sit.

## Traction Need Isn't A Given

When a sport horse backs off going into a corner, it often means the horse needs more traction in order to avoid slipping. Yet in some instances, horses perform better when the shoe surface area is increased rather than by adding traction.

Whether a horse can benefit from additional support comes down to evaluating a number of items. Besides understanding the sport, you have to consider the rider, his or her experience, age and conformation of the horse along with the surface where the horse will be working.

When you believe a horse may need more shoe width and length, other issues may limit how much can be provided. If an inexperienced rider is unbalanced on the horse, the horse may lose shoes when you shoe it long and wide. As a result, you may need to shoe a little more conservatively so you can widen the heels and provide more ground support.

For a horse competing in a long-distance event, there's nothing worse than losing a shoe and ending up foot-sore. So it's often important to take a more conservative look at your shoe fit.

It's also important to talk with owners, trainers and riders to learn the type of surface where a horse will be performing. A horse might perform well with one style shoe on one surface, yet need another style shoe for peak performance on a different surface.

## Maintain Your Shoeing Tools

While it's important to have all of your tools in top-notch condition, here are a few examples where problems tend to occur with the tools you'll use when modifying machine-made shoes.

- **Tongs**. Make sure your tongs properly fit the particular style and size material you are working with. When the tongs don't hold the material properly, you'll have to grip the tongs tighter and you'll lose overall control of the tool while working the material.

- **Hammers**. Avoid hammer faces that are worn and flat. When this occurs, the hammer blows will tend to ricochet and not hit the material squarely.
- **Fullers**. These must be dressed properly and often require maintenance on the head side to prevent chipping. Set the blade of the fuller to fit the specific nail that you are using.
- **Stamps (Forepunches)**. As soon as a bubble forms on the point of the tool, it will start to deform and soften the metal. By removing the bubble, the tool will allow you to do better, more accurate work that will lead to cleaner nail holes.
- **Pritchels**. These tools need to have a flat end that fits the shape and bottom of the stamp. Modify them to fit the specific style of nail you're using, such as a city head or E-head.

## Regulate The Heat

For years, I worked with coke forges in England and learned how to properly regulate the heat. Then I arrived in the U.S. and quickly learned that if you don't produce the proper amount of heat in a gas forge, you're not going to be able to move the steel you're working with to where you want it to go.

Too many farriers ignore the gas forge's regulator valve that allows you to adjust the pressure based on how fast you work. If a modified shoe gets hot too quickly or sits in the forge too long, adjust the regulator so the forge will heat the material without burning up the shoe.

---

*Grant Moon is an internationally known farrier from Wales who went through the British farrier-training program. After 4 years, he passed his diploma exam with honors and gained his Associateship of the Worshipful Company of Farriers 2 years later.*

*He later expanded his farrier experiences by moving to the U.S. and working with fellow International Horseshoeing Hall Of Fame member John Marino. The Peaster, Texas, farrier gave Moon his first experience in shoeing Western sport horses and experiencing different environmental conditions than in the United Kingdom.*

*Once he gained experience in new disciplines, Moon became a farrier clinician and consultant. During the 1990s, he worked in 36 countries around the world.*

*A long-time shoeing contest competitor, Moon was named World Champion Blacksmith six times at the Calgary Stampede, along with earning a number of runner-up honors. He has been a member of the Welsh farrier team on many occasions and was a member of the American Farriers Team for 5 years.*

# Bob Peacock

## Work With And Learn From Experienced Farriers

### Learn to keep it simple and make the horse comfortable

When I first started shoeing, I learned from Frank McGinnis. He taught me to always look at the horse before you put shoes on it. I always watch the horse move and look at its knees to see if they are equal or see how unequal they are. What I learned shoeing over the years is that the horse is a self-compensating unit and compensates for the rider.

When you see one knee higher than the other, you'll find out that the rider has one shoulder lower than the other with one leg shorter than the other and did not adjust the saddle. A professional rider can ride a multitude of horses because he or she can get on a horse, feel it out and adapt accordingly to that horse.

But many people just buy a horse, ride it and then the horse ends up sore. You have to look at the horse and the rider. You may find out that the rider has not been adjusting the saddle to compensate for the horse. I usually have to work on this problem through the trainer.

### Never Stop Learning

It's important to remember that you are still learning. I am not always right. There were times I've been wrong and put six different types of shoes on a horse if the job wasn't right. I finished the horse and walked it out only to realize it still wasn't right, but I was willing to do it over again until it was.

We have a lot of good farrier schools and contests, but making shoes as a contestant doesn't always guarantee that you'll succeed as a horseshoer. You need so much more. I am 75 years old and I succeeded, so I can say this and not worry about what people think.

Furthermore, a farrier can't rely on simply using manufactured shoes. There are too many gimmick shoes on the market today.

### Look For Non-Traditional Shoeing Options If Needed

Shoeing at events and teaching clinics has helped me adapt to many different situations. It's important to do what will work best for the horse, which may require some creativity on the part of the farrier.

At the Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) World 3-Day Event in 1978, I shod three horses for Canada.

They hadn't passed the vet check, which was required before they could compete in the cross-country event. I found out where they were sore and fit them with a wide-web aluminum shoe, which I invented. I put this shoe on a couple of those horses and balanced them so they had a nice movement and everything was compensated.

You shouldn't always put the wedge in the back of a horse's foot. I've put it on the side if that's where it's needed. I rotate the wedge. You can't always fix them right away, but after years of experience it got easier.

## Work With Veteran Farriers

After 50 years of shoeing horses, my best advice to young farriers starting out is to work with and learn from an experienced farrier. One of the things McGinnis taught me was to work smarter; not harder and to keep it simple.

McGinnis also taught me to make the horse comfortable. It's embarrassing to see the gimmicks people sometimes hang on a horse's foot. I was in California giving a lecture and a gal asked me to come out to her farm and look at her horse.

It was a pricey horse that she'd bought in Chicago. Her own farrier was at the lecture along with other California farriers. I invited them to come out to the farm with me, but they declined. I was in their territory and they didn't want to learn anything from me.

When she got on to ride the horse, you could see that it was so uncomfortable it was trying to buck. The horse had built-up bar shoes and a lot of extra stuff on the front end that it didn't need. All I did was take it off and make the horse more comfortable.

She got back on and the horse traveled just as smooth as a daisy cutter. This was a $15,000 horse and she'd been faced with possibly having to buy another horse until I made this one comfortable again. I might not have been welcome by those California horseshoers, but maybe they learned something.

