

Added in 2008: Every few years I read the book I wrote in 2000, figuring I'm going to pull it off the shelves- let the DVD set stand on its own. My book seems very elementary to me now. My knowledge and ability has advanced in every area, and the simplistic way I described disease and nutrition is embarrassing to me. But when I read it I can't keep from smiling- I reminisce about the place I was in back then. These days, I carefully guard every word- thinking constantly about how a vet or researcher or farrier or trainer will react to what I say. Back then, I just blurted it out as I felt it- it was more youthful and honest I guess, and I miss that in me.

But the same simplicity and political naivety that embarrasses me now, also makes the book very easy to understand. To my surprise, literally hundreds of vets and farriers have told me they learned a tremendous amount of valuable information from that little book. And there were significant firsts printed there: Reading sole thickness using the collateral grooves, the “heel bevel” for rotated hooves, “seeing” the coffin bone in the foot using collateral grooves and upper wall growth, hoof boots as a healthy alternative hoof protection, using a healthy foot to promote pastern alignment rather than using pastern alignment to dictate the hoof, primary sole loading for laminitic horses, the links from subclinical laminitis to “routine” wall separation, WLD and thin soles, lateral cartilages as the foundation for the back of the foot rather than a “thing in the foot”, and a viable method of relieving navicular horses, reversing distal descent and growing out big founders... So yes I do cringe every time a vet tells me they read my book, but I just can't make myself pull it off the shelves. It is rarely referenced or quoted, because there is no scientific proof of the words there. But it has sparked a ton of research, and has done a lot of good for horses. Maybe next year.

The toughest thing about writing a “how to” book, is that what you write is frozen in time. Even if you do a revision, all of the old copies are still out there. In the five or so years since I wrote my book, I have been studying, trimming horses, and learning every day. For the most part, only a portion of hoof trimming (particularly rehabilitation) can be written down or taught anyway, so writing about the subject is tough business. It seems that every time I tell someone never to do something, I find myself needing to do it on the next hoof I trim. Experience is the real teacher, and when the chips are down, the intuition and experience of a professional will succeed before “book knowledge”.

The first thing I would like to add on to, is the acknowledgements. I would like to thank my beautiful, wonderful wife, Ivy for all of the hard work she puts in every day with the students, the clinics, the daily schedule and for building this site. You are the most amazing, perfect partner I could have dreamed of. My daughter,

Lauren, has also been joined by an incredible son, Clint, and a beautiful new baby, Alyson. Thank you, guys for being such a pleasure to come home to every day. Add one more: Cannon III

The techniques I taught in my book are solid and proven all over the world to deliver healthy, strong bare hooves, but I've learned some valuable lessons since then, that make things even better. I want to use this article and the other articles I will continually post on this site to share what I have learned along the way. I will assume the reader has read my book and not repeat what is already in there. I still don't claim to know it all, but hope readers can benefit from my experience in the field, anyway.

Hoof Boot Use

I should have put this in bold letters at the top of every page: **Do not ride lame horses!** If pathology exists, or if the riding terrain is not identical to the living terrain, barefoot riding may be unrealistic. Hoof boots let us “have our cake and eat it too”: We get the health and foot development of barefoot turnout and superior protection and shock absorption for work. Hoof boots have improved dramatically since 2000. Study through Garrett Ford's blog http://easycareinc.typepad.com/from_the_horses_mouth/ for details on the Easyboot Glove and Glue-on. These are my tools of choice these days. And while I have never been more convinced this is the healthiest option for horses, I am equally convinced that anyone not willing to “fool with” hoof boots should call a horseshoer.

Sore after a trim?

AANHCP Trimmer, Kirt Lander of Arizona; a highly experienced Natural Hoof Care Practitioner, kindly pointed out a problem in my book that I need to address. The statement, “If a horse is ever sore after a trim, a trimming mistake has been made”, is too vague and needs clarification.

I was, and still am, traumatized by invasive, misguided trimming that continually causes sore horses. Every time the horse almost recovers from a trim, its time for the next trim. People are told that this pain is necessary. I have preached the world over, that it is not necessary. Barefoot transition, navicular rehab, founder rehab, uncontraction and bar straightening can all be accomplished with a less invasive trim (in any terrain or region) that doesn't sore the horse. This is the message I was trying to get across.

Do I ever make horses sore? Yes, occasionally I do. When this happens, I do beat myself up about it pretty hard and try to learn something from it so that I may better serve the next horse. The fear of making a horse sore should not paralyze a professional into immobility, though.

