

# All Natural Horse Care E-book

*give your horse the best care, naturally*



*Covers all aspects of Natural Horse Care  
including Natural Boarding, Horsemanship, Health and Hoof Care*

**About this book**

This book is created from the information on the All Natural Horse Care website, and includes "Quick Links" on the outside edge of each page which will take you to the relevant webpage. If you have the pdf version you will be able to click on those links (just move your mouse over the link and click) and the page will automatically open in your web browser. The All Natural Horse Care website is continually being updated so is always worth visiting for new information.

Also, in the pdf version, you can jump to any section you want from the content page - just click on the topic of your choice and you will be taken to that page. To return to the contents page just click on the "back to contents" arrow at the bottom of each page.

**All Natural Horse Care ebook**

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# All Natural Horse Care

Do you want to provide the best life possible for your horse? Then All Natural Horse Care will show you how! We focus on putting the horse's needs first by taking a wholistic approach and allowing him to be a horse - which is by far the best gift you can give him.

For those who have only ever known conventional horse keeping methods, this approach may at first seem to go against almost everything you know. This is because convention methods tend to have developed from the human perspective - things that make it easier for the human, such as rugging to keep a horse clean, or stabling because we like to live inside so we think the horse does too. However, this does not meet your horse's physiological needs.

Horses are prey animals who are happiest when living in wide open spaces and in a herd. They don't care about fancy rugs and expensive stalls. They just need the social contact of equals, room to stretch their legs and to be a horse. By allowing them to do this you will have a horse that is less stressed, more athletic and overall much healthier.

This ebook aims to provide information about all aspects of natural horse care in one convenient location. That way you can make informed choices easily and you don't have to waste precious time seeking information - time you can spend developing your relationship with your horse instead!

Natural horse care is my passion. For me it has been a wonderful journey and has opened my eyes up to a whole other world that goes way beyond just horses. I would love to share that with you. You'll be surprised by how just making small changes can dramatically improve not only your horse's quality of life but often his lifespan too.

## Find answers to the following questions, plus much, much more:

- How can I modify my horse's living conditions to provide a more natural lifestyle?
- How can I tell how healthy my horses' hooves are?
- Which training method will help overcome barriers and improve my relationship with my horse?
- What feeds and supplements are best for my horse's needs?

## Testimonials

*Hello, what a wonderful site!*

*Very concise and easy to read with great info on everything natural for horses. I have been involved in natural therapies and training with horses for the past 11 years. I am constantly searching for new and up-to-the-minute techniques or advancements in the field of natural horse care and psychology. Congratulations on your site. Very nice to have found you guys.*

Best wishes, Sascha

*I am happy to have stumbled across your site. It has a whole bunch of great information with good diagrams.*

*I have been trimming my own horse for about a year now and I am always looking for more information.*

Thanks Debbie

*I love your site, it is an excellent resource.*

Thank you, Anne

*You have an amazing gift of making things that are typically hard to understand, easy to understand.*

Dean

## Contents

### Quick Links

#### Introduction

#### About the Author ..... 5

#### Natural Health ..... 6

- Feeding ..... 6
- Vitamins & Minerals ..... 8
- Herbs ..... 10
- Supplements ..... 11

#### Natural Boarding ..... 13

- Herdlife ..... 13
- Living Outside ..... 13
- Movement ..... 15
- Paddock Paradise ..... 16

#### Natural Trim ..... 20

- Hoof Diagrams ..... 21
- Coffin Bone photos ..... 23
- Hoof Evaluation ..... 25
- Taking Good Hoof Photos ..... 30
- Equine Hoof Problems  
& Photo Consultations ..... 33
- Barefoot Hooves in Action ..... 34

#### Trim Styles ..... 36

- Applied Equine Podiatry ..... 36
- Barefoot For Soundness ..... 38
- Gene Ovnicsek ..... 39
- Pete Ramey ..... 41
- LIM Trim ..... 42

#### Common Hoof Disorders ..... 46

- Laminitis/Founder ..... 46
- Navicular ..... 52
- Forward Foot Syndrome ..... 55
- Toe Rocker ..... 58