## A Rewarding Career

Life as a farrier has been rewarding. I went to the Quarter Horse Congress to show them the shoes that I invented and they told me they didn't need them. But the next year they were all putting them on their Quarter Horses. That's part of life.

Today, it's often about money and ego. I really enjoyed working with the older farriers, especially trotting horseshoers in Illinois. Phil Cable was one of the finest trotting horseshoers along with my grandfather.

Shoeing seems like it comes through the bloodlines — the aptitude and the passion. You have to have the

passion. I had the passion, and then my body quit. I got kicked airborne a couple times. I worked for 20 years with a broken back and with three bad discs. It didn't help my disposition, but I enjoyed teaching other people.

It's never yours until you can give it away, and pass it on. This is a way to pay it forward — passing along the things we've learned.

I haven't been out and around much since I've been in a wheelchair, but I am still there with my mind and feelings. I went to the International Hoof-Care Summit in Cincinnati and it feels good when your peers elect you to something like the International Horseshoeing Hall of Fame. I see the boys today who I trained and I am very proud of them. Ω

---

*Bob Peacock started shoeing with Frank McGinnis back in the 1960s. He later worked with veterinarian Bill Kline and apprenticed with Henry Blankenship. Washington state farrier Gordon Goss was also a big influence on Peacock.*

*Many credit Peacock with inventing the wide-web aluminum shoe and other farrier products. "My life has been about shoeing horses and figuring out problems. I was an engineer before I was a horseshoer, and made good money doing both," he says. "But when you get paid for doing what you enjoy, that's the best in life.*

*"After retiring from horseshoeing, I became active in the Shriners. That's what I really enjoy now — taking care of kids who need help."*

# Dean Pearson

## Tool And Rig Setup Paramount To Efficiency

### How you organize your tools could mean the difference between shoeing another horse or calling it a day

One of the most important things for a busy farrier is efficiency and organization of the shoeing rig, which will save time and energy throughout the day. My experiences with shoeing competitions taught me the value of efficiency.

My Utah buddy Shayne Carter taught me that skill is the meeting of craftsmanship and speed. Our job is a combination of science and artistry, but it's always an athletic endeavor.

When I was competing, we had a time limit to make a shoe. You have to train yourself to be efficient as you develop your skills. There are some unspoken things you gain from that. You become efficient around the horse, which helps the horse and is safer for it.

You become efficient under the horse, efficient with your body and efficient and safe with your tools. Efficiency grows out of respect for the horse and the training you go through to develop your farrier skills.

How you arrange and organize your tools is paramount. When I built my first rig, I put the drawer for the pads on the wrong side of the truck — the opposite side from where the drill press was where I would rivet a pad on a shoe. So every time I needed to pad a horse, I'd have to walk around to the other side.

In my next rig, I had the pads in a drawer right next to the drill press. This is one small example of creating efficiencies so that your focus can be on the horse.

If you are right-handed, the back of your anvil should point at the door of the forge. This way, your left hand opens or closes the door with your tongs going in and out and there is no turning. You stand right there.

Forging competitions made me think more about where a tool is, how I pick it up, etc. When I stand at my anvil, directly across from it is a door that opens out from the front of the porch that has my hammers, tongs and pritchels. All the things that I use are lined up there. I can grab them and don't have to move. I could grab them with my eyes closed, it's almost like playing an instrument.

## Relationship Between Your Rig And Tools Is Important To Productivity

A good rig involves more than just a good Stonewell body. That's just a flat work deck. What is important is the relationship between the tools. You can't have the keys of a piano in two separate areas. They have to be where you can reach and use them. This all translates into the finished product.

If your truck is set up with things in the wrong spot you will trip over yourself and bounce around a lot, which is counterproductive. I want everything in my rig exactly where it needs to be in a working relationship, as if I was in a competition.

I will be standing behind that truck for 10 hours a day, so I am very particular. If you are not efficient, at the end of the day you could have shod another horse in the time it took you to fumble around. You want to create a static situation where you can be in a controlled position, able to move athletically without it becoming crazy, so the horse can be the center of your awareness.

**If you are not efficient, at the end of the day you could have shod another horse in the time it took you to fumble around ...**

Back your rig up to the cross ties where the horse is being shod, so when you are standing at your anvil you are looking at the horse. Then the driver's side of your shoeing rig will be farthest away from the horse, which is where I mount my grinder and drill press. Then you are not scaring the horse with the grinding and it's farther away from the barn.

Both of my anvils slide out. I don't understand why anyone would want to pick up an anvil and put it out on a stand every day. With today's rigs, anvils can either slide or swing out.

Create efficient ways for your tools to pop out of the truck to utilize that also allows them to be easily placed back. This includes things like fans to help keep flies off the horses. Each item has its place.

## Protect Yourself From The Sun And Other Job Hazards

I never knew about sunscreen when I started shoeing. Today it's important, especially when working in Wellington, Fla., during the winter. Everything in my rig is designed to have me under shade. For example, the rear door of my rig opens upward and provides shade.

I see a lot of guys standing out in the sun. They turn 240 degrees from the anvil to the forge every time they do something. If you look at the back of my shoeing rig, my forge is on the passenger side back corner. My anvil comes out right below the forge. When I am standing at the anvil, I have the maximum amount of cover over my head because I am standing directly under the center of my back door. This gives the most protection and also makes it easier to see everything.

Everything I want to control is right there at the back of the truck. Little things make a difference. On the Forgemaster that I have in the back of both of my rigs, each jet has its own valve. I put a lever valve on mine. To open and close those, it's a one-quarter turn lever to turn the fire on and off. I don't need to make it more work than necessary.

All of this enables me to keep my eyes on the horse the whole time, so I can anticipate problems. My back is not to the horse and I'm not on the other side of my truck from it. The horse is not out of my sight. My helper, when he is drilling and tapping the shoes or grinding, can be on the other side of the truck out of the horse's sight.

Another important issue is breathing. You don't want to grind aluminum; it's not good for us. We also don't want to breathe a lot of dust, so we shouldn't be grinding without proper protection. I wore goggles for a long time and now I wear a full facemask, which has a set of headphones. It's like a brazing helmet and hangs on a hook right next to the grinder. It gives me ear and full-face protection.

When grinding, I have a good clear screen and replace it on a regular basis. I also put a water bucket underneath my grinder to catch the grindings coming off the bottom of the wheel. They go right into the water and that takes them out of the air.

For efficient cleanup, my drill presses come out from the side of the truck on a rollout. Then all those grindings and dirt don't go into the trailer. This saves me 10 minutes of cleanup at the end of the day.