When you pull the shoes off a horse with unhealthy hooves, it will often be less comfortable afterwards. That's what fixed shoes do best; they hide the pain caused by pathology (for a while) but they also generally cause the hoof to become less healthy and less functional, over time, which is why we do what we do. As the hoof gets healthier, with amazing consistency, it will feel and perform better while bare than it did when it was shod, but there is often an unavoidable "transition period" between the two.

I minimize this any way I can with the use of terrain, tape-on pads, Hoof Armor, hoof boots and by sometimes beginning with "incomplete trimming", but the fact remains that this is a period I have to fight my way through with many horses. The only way I know of to truly avoid it is to raise a foal under competent natural hoof care. That way, you never have anything to "transition" from. **I have still not found a farrier textbook that fails to recommend routine unshod periods "to recover from the damage done by shoeing" yet still, every day Natural Hoof Care Practitioners have to bear the burden and the blame for what the horses feel when they have the very first barefoot experience of their adult lives.**

The other situation I need to discuss is going too long between trims. I find that there is no excuse for making a horse less sound after a four to six week maintenance trim. If you wait any longer, an excess amount of dead sole may form, and will stop the natural callousing of the live sole. A trimmer can come along and do a perfect trim, removing this dead sole and make the horse more sensitive to rocky ground than it was before the trim. This sensitivity should be an indication that the trim cycle was too long. When this happens to me, I arrange my next appointment for an earlier date. If the owner will not comply, I hand them the business card of someone else.

Are you a "bad person" if you only trim your broodmares every four months? Maybe not, but the trimmer is not necessarily the one at fault if the horse suffers from tender feet for a few days. I don't personally provide that service to my clients, but I suppose someone has to.

Finally, I definitely never meant for anyone to think that every lame horse feels perfect after my rasp touches its hoof. Every horse should feel the same or better after a trim (aside from the previous topics), or something better could have been done. Generally, the overall condition of the hooves and the performance and soundness of the horse should begin a steady uphill climb, but the basic fact remains that the rehabilitation of problem hooves is a process that can sometimes take a while, depending on where you start and the level of performance expected of the horse. Often there are other factors involved, as well. For instance, if you have a laminitic horse and you refuse to adjust the diet and management, there is probably nothing that anyone can do to help your horse. Also, some problems are beyond repair and the best we can do is provide a bit of relief or support to a condition. Like I said in my book; if you get in the

habit of pulling lame horses from the edge of the grave, you'll find a very rewarding life, but you'll get your heart broken every once in a while, as well. We all just need to constantly strive to learn every day and constantly question everything we "know", so that this happens less and less often.

I apologize for my lack of clarity.

Diet

Every day I realize more and more, the importance of diet to the hooves. Read my articles, "Feeding the Hoof", "Laminitis Update" and "The End of White Line Disease". It's not just the "foundered" horses we need to put on strict diets. Almost every domestic horse I have seen has compromised hooves due to an unnatural diet. Cindy Sullivan said it the best I have heard, "What you pour in the top, comes out the bottom."

Jaime used to frustrate me so much. When we would discuss a hard case over the phone, he always tried to get my mind back to the diet and environment of the horse. I just wanted to talk about trimming and tried over and over to pick some secret tidbit from him. "I'm sure you're trimming is just fine," he would say. "What's the horse eating? Where does it live?" As time goes by, his wisdom is finally sinking in. The more you can get a horse moving and get the rich meals off his menu, the more amazing your trimming will appear. You can take that to the bank!

Mustang Roll?

I have found that applying a very prominent bevel to the outer walls rather than a round radius is much more effective. Be careful to leave the wall 1/16 inch longer than the sole unless the horse has worn them level with each other. This bevel should be around 45 degrees and from the widest part of the hoof, around the toe to the other side at the widest part of the foot, should involve all or most of the entire width of the hoof wall. Don't bevel the walls behind the widest part of the foot in this manner, but lightly roll the sharp corner. Look closely at the wild hooves in my book and you'll see exactly how to do this to perfection.

This puts a slight inward pressure on the walls as they press into footing, that creates a squeezing effect on the laminae rather than a separating force. Some worry that it could cause contraction (it doesn't) but understand that the walls play the role of springing the hoof back together after expansion. The true expansion forces on the hoof capsule are the weight of the horse descending on the solar dome, and the outward pressure created by the squeezing of the fully developed digital cushion between a thick, calloused frog and the descending pastern bones. A little bevel on the outer wall is nothing when it opposes all of that expansion force.