#### Hoof Boots ..... 62

#### Soaking Boots

- Davis Horse Boot ..... 69
- EasySoaker ..... 70
- Smart Soaking Boot ..... 71

#### Therapy Boots

- Easyboot RX ..... 72
- Soft-Ride Comfort Boot ..... 73
- Saber Sneaker Rehab Boot ..... 74
- Castle Plastics Hoof Boot ..... 75
- Hoofix Emergency Boot ..... 76
- Equine Slipper ..... 77

#### Riding Boots

- Boa Horse Boot ..... 78
- Easyboot Bare ..... 79
- Marquis Hoof Boot ..... 80
- Old Mac's ..... 81
- Easyboot Epic ..... 82
- Renegade Hoof Boot ..... 83
- Hoofwing Hoof Boot ..... 84
- Easyboot Grip ..... 85
- Simple Boot ..... 86
- Swiss Horse Boot ..... 87
- Easyboot Glove ..... 88
- Horse-Mocs ..... 89

#### Glue On Boots

- Easyboot Glue On ..... 90
- Marquis Glue On ..... 91
- Renegade Glue On ..... 92

#### Natural Horsemanship ..... 93

- Mark Rashid ..... 94
- Tom Dorrance ..... 95
- Brent Graef ..... 96
- Linda Tellington-Jones ..... 97
- Monty Roberts ..... 98

#### Homemade Rope

#### Halter Instructions ..... 99

#### Horse Facts ..... 102

#### Glossary ..... 105

## About the Author

My name is Jenny Edwards and I am the owner and creator of All Natural Horse Care. I was born in Canada, but lived in the UK until my mid 30s.

I have been involved with horses most of my life and have competed in many different disciplines including the European Championship for Western Riding in Munich in 1988.

I started out my career working at a large riding stable, where I was introduced to many different horse activities including: English (dressage, cross-country, show jumping, showing, quarter horse racing and general pleasure riding) and Western (showmanship, horsemanship, pleasure, trail, western riding, reining and trail riding) styles; breeding; teaching and training (both English and Western).

In 1990 I decided to undertake a career change as I wanted to spend more time with my own animals so I retrained, becoming a graphic designer.

In 2005 I decided to move back to Canada with my three horses - Tuff n Classy Two, Charlie and Pip, plus my two cats and two dogs - to fulfill my dream of having my own farm.

I have always been of the opinion that all animals in our care should lead as natural a life as possible, but I really got into the 'natural' horse movement after my horse Tuffy was lamed by a farrier in 2000. After trying and failing to fully recover his health with traditional methods for treating the ensuing laminitis and rotation I came across the barefoot movement. This journey opened me up to so many wonderful experiences and I have never looked back.

Since 2000 I have been learning all I can about barefoot trimming methods and I now put that knowledge to good use by offering a trimming service to horses in my area.

My six horses (I have since adopted another four, Zeus, Jasper and Sparky (who are rescues/rehabs) and Montana - more information below) live as natural a life as possible utilizing the Paddock Paradise system. I keep them all barefoot and ride in treeless saddles and bitless bridles. They eat a natural grass (and grass hay) diet with some supplements and are only wormed when necessary. I do not have them routinely vaccinated, apart from a ten yearly tetanus shot.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to Andrew, my very supportive other half. His love and unfailing support - and many carpentry talents - have enabled me to achieve all this, and together we try to provide all of our animals with the best life possible.

### Quick Links



#### About Us:

[www.all-natural-horse-care.com/Jenny\\_Edwards.html](http://www.all-natural-horse-care.com/Jenny_Edwards.html)

#### Contact:

[www.all-natural-horse-care.com/contact.html](http://www.all-natural-horse-care.com/contact.html)



## Natural Horse Health - for a healthy body

### Quick Links

**Horse Health:**

[www.all-natural-horse-care.com/natural-horse-health.html](http://www.all-natural-horse-care.com/natural-horse-health.html)

**Horse Feeding:**

[www.all-natural-horse-care.com/horse-feeding.html](http://www.all-natural-horse-care.com/horse-feeding.html)

**Supplements:**

[www.all-natural-horse-care.com/horse-hoof-supplement.html](http://www.all-natural-horse-care.com/horse-hoof-supplement.html)

**Vitamins & Minerals:**

[www.all-natural-horse-care.com/natural-horse-vitamins.html](http://www.all-natural-horse-care.com/natural-horse-vitamins.html)

**Jiaogulan:**

[www.all-natural-horse-care.com/Jiaogulan.html](http://www.all-natural-horse-care.com/Jiaogulan.html)

**Paddock Paradise:**

[www.all-natural-horse-care.com/paddock-paradise.html](http://www.all-natural-horse-care.com/paddock-paradise.html)

Natural horse health covers many topics including feeding, supplements, natural horse remedies, herbs, alternative therapies, natural horse vets, horse vaccines and worming.