## Basic Add-Ons Lead To Efficient, Focused Hoof-Care Work

One of the best things I have added to all my shoeing rigs is a small, apartment-size refrigerator. I can put 4 gallons of water and sandwiches in it. It only takes me 10 minutes in the morning to make my lunch and put it in a little container in the back of my rig.

Around noon when the horses are training, we can sit down for lunch and then we are right back to work. It makes more sense than pulling out a menu and ordering from a pizza place and you don't eat properly that way. When you make your own lunch you know you won't get indigestion in the afternoon when you are under a horse.

It's one thing to have a fancy, shiny trailer, but often when I see guys open up their trailer it takes them awhile to set up, and the working sequences don't make sense.

It breaks my heart when I see these young guys' shoeing rigs where they have to pull the stand out, set it out on the ground, then pull an anvil out. Basic core efficiencies lead to clearer thinking, more focus on the job, which is creating and managing a healthy hoof capsule. Ω

*Dean Pearson of Nottingham, Pa., and Wellington Fla., began shoeing in 1976 after majoring in animal science at the University of Wyoming and attending Oklahoma Farrier's College. In 1982, he started Green Gables Forge in Nottingham, where he has a small farm and raised four children.*

*Pearson and Bruce Daniels won the two-man draft horse competition at the 1985 American Farriers Association (AFA) National in Raleigh, N.C. That year he was also on the American Farrier's Team competing for International Farrier Championships in Stoneleigh, England, and the Clydesdale Shoeing Championships in Closeburn, Scotland.*

*In 1987, he won first place in the Specialty Forging Competition at the AFA National in Albuquerque, N.M., which again put him on the American Farrier's Team. He also placed second in the Clydesdale Shoeing Competition in Scotland.*

*Pearson served as the official team farrier for both the U.S. and Canadian 1986 Olympic Equestrian Teams and the U.S. Eventing Team.*

*He has been shoeing show horses through most of his career, and was the American judge for the 2013 World Horseshoeing Classic in Lexington, Ky.*

# Bob Pethick

## Function Is Key To Managing Mismatched Feet

### Trimming and shoeing parameters help improve fluidity and equalize fetlock drop

Feet vary greatly in all horses. There are very few horses with matching hoof angles. It is almost the norm to have differences in length and angle at the end of the shoeing cycle.

The first thing to keep in mind is that the deep digital flexor tendon (DDFT) and the accessory ligament (AL) to the DDFT are key components affecting growth and the angle of the hoof capsule.

Horses with mismatched feet are typically dealing with two extremes:

A long and lax DDFT that weights the heels, reduces the height of the digital cushion and causes the toe to grow at a more rapid rate.

Or a contracted DDFT that transfers the weight to the toe, reduces sole depth under the cranial third phalanx and causes rapid heel growth. Any of these extremes and their related factors can result in an unhealthy hoof capsule that affects long-term soundness and movement.

The goal is not to match the feet, but when trimming for function the feet do become more similar, as does movement. It is important to keep the toe length and sole depth as close as possible in both feet.

### Looking At Radiographs

When available, evaluation begins with lateral radiographs measuring sole depth, the ratio around the center of rotation, the hoof pastern axis (HPA) and palmar angles. Radiographs are not necessary but can be very helpful to get an initial understanding of the issue.

The main thing to look for on an X-ray of a horse with mismatched feet is a positive P3 angle, as well as an aligned HPA.

One helpful tip on horses with upright pasterns is that radiographs should be taken loaded (picking up the other foot) to gain more insight to the HPA. On the upright hoof, a simple test can be done to see how much load there is on the AL of the DDFT.

Using one or two 3-degree wedge pads, place the thick part of the wedge pad under the toe of the upright foot. Using this test, you can determine whether you can lower the heel and not stress the DDFT or the

AL-DDFT. If the horse stands comfortably with the heel flat on the ground, you can trim the thickness of the wedge pad from the heel. Radiographs also can be taken standing on the wedges to document the improvement of the HPA.

## Trimming The Low Heel

Once the horse has been assessed, begin trimming the low-heeled hoof first. Trim in a manner to restore solid horn in the back of the foot by removing run-forward collapsed heels and to maintain sole depth in the front half of the foot while being careful not to over pare the sole.

It is a common practice to shorten the toe excessively to raise the angle. However, it is in the horse's best interest to maintain significant sole depth in order to be comfortable traveling over rocks and uneven ground. Therefore, it would be better to address shortening the toe by dressing the dorsal wall back rather than shortening it from the ground surface.

Collapsed heels and folded bars need to be addressed by trimming

to restore and straighten the bearing surface as much as possible. The frog will be a major weight-bearing structure in this type of hoof and should be trimmed lightly, not over pared.

## Trimming The Upright Hoof

Farriers who previously have over-lowered the upright heel and have landed in trouble tend to leave too much heel height on these feet to avoid past experience. However, excess heel height will limit the expansion of the hoof capsule, stress the coffin joint and often other structures, and result in a stilted gait with a hard heel-first landing.

In addition, the rider/trainer will often say the horse has a short stride on this foot. The stride is not shorter, but the timing is different as the fetlock on the upright foot does not descend as far as the low-heel foot. This shortens the stance phase.

The sole depth on the upright foot is often lacking at best and care should be taken to keep a safe depth under P3. If the toe is shortened excessively, it is not possible to trim the heel as you will be dangerously close to sensitive sole in the middle of the foot. Always trim this foot from the heels forward to maintain sole depth under P3. The dish/flare at the toe can be dressed to as straight as possible, being careful not to overdress.

Overall, the goal of trimming is to align the HPA and restore function to the hoof capsule without stressing the DDFT or the AL-DDFT.

## Shoeing The Feet

Once the feet are trimmed, choose the shoe best suited to the horse's needs for its discipline. It may be concave for an event horse, aluminum for a show hunter or steel for a dressage horse or jumper.

Pads can be used depending on the amount of growth available to work with and how successful the trim was in restoring the HPA and retaining sole depth. A wedge may be used on either or both feet to gain the proper HPA alignment. A flat pad can add sole depth.

I prefer to use frog support pads and support material such as Equi-Pak or Advanced Cushion Support to spread weight bearing over a larger area to promote function and counter the effect of peripheral loading.

The shoe placement on both feet should be 50/50 from the center of rotation with the toe rockered slightly from the back of the web or rolled to ease turnover. The placement of the back of the web will fall slightly forward of the tip of P3.

I have seen proven success with these trimming and shoeing parameters after observing a video gait analysis of horses that became more fluid and developed a more equal fetlock drop.

HPA has been restored, and the feet are able to function in a more normal manner. Keep in mind, though, that weight bearing works against us. With any limb deviation, horses with mismatched feet should be shod on a shorter shoeing schedule to stay ahead of growth. Ω

---

*Bob Pethick has a long list of accomplishments under his farrier belt including numerous certifications and involvement with countless farrier and veterinary associations.*

*Pethick began shoeing horses in 1971. As owner of Bedminster Forge in Califon, N.J., Pethick's clientele includes show hunters, jumpers, dressage and event horses. He has shod many world champions and Olympic horses in all disciplines.*

*In his busy career, Pethick fills many roles as an active farrier, clinician, teacher, international judge and an avid promoter of excellence in the industry. Pethick was a two-time member of the North American Horseshoeing Team. He is a five-time member of the American Farriers Team and has represented the United States in international competition. Pethick now judges competitions at the national and international levels.*

# Haydn Price

## 2 Considerations When It Comes To Traction

### Interpreting traction in terms of a horse's performance relies on rider input and a complete evaluation

Traction always will come down to basic principles. A major consideration is the underfoot conditions that you expect the horse to work on. However, there are items farriers must not overlook when evaluating traction with a performance horse.

### Get Input From Riders

During the 2012 London Olympics, we had a very undulating cross-country course. That was combined with an unprecedented wet season. Several riders expressed concern about how they would cope with that. The lesson here is that as farriers, we have to listen to information from riders.

Taking that information, we should make provisions for each horse on an individual case when the feet come back to us.

The feedback from riders is absolutely paramount because this includes so much of what you do to the foot. For example, a farrier may have a particular preference for a product, such as using four sole pads, but it may not be conducive for that horse because it may significantly reduce traction.

The rider provides you with information and your responsibility is to administer the appropriate treatment process.

This relies on the feedback being accurate. On occasion, we need to listen to that feedback, look through the information and make a judgment rather than a reaction.

Communication is key. It has little to do with the caliber of horse or rider that you work with. It has everything to do with your interpersonal skills. You are one small element in a big picture. The rider may forget to provide you with that information. Yet that information is vital for you to undertake that job and have the best effect as a result. A good practitioner asks questions.

If I come into your yard, and I haven't seen you for a month, the first questions I'll ask is if everything is OK and if I need to know anything. That insight and ability to communicate comes with time, there is no shortcut. What you do with one horse isn't necessarily what you'll do with another, so you have to learn the

individual merits.

## Making Changes To Traction

Our competition horses are kept on a 4-week schedule, with a maximum of 5 weeks. I tend to steer away from making changes leading up to competition unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as the case with the weather leading up to the London Olympics. I would then make only small changes.

I have a rule of thumb in which I won't shoe a horse under a 7-day period before a major competition to allow things to settle down. If we change anything, it would be within a 3-week window, unless it is an emergency. In general terms, we prefer to keep things status quo.

When farriers look at the horse, we have to take in a lot of information. I don't advocate the assessment of worn shoes. When we look at traction, a farrier may look at the shoe, see that it is unevenly worn and may blame it as a direct result of an increase in traction on an abrasive surface.

That is not necessarily the case. It could be a secondary effect. One has to be careful when analyzing a shoe on an individual basis and making an assumption on traction based on the shoe wear.

I never investigate shoe wear and correlate it without seeing the horse move. The opportunity to see horses train and compete will provide you with so much information. You see them in their environment, rather than ours. It is a mistake to make a judgment on an isolated interpretation without seeing what, how and why a horse does something.

---

*Haydn Price of Monmouthsire, Wales, has served for a number of years as a consultant to Great Britain's international show jumping and dressage teams and was presented with a medal of honor by the British Equestrian Federation for outstanding service to the equine industry.*

*A diplomate of the Worshipful Company of Farriers, Price has trained more than a dozen apprentices, has served in various leadership roles with Great Britain's Joint Farrier Training Committee and as a board member of the Farriers Registration Council.*

*"When I was 14, I wanted to become a farrier and it has been an exciting career that I could never dreamed of," he says. "It has allowed me to develop lifelong friendships around the world."*

# Red Renchin

## 5 Common Failures Of Farriers

### Learn from my mistakes to foster a more rewarding life during and after shoeing

I grew up in a horse community and learned my first horse-handling skills from cowboys. They were good riders, but they weren't necessarily good horsemen in terms of training. Their techniques were on the harsh, sometimes abusive side. For them, it was more about getting horses to submit than actually training them.

### Failure To Practice Good Horse Handling

So, when I started shoeing in my late teens, that was my philosophy — if the horses weren't going to cooperate, I was going to make them cooperate. Sometimes looking back on it now, I'm lucky I didn't get myself killed because I put myself in some dangerous situations.

As I got older and got involved with better horsemen, I learned better horse-handling skills. I learned the slowest way is the best way, especially if you're going to be working on those horses for a long time. It's better to have the horses like you than fear you. I changed my methods to a gentler approach, which has served me well over the years.

Part of the problem with young farriers is that they really lack good horse-handling skills and knowledge of how the horse's mind works. That's something that takes a long time to understand and to become proficient at.

While some of these skills are just learned over time, newer training methods can really help young farriers — and all horse people — develop these skills. One of the things that has taken place in the past decade is the "horse whisperer" movement, which advocates a quieter way of handling horses.

It has been a big benefit to horse owners because they can really train their horses better. In addition, farriers can have a better understanding of how to get a horse to cooperate quietly and in a manner that's a whole lot safer for the horse and the farrier.

### Failure To Balance Business And Pleasure

By nature I'm an AAA personality, and I was especially energetic as a young farrier and very driven to succeed. Consequently, I put a lot more time and energy into my

business than I did my family, and that has long-term implications.

I know a lot of successful farriers who are unhappy people because they have messed up their marriages and families. Looking at the big picture of life, things have not really worked out for them. Sometimes it was their own fault because they became addicted to their work, which can easily happen.

An up-and-coming young farrier has to learn to take a day off. Part of the problem is that I was encouraged to work hard and long from my mentors. After learning the downsides of this practice, I taught my apprentices to depart from that kind of thinking and to spend time with the people they love and the people who love them.

The slowest way of handling a horse is the best way, says International Horseshoeing Hall Of Famer Red Renchin. Good horse-handling skills make the job easier and safer.