### Feeding for Natural Horse Health

The horse feeding industry is a big money business but in many cases it is not based on the natural requirements (or best interest) of the horse.

Horses are foragers/grazers who in the wild, would travel over great distances to obtain food and water as the wild grasses are low in nutrition. In it's natural environment the horse grazes for approximately 18-20 hours per day. The relatively small stomach and large gut are perfectly suited for this. If the stomach is left empty for prolonged periods (as often happens with stabled horses) the stomach lining can become damaged.

The majority of the food digestion takes place by bacteria in the large intestine. These bacteria continually reproduce and are kept at appropriate levels by the movement of the gut contents. If the food intake is reduced then the bacteria levels become out of balance which could result in colic. Also as there are different types of bacteria needed for processing different food substances sudden changes in diet can cause gut disturbances and lead to colic. Grain is not easily digested by the horse as it did not encounter it in the wild so the digestive system is not evolved to cope with it.

Therefore the safest diet to feed to a horse is grass or grass hay on a free choice basis. However, due to current farming practices which aim to increase the nutritional value of pasture grasses, many fields are now too rich for safe grazing. This means that you may have to restrict the amount of grass available to your horse (see ideas on how to do this on the 'Paddock Paradise' page) to prevent illnesses such as laminitis which can be triggered by high levels of sugar in the grass. Hay is a much safer alternative to be used when horse feeding and it can also be soaked in clean, warm water for 30 minutes (or for an hour in cold water) before feeding to further reduce the sugar levels if necessary.

**Average calorie needs for a mature 1,100lbs horse:**

Maintenance:	16.4Mcal = 19lbs hay (approx 2% of body weight)
Breeding Stallion:	20.5Mcal = 25lbs hay
Mare, late pregnancy:	19.7Mcal = 23lbs hay
Mare, lactating (first 3 months):	28.3Mcal = 33lbs hay
Mare, lactating (after 3 months):	24.3Mcal = 28.5lbs hay
Light work:	20.5Mcal = 25lbs hay
Medium work:	24.6Mcal = 29lbs hay
Heavy work:	32.8Mcal = 38.5lbs hay

(from *The Horse Journal: Guide to Equine Supplements and Nutraceuticals* by Eleanor Kellon, VMD).

**Eating Position**

The horse's body has evolved to work most efficiently when eating at ground height. When a horse puts its head down to eat the lower jaw drops forward and then when the horse lifts its head to chew the jaw slides back. This forward and backward motion helps to grind the teeth and keep them at the optimum length. Obviously this does not occur when the horse is fed from a hay net or rack. This is why it is important to provide food at ground level. Here is a website that has some great ideas on how to accomplish this: [www.swedishhoofschool.com/hayfeeders.htm](http://www.swedishhoofschool.com/hayfeeders.htm)

The airway is also designed to work best when the head is held long and low. A high head position puts a bend in the airway which impedes inhaled air. This means that any foreign particles that are inhaled, such as dust from hay, are more likely to hit the walls of the airway and embed in the mucous membranes. This in turn allows germs and viruses to enter the tissues.

The horse's spine is suspended between the withers and is raised and lowered by the tension created through the ligaments when the head is raised and lowered. By feeding from the ground there is less strain on the muscles to maintain a correct posture.

**Quick Links**

## Quick Links

### Navicular Disease:

[www.all-natural-horse-care.com/navicular-disease.html](http://www.all-natural-horse-care.com/navicular-disease.html)

## Navicular Disease - no longer a death sentence

Before the days of the barefoot movement, navicular disease in horses used to be seen as an incurable disease. However, there are now many horses who have been completely restored - being fully sound and leading fully productive and more importantly, healthy, lives. How is this achieved? By trimming the hoof to the specifics that nature intended.