It might not make you a better professional, but it will make you a better person. Looking back, I wish someone had given me that advice earlier on. Having a good business is wonderful and all, but having a family and a life outside of shoeing is equally important, maybe even more important.

## Failure To Have Good Communication

Over the years I've had some really good clients. One of the mistakes I made was that I was so interested in doing a good job on the horse's feet that I often failed to include them in what I was doing.

Consequently, I took them out of the loop just a bit, which kept them guessing and not really keeping them informed about what I was doing. When things went wrong, which inevitably they will when you are around horses, I didn't have that confidence level with them that I wish I had, and I lost a couple of pretty good clients. They lost confidence in me because I hadn't been talking to them on a regular basis.

**Part of the problem with young farriers is that they lack good horse-handling skills and knowledge of how the horse's mind works …**

The same thing is true with vets because there is a lot of disconnect between the farrier and the veterinarian. A lot of that is just due to miscommunication.

You have to keep everyone in the loop and on the same page. The way to do that is to take the time to talk to people and to discuss what you're saying, what you're doing and what you want to do. Engage them in a dialogue about what's happening at the barn and what's happening with the horse.

## Failure To Wear Hearing Protection

I'm at the point right now where I'm probably going to have to get a hearing aid. Part of the reason was a misunderstanding when I got started as a farrier. With my generation, it was considered a sign of the business to have an anvil that rang at 110 decibels. It was kind of a source of pride, as well. Little did we know what it was doing to our hearing.

Luckily that is changing. Young farriers now realize how important it is to protect their hearing. But I still see instances of farriers not using hearing protection when I go out and watch them work, even with people who know better.

That's something that needs to be promoted just a bit more. Eye protection and hearing protection are so important if you want to be able to hear and see later in life. It's all cumulative, and you don't realize it until it's irreversible.

## Failure To Listen To My Body With Back Pain

A lot of farriers when they start having problems, especially with their back, go into a denial mode and give it a day or 2 to let it get better. But, it's like a horse that's developing soreness. If you catch things early on, you can do a whole lot to avoid problems later on. Sometimes it's just cutting back and spending fewer hours bent over working on horses.

**If you're not feeling 100%, do something to change, just like you would with a horse that wasn't quite right …**

Other times it's getting into an exercise program so that you're strengthening the muscles. We're bent over all the time, but we're active; we develop these large back muscles, but our stomach muscles are nonexistent. A lot of farriers don't take good care of their bodies and don't realize they are probably the most important tools we have.

When I was practicing, I had a little workout program I did religiously every morning. It took me about 25 minutes and got me warmed up. It's important to put yourself into a program, whether it's yoga or going to the gym or a chiropractor. I also learned how to get under a horse and not put a whole lot of pressure on my back, and instead, transfer it to my legs.

I also learned a hoof stand and hoof cradle really made a difference in transferring the weight of the horse to the tools so my body wasn't taking so much abuse.

If you're not feeling 100%, you have to do something to change, just like you would with a horse that wasn't quite right.

---

*Red Renchin was born in 1945 in southern Minnesota in an active horse environment. At the age of 16, he pursued a career as a horse trainer and shod part-time with several different mentors. In 1969, he decided to*

*concentrate on a career in farriery and moved to Milwaukee where he began shoeing professionally full-time.*

*In 1970, he hired his first apprentice and expanded his business, which evolved into a multi-farrier practice in the Milwaukee/Chicago area and Wellington, Fla. He trained a number of talented young farriers during his career. Renchin eventually specialized in shoeing show hunters and jumpers and therapeutic work and has worked on several Olympians.*

*From 1978 until 2010, he was the staff farrier at the Wisconsin Equine Clinic and Hospital in Oconomowoc, Wis. Since 1988, he has been associated with American Farriers Journal as a freelance writer and became the technical editor in 2010.*

# Rob Sigafoos

## Start Planning For Your Future Today

**Regardless of where you're at in your career, it's important to save money and seek advice from a financial planner to prepare for retirement**

When you're young, you tend to think you will always be strong, energetic and invincible. Don't believe this, because you won't. The number one piece of advice I can give to young farriers is to save as much money as possible.

If you look at statistics in the farrier profession, the average age of retirement is 45 years old. If your body is worn out and broken at the age of 45, then what are you going to do?

I saw on the news that 36% of Americans at retirement age have less than $1,000 in savings. When I was chief of Farrier Services at the University of Pennsylvania, I carefully put away some money. I also had matching retirement funds from Penn, which helped a lot. But I see a lot of young guys going out and buying every new tool like there is no tomorrow, thinking they will just keep shoeing horses until they die.

That just doesn't happen. I personally had that experience when I injured my back.

### Work With A Pro

To save and invest wisely, talk with a financial planner. They basically charge you an hourly fee to look at your finances and offer some suggestions. They aren't trying to sell you anything — they are just giving advice.

People who get into financial trouble are the ones who go into risky investments and buy a lot of worthless paper. There is a national organization that helps with financial planning. They certify the experts in this field, so you can trust their advice.

I recommend the financial planner route as soon as possible, regardless of where you are in your career — whether just starting out or have been shoeing horses for 30 years. I was lucky and found someone who was a fee-only financial planner, but I am sure other farriers can find help in other directions.

### Face Reality

The main thing is to start thinking about the future. Many farriers are tied up in their own identity of being a farrier. To some, the idea of not being a farrier someday is unthinkable, either due to denial or ignorance. The time will come, whether you are 40 or 70 years old, when you are not going to be able to shoe horses anymore.

You don't want to put a gun to your head after you've shod your last foot — you need some kind of plan.

This will probably fall on deaf ears if a person is younger than 30, unless they personally know someone who had to retire early. Having a comfortable retirement is certainly preferable to being a greeter at Walmart. It's nice to have options, but it takes careful planning.

I retired about 10 years ago because I had two orthopedic surgeons, a neurosurgeon and neurologist independently tell me that I was just one bad jerk away from a wheelchair.

I decided to take their advice. I have severe back problems as well as inheriting a degenerative disease in my back. That's why surgery is less of an option for me than it might be for other people.

There are things I am doing now that I enjoy every bit as much as I did shoeing. I am doing a lot of artwork — pencil drawing, painting and some metal work. I create usable "equine art" in many forms, from cooking pots to kitchen utensils made from bridle bits, to candle holders and bud vases. I also forge steel to make custom pot racks, bird feeders, garden gates, etc. Find something else you are passionate about and pursue it.

Some of the techniques I'm using in metal artistry are the same as what I did with forge work in farriery. However, it's nice to also work in other mediums such as woodwork, drawing and painting.

I enjoy seeing people I knew in the horse business, other farriers and watching young farriers grow, evolve and become well respected in their own right. If I get one little pleasure out of retirement, it is seeing young people come up with new ideas and carry things forward.

One person that I think of in particular is Pat Reilly. He took over my position at New Bolton and I am very proud of him. He's done exactly what I'd hoped he would — carry the farrier service and the industry further forward than what I was able to do. He is a very talented individual. ☊

---

*Rob Sigafoos went to horseshoeing school in 1973 and shod horses in Virginia for 10 years. He came to New Bolton at the University of Pennsylvania in 1983 and ran the farriery service and research lab there.*

*He pioneered several innovations such as glue-on shoes. But when asked about his accomplishments he says, "I am always much more interested in seeing what other people are doing and how things are going than reliving my past victories."*

*Today he and his wife Susan are a creative team producing what they call "art for living" under their business name of Vinewoods Forge (www.vinewoodsforge.com). Each piece of usable art they create is unique and one-of-a-kind.*

*"These pieces are inspired by whatever we see around us in nature, in our daily walks with our dogs," says Sigafoos. The hand-formed profiles of their work reflect natural forms that twist and change when viewed from different angles.*

# Danny Ward

## Bar Shoe Benefits Without Welding

### An open bar shoe can help a farrier determine if the bar shoe is required

I find that bar shoes are among the most useful tools we have as farriers. But not everyone has the welding and forging skills needed to build a bar shoe, or more importantly build one and fit it properly.

Bar shoes, particularly straight bar shoes, can help any horse that might benefit from additional support. They should not be thought of as shoes to be used only in therapeutic or lameness situations.

### Making Bar Shoes

The biggest challenge with forging a bar shoe from stock, or modifying one from a standard keg shoe, is the welding required, and constructing a shoe that can be fitted properly to the foot.

When a horse needs a bar shoe, don't try to "dazzle" the horse by building a bar shoe next to it. If it takes you three tries and you still haven't got one that fits, you've failed to impress that horse or anyone else.

Modern manufactured bar shoes are well-made and certainly acceptable alternatives to forging straight bar shoes. But they are also more expensive than regular shoes. Furthermore, you may not carry one or have the right size in your rig when you encounter a horse in need of a bar shoe.

Nonetheless, you need to get something on that horse. An "open bar" shoe can be easily modified from a keg shoe without any welding. An open bar shoe allows you to quickly give a horse the added support it needs and also help you determine if the horse benefits from being in a bar shoe.

### Modifying For The Open Bar Shoe

I usually start out with a shoe that is one size larger than the one I'd typically use for the horse.

Now, simply bend the heels of the shoe closer together so they almost meet. This provides more support to the palmar portion of the foot. You can make open bar shoes in a straight bar or almost an egg bar style.

You may not be able to use the heel nail holes, since this modification will probably place them inside the white line. If you do need a nail in that portion of the shoe, you can punch and pritchel a new one.

Be sure you don't let the heels stick out too far behind, or have too much shoe showing around the

perimeter. You don't want the horse stepping the shoe off.

Explain to the owner what you are doing and have them tell you if the horse seems to move better or is more comfortable with this type of shoe. You can leave this open bar shoe on until the next shoeing. Before you leave, jot down the measurements of the foot.

If you find out over the next 6 weeks that the horse does better with your open bar shoe, you can take the time in your workshop to forge a full bar shoe for the horse, or make sure you have a manufactured bar shoe of the right size and configuration for the next shoeing. I haven't made a bar shoe while at the horse in years.

## The Benefits

The open bar helps me decide if the horse will benefit from a full bar shoe before I spend the extra money for a manufactured shoe. It can benefit your work with the client, by saving them the extra cost and showing them why the bar shoes may help.

**These open bar shoes work as well as anything I've tried for one shoeing …**

These open bar shoes work as well as anything I've tried for one shoeing. I've even had some horses in these shoes for years that have really benefited from the added support. Open bar shoes work particularly well with horses with long pasterns and low heels. The added support the shoe provides takes a little strain off the pastern.

Always consider the horse's needs and job before you apply this. For example, if you're working on a hunter or jumper that really needs a lot of support, the open bar shoe is probably not the way to go. That horse would be better served by a straight bar shoe.

Still, in my mind, there are a lot of horses that can benefit from open bar shoes. They give the horse just a little more support and get the foot up off the ground.

I haven't seen any negative effects from using these open bar shoes when they are applied correctly. An open bar shoe isn't going to hurt a horse that's sound and may even help prevent problems down the road. They give you a way to provide a horse a little added support and you don't have to be a master farrier to make them. Ω

---

*Danny Ward of Martinsville, Va., has been training farriers at his Danny Ward Horseshoeing School for more than 30 years and shoeing horses for more than 50.*

*He's a third-generation farrier, learning the trade from his father, who in turn learned it from his.*

*Ward has done hundreds of clinics, hosted the popular Eastern Farrier Conference at his school for 31 years and has judged numerous shoeing competitions, including Stoneleigh in the United Kingdom, the World Champion Blacksmith's Competition in Calgary and Scotland's Heavy Horse Competition.*

*In addition to the International Horseshoeing Hall Of Fame, he's a founding member of the Anvil 21 Club.*

# Mike Wildenstein

## Hoof-Care Knowledge Is Always Advancing, So Footcare Professionals Need To Keep Learning

### Options are plentiful for continuing education, but require some effort and investment on your part

Historically, farriers and blacksmiths worked in secrecy. It was important for a civilization to protect the knowledge they have. But that tradition continued in our profession even into the 1970s. Things have changed in the last 30 years. Education has become prominent in our industry and we now have a willingness to share ideas.

We now have publications such as the American Farriers Journal. We have apps, webinars, conferences and clinics that will bring people in from all parts of the world. There are DVDs, online videos and TV shows. You have a learning opportunity just about every weekend.

Farriers need to be aware of these opportunities and take advantage of them. One of the things we should always strive to do is to leave the horse better off than when we came. You always need to keep learning to do that.

### So Much More

The horse-owning population is changing. More and more, a horse isn't seen as a utility or a tool, but as a family member. The level of care that horse owners expect has increased. You have to be able to shift gears every day, all day long. If you're not up on current trends and information, you get left behind.

I put a lot of shoes on horses before I went to farrier school. When you're learning the job, you're not real comfortable under a horse. Your muscles aren't conditioned to doing the job. You're focused on breathing and keeping your knees from wobbling long enough to just get one hoof trimmed.