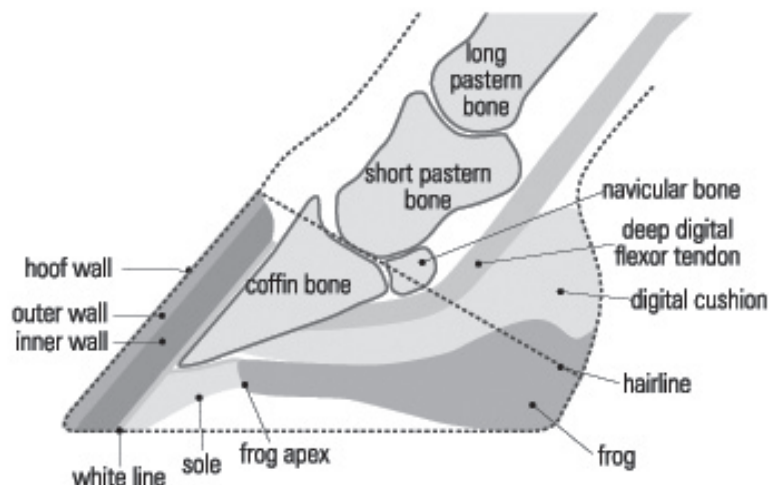
### What is navicular disease?

That is a very good question! Usually any non-specific (other than such caused by an injury or abscess) hoof heel pain is lumped together under the description of navicular disease, or navicular syndrome. Diagnosis often involves nerve blocking the leg and taking x-rays.

In some horses there is seen (on x-rays) to be deterioration of the navicular bone which is where the term navicular disease came from - as the degeneration was thought to be caused by a mysterious degenerative disease. It was thought that the pain came from the friction of the tendon on the damaged bone. However, not all horses who show this deterioration are lame or experience pain. Whereas others who appear to have no degeneration show severe lameness.

### Where is the navicular bone located?

As shown in the diagram on the left the navicular bone sits at the back of the coffin bone and provides a smooth surface for the deep flexor tendon to run over.





It was thought that the degenerative disease caused the bone to become rough which in turn damaged cartilages between the bone and the tendon which in turn damaged the tendon. However Dr James Rooney (American College of Veterinarian Pathologists) conducted a post mortem study of thousands of horses and found that not one had damage only to the bone. In all cases there was damage to the deep flexor tendon and cartilages proving that it is not the bone deterioration that causes tendon damage but the cartilages and tendon deterioration that causes the bone damage.

He then went on to prove how this came about. He found that by stimulating a toe first landing in test machines using dead horse legs the same damage could be created.

With heel first landing, the descending fetlock joint quickly tightens the deep flexor tendon. Simultaneous to this, the coffin joint rotates forward toward breakover, loosening the deep flexor.

But in a toe first landing the descending fetlock joint is still tightening the tendon just after impact, but as the heel rocks downward (rotating the coffin bone backward), the tendon is tightened from the other side at the same time. So there is increased pressure on the coffin bone which increases the friction, causing damage to the region. This was documented and published back in 1974!

The toe first landing normally occurs as a result of heel pain. So by finding the cause of the heel pain we can prevent the damage caused to the navicular bone.

When horses are born all their feet are the same and it is the physical stimulation that develops them into the distinctive front and back hoof shapes that we see in the healthy adult hoof.

However, many foals don't get the proper stimulation because they are kept on soft ground (or stabled). This means that the lateral cartilages, digital cushion and frog do not fully develop. With the lack of development of these structures, the back of the foot is over sensitive which means the horse starts to land toe first to avoid the pain.

Traditionally, horses with navicular disease are treated by applying bar shoes and pads which mask the problem by protecting the bottom of the foot. This however, does nothing to address the cause and in fact makes things worse as the structures continue to get weaker as they now have no stimulation at all. Raising the heels is another method that is used as it was thought to relieve the tension on the tendon, but again this just makes things worse. Also, by applying a shoe the natural shock absorption of the foot is compromised making the pressure even worse.

## Quick Links

## Quick Links

So the way to address the cause of navicular disease is to gradually lower the heels using a barefoot trim to allow the hoof to receive some pressure on the frogs. It must be done slowly to keep the horse comfortable - too much too soon and the horse will start toe landing again to avoid the pressure on it's sensitive frog. Boots and pads can be used to increase the stimulation. Taping a v-shaped pad to the frog will help both protect it and stimulate it. Then as much movement as possible to get the hoof to develop.

Whilst the bone deterioration may never fully recover, the horse will become sound as it no longer has any heel pain and the deterioration will have stopped.

Quick Links