There have been some studies that say you need to practice 10,000 hours to become proficient at something. If you think back to the old apprentices, an apprentice probably put in those 10,000 hours in about 4 years.

You need to be aware that there is so much beyond just being able to apply four shoes to a saddle horse. That's a great skill, but it's only the beginning. You need to learn about gaits, anatomy and pathology. You need to learn about how your shoeing and how your trim affects a hoof.

Most of our education takes place after farrier school, after we've attained a certain level of mastery of those basic skills. It takes a lot of time, some travel and some expense. Here are several suggestions and items to consider:

- There are many manufacturers and vendors that provide educational opportunities for free. It's not just that I do these most weekends as a clinician, but I strongly feel this is an opportunity that shouldn't be missed. It's important to expose yourself to and learn from as many hoof-care professionals as you can.
- There are all kinds of unsung heroes. Farriers who attend to the horses' and clients' needs and do spectacular work, but who haven't felt they needed to make a big name for themselves. Taking an opportunity to talk with them about their work while eating lunch at a clinic is an educational experience.
- Marketplaces at the larger conferences like the International Hoof-Care Summit are another opportunity. That's where you can go and see new products and talk to the manufacturers about how they were developed and how to use them.
- Part of your education involves being able to educate horse owners. We know from surveys done by the American Farriers Journal that a lot of people go to their farrier first to ask about ideas they have and with questions about products, diseases or different kinds of shoes. It's important that farriers be educated about these things, because they will be asked on a regular basis.

**I have no problem referring people to competent horse trainers …**

- The Internet is a great resource. However, as a farrier, you're asked about things that someone may have read about on the Internet and it's good to be educated and be able to give an informed answer.
- I'm not a horse trainer, and I don't have any desire to become one. But I know a lot of people who are really phenomenal at it. I have no problem referring people to competent horse trainers. There are certain aspects of horsemanship we may not know a lot about, but maybe we know a resource, a book, a website or an individual that possesses information that is valuable to a client. Because we are out there talking to people all day, we have knowledge about who's in the know and that's something we can share with our clients. That makes us more valuable to our clients.
- We get asked about veterinarians and veterinarians will get asked about us, so it's important to keep an open mind and build your
- relationships with local veterinarians. That way we can all do a better job for the horse.
- You can even learn while you're teaching. I've had students from all over the world and from many different backgrounds. Some had experience dealing with a certain breed or style of shoeing that takes

place in their part of the world. Others had specific skills, whether it was saddle fitting, equine dentistry or a certain type of riding. They bring all this information to the table. I learned a tremendous amount from my students.

- I've also learned a lot from the horses I've worked on. The lessons weren't obvious at first. I didn't start learning from the horses until I had the basic skills in hand and was able to see beyond just getting the job done. You start realizing the importance of conformation, the role breeding plays and the little subtleties that are involved with various riding disciplines and work that we ask horses to do.
- That's one of the great things about this job and what makes it so interesting. It is such a beautiful combination of the arts and science. We have new technologies and new gadgets that help us do our jobs.
- We have new diagnostic tools and tests that let us see things we never could before. We can watch video of a horse in slow motion. We can glue-on shoes with adhesives. Our knowledge base is constantly expanding and that's why we have to be constantly learning. Ω

---

*Mike Wildenstein, who recently relocated from upstate New York to Cynthiana, Ky., has spent years pursuing his own hoof-care education, as well as educating farriers and veterinarians.*

*Wildenstein is an American Farrier's Association Certified Journeyman Farrier, is a Fellow (with honors) of the Worshipful Company of Farriers of Great Britain, and was adjunct associate professor of farriery and surgery at Cornell University, where he educated farrier and veterinary students for 20 years.*

*Not surprisingly, the Farrier Products Distribution clinician believes that success in farriery depends in part on a continuing investment in education.*

# Pearls Of Wisdom From More Hall Of Famers

## Here are a few "best-of-the-best" bonuses collected from other veteran farriers and veterinarians who have dedicated their lives to top-notch footcare

Besides the previous features in this report that highlight tips from International Horseshoeing Hall Of Fame members, we've added a number of "quick-hit" hoof-care tips that additional farriers and equine veterinarians have contributed. Take a look at how adapting some of the tips and techniques found below can help you expand your footcare knowledge.

### Managing A Farrier Business

Farriers are piece workers, as they generally are paid for what they do and are not paid per hour. For this reason, it is very important to be efficient in developing your daily work habits.

*— Walt Koepisch, Jr., Benton, Pa.*

A friend of mine was the fastest shoer I've ever seen and he could keep up the pace all day. He didn't work fast, but very efficiently.

As an example, he held his nailing hammer with his thumb and the next two fingers. The last two fingers were used to hold his nails in the same hand, and he could still ring off the nails.

*— Walt Koepisch, Jr., Benton, Pa.*

Always keep the need for improving efficiency uppermost in your mind. Strive to find new ways to reduce the time needed to trim and shoe a horse without sacrificing quality work. In addition, analyze the amount of energy needed on your part to complete the work.

Examples would include the location of tools in your rig, the size and height of your anvil and anvil stand and whether you keep too many tools in your shoeing box. I've used a clenching stand with a flat base where I place all my finishing tools, as there's no need to be pushing tools around until they are needed.

*— Walt Koepisch, Jr., Benton, Pa.*

Having a specialized farrier software program that can be loaded onto your computer, phone or tablet makes running your footcare business much easier. There are several farrier software options, but I use the Forge Ahead program that lets me quickly call up client information, horse histories, a listing of the barns where I work, other industry professionals, digital X-rays and much more valuable business analysis information. By having all of this information readily available along with handling the bookkeeping, using

a specialized farrier software program makes running a hoof-care business much more efficient.

*— Mike DeLeonardo, Salinas, Calif.*

Start saving a few dollars each week for your retirement. Saving for retirement is one of the most important things you can do for yourself and your family. Make saving for retirement a habit and watch it grow, as the younger you are when you start the more you'll save.

Don't be the person who keeps putting off saving in a retirement account and ends up having to depend only on Social Security for funding your retirement years. By not starting to save for retirement, you may find it necessary to work until the very end of your career.

*— Dave Farley, Coshocton, Ohio*

## Professionalism

Be a hoof-care professional and act like one by not bashing other professionals, making demeaning or sarcastic comments and acting in an unprofessional manner. Avoid dealing with unprofessional people in the equine industry, as they can be cancerous to you and your business.

*— Esco Buff, Webster, N.Y.*

If you can't make a comment in a positive or nice manner on a social media site, don't post a message. Do not insult or attack someone's work publicly by making hit and run comments. Instead, write them a private message.

*— Esco Buff, Webster, N.Y.*

## Continuing Education

Be a horseshoer and not a hoof shoer. Learn to evaluate the entire horse.

*— Esco Buff, Webster, N.Y.*

Attend as many footcare lectures and clinics as you can so you have a broad understanding of different modalities and techniques used in the hoof-care industry.

*— Esco Buff, Webster, N.Y.*

Don't just go to farrier clinics. Spend time learning and attending local college classes on how to run a successful business.

*— Esco Buff, Webster, N.Y.*

## Hoof Management

As tough as a hoof may appear, it contains the same proteins as found in your own human skin. In fact, a horse's hoof is 95% protein. Many chemicals used in commercially sold hoof products can denature and destroy the protective function of this protein. Formaldehyde, turpentine, pine tar and acetone will harden the hoof and make the hoof shine. But with these products chemically "cooking" the protein, the hoof loses some of its elastic qualities and ability to absorb shock, which is a primary function of the hoof. A hoof wall without elasticity is more prone to cracking and a hoof wall unable to "breathe" naturally can't maintain healthy moisture content.

*— Frank Gravlee, DVM, Cherokee, Ala.*

## Tool Usage

A good rule of thumb is to have the top of your anvil at the height of your knuckles. However, the important thing is to be comfortable and balanced with the height of the anvil.

Keep everything parallel or perpendicular to the anvil face. Your knees should be slightly bent, similar to the position you would have when playing golf or lifting weights. Your feet should be perpendicular with your work and not necessarily with the anvil.

*— Roy Bloom, Drummond, Wis.*

Keep your tools sharp, clean and oiled by spending a few minutes working with them at the end of your last stop of the day.

*— Esco Buff, Webster, N.Y.*

A forepunch should be precisely the size of the head of the nail you're using. If you take proper care of a forepunch, it should leave a perfect nail hole. When you see what and where you want to punch, set it quickly, make three blows with the hammer and get out of there. A problem occurs when farriers leave a forepunch in red-hot shoes too long.

*— Roy Bloom, Drummond, Wis.*

Most farriers spend too much time working with a rasp. Learn to properly use your nippers so there isn't much need for a lot of rasping, Use the file side more than the rasp side to prepare a foot for nailing.

*— Walt Koepisch, Jr., Benton, Pa.*

You are not going to be efficient at the anvil or the hoof unless the hammer fits your hand. You should be

able to place the hammer in your hand with a relaxed grip and have a 1/4-inch gap from the tip of your middle finger to your thumb.

If you start squeezing the handle instead of being relaxed, the concussion of the hammer blow will go to your wrist, elbow and shoulder and you don't want that to occur. And get some grime and grease into the hammer handle, as that's going to give you the grip you need.

*— Roy Bloom, Drummond, Wis.*

## Trimming

Palmar heel pain is practically an epidemic with sport horses. Much of the fault is due to the farrier doing too much work with a hoof knife and not enough with the rasp.

*— Bob Smith, Plymouth, Calif.*

If you trim and shoe to allow for as close to a level footfall as possible, you will extend the working life of a horse.

*— Jim Ferrie, Newmilns, Scotland*

Refrain from "gutting" the back half of the foot with your hoof knife. Leave the bars level with the hoof wall to a point that is a minimum of the width of your stock. Keep the back half of the foot strong and unmolested.

*— Bob Smith, Plymouth, Calif.*

Don't rasp or sandpaper the dorsal wall on barefoot horses and you will create a much stronger hoof capsule.

*— Jim Ferrie, Newmilns, Scotland*

Only remove those portions of the frog that you can grab with your fingers. Leave the frog full and unmolested.

*— Bob Smith, Plymouth, Calif.*

When trimming, don't overlook the shape of the white line. It's much easier to see or notice hoof wall flares if you pay close attention to the white line after making a cut around the wall with your nippers.

While the hoof wall will almost always be thicker at the toe on normal feet, a medial or lateral hoof wall flare definitely deserves attention. This trimming work will improve the balance as well as the movement of the horse.

*— Dave Farley, Coshocton, Ohio*

Use your rasp to back up the toes. When you have backed up long toes as much as you are comfortable with, give the horse some added breakover.

*— Bob Smith, Plymouth, Calif.*

## Balancing The Hoof

If you are having a problem obtaining proper hoof balance, cover the bottom of the hoof with chalk and walk the horse in a straight line along the barn alleyway. The chalk will wear off on the high side of the hoof.

*— Esco Buff, Webster, N.Y.*

Balance the foot around the center of the coffin joint to maintain equilibrium on the flexor and extensor tendon insertion points within the hoof capsule.

*— Jim Ferrie, Newmilns, Scotland*

Reduce hoof distortions by learning better balancing skills with trimming and shoeing to the coronary band.

*— Esco Buff, Webster, N.Y.*

## Shoeing

Forge as many handmade shoes as you can, even if you are not being paid extra by clients. It does not take long and greatly enhances your work. As you get better, you'll gradually develop a clientele who wants that kind of work and probably lose clients who won't pay for high-quality work. However, your new and more discerning clientele will be more loyal and willing to pay a higher price for your work.

*— Jack Roth, DVM, Purcell, Okla.*

Avoid raising the heels without adding some type of frog support.

*— Jim Ferrie, Newmilns, Scotland*

The most under-used shoe today is the rocker-toe shoe. It is not difficult to learn to forge and nail or glue this shoe on the foot. A rockered-toe shoe works well with mild chronic laminitis, navicular disease, ringbone, forging, scalping and overreaching. Use it often and you will be happy with the results. You can also charge a little more for it when you only modify a keg shoe.

*— Jack Roth, DVM, Purcell, Okla.*

For farriers who shoe a large number of performance Quarter Horses and other western riding style breeds, learn to forge sliding plates. Forging these shoes to fit the specific needs for a particular horse can work well.

You'll have the opportunity to use these handmade sliding plates often, as they will build your clientele and client loyalty. And you can charge more for these shoes.

*— Jack Roth, DVM, Purcell, Okla.*

AMERICAN FARRIERS JOURNAL™

P.O Box 624 • Brookfield, Wisconsin • Phone: 262/782-4480 • Fax: 262/782-1252 • www.americanfarriers.com
Published and copyrighted 2015 by Lessiter Publications, Inc.,
16655 W. Wisconsin Ave, Brookfield, WI 53005.