At first glance, most farriers say, "You're making the walls passive". Standing square on concrete; yes I am, but on varied terrain and in motion, the walls are very much engaged. You wouldn't call the walls passive if you got your finger stuck between the bevel and a gravel road! When a horse is pushing off

its toes, the walls are set up to work perfectly. It has been nature's plan all along and it works.

Please read my new article, "Breakover" for more.

Sole ridge parallel to collateral grooves and bars

I used to trim the ridge of sole that extends from the ends of the bars, along the frog. I have found this to often be unnecessary. Usually this sole ridge is prominent when optimum sole thickness and concavity have not yet been achieved. Perhaps this is to give extra support to a weakened situation. It normally goes away on its own when the hoof gets truly healthy. I succeeded for years, while faithfully trimming it away, but now I usually leave it alone. In fact, after the setup trim, I rarely even exfoliate or otherwise touch the sole again, unless the horse is so inactive that it can't wear away any sole at all. In this case you may need to use the collateral grooves as a reference to identify and remove the false sole as described in my book.

I have also learned more about bar trimming. For years I consistently tapered the bars and never left them level with the heel walls. This habit often caused me to trim a tiny amount of live sole at the corn area. After observing the work of K.C. LaPierre and Gene Ovnicek I stopped doing that as an experiment. I tried leaving the back of the bar level with the heel buttresses when the sole "asked" for it. The result was that very quickly almost all of the bars in my care tapered themselves in one or two trim cycles and now need absolutely no trimming to stay at an optimum height. In other words, I phased out the very last reason I had to trim into live sole.

I should not have been surprised. I already learned this lesson. Years ago, when I stopped trying to lower heels into live sole, the heels in my care lowered themselves farther than I ever would have dared to cut them. Cutting the live sole registers to the horse as a wound and it will quickly regrow in spite of the other adaptive needs of the horse. Never close your mind to other people's methods. Everyone who trims horses every day knows something you don't know!!!

Frogs and Heels

For years I paid far too little attention to the back of the foot. I did use frog health to judge overall hoof health, and kept frog contact with the ground, but only recently did I really "get it". Dr. Bowker's research really opened my eyes to what I now consider to be the most critical part of hoof care. Watch a horse that is tender on rocks. Almost always, it is the back of the foot they favor. Restoring health and function to the back of the foot is the absolute crux of hoof care, to me. Do that and everything else will fall into place. First, don't trim the frog at all, except to remove diseased tissue. Let the frog pack into dense callous as you would the sole. It seems that these days I don't even use my hoof knife at all on 9 out of 10 maintenance trims. At the rate I'm going, I predict I will eventually learn to leave my knife in the truck!!!

Seriously, I do find that I rarely find a need to touch the frog during dry weather but during wet times, I do sometimes have to taper the edges to remove and prevent infection and open the central clefts as well for the same reasons. I always try to remove as little as possible and really work to preserve the height. Exception is the rule, so this stuff is hard to teach! The bottom line is that it is a mistake to routinely trim every frog out of habit.

I still firmly believe the height of the live sole shows us the optimum heel height the body mechanically needs at a given time. However, if the frog/digital cushion is sensitive, the horse will land on his toes, **throwing off the mechanics you may think you are setting up**. This also, of course perpetuates the weakness in the back of the foot. A continued toe first landing causes thrush and heel contraction, joint and locomotion problems, and improper loading of the laminae, which can seriously contribute to separation and thus to white line disease and founder. Toe first landings also ultimately cause navicular bone changes (Dr. J.R. Rooney and Dr. Bowker) as well, so getting a horse to lengthen stride and move naturally is pretty darn important, I think.

To do this, we need to concentrate on increasing frog pressure at a rate that will allow the horse to use the back of the foot. According to Bowker, we should try to get at least 2/3 of the hoof's bearing surface behind the apex of the frog and 1/3 in front of the apex. (I find that truly healthy hooves end up with even less in front of the apex, but find this to be a good place to start.)

If the back of the foot is sensitive and the height of the frog is greater than the height of the sole, it is usually best to lower the heels only to the height of the frog. If this helps the horse to land heel first, the frog will soon recede as the digital cushion becomes healthier and the frog packs into callous. You follow the frog down with the heel height over time until you get to a point that the heels are 1/16 inch longer than the live sole. From then on you will use the sole plane to dictate heel height and the back of the foot will be much stronger; the horse more sound. Read "Digging For The Truth About Navicular Syndrome" for more help.

Setting up the heels at the future plane

This one is difficult to understand, but extremely helpful for correcting under run heels, and other problems in the back of the foot. Don't try it unless you are already succeeding with the methods in my book. Read it very carefully over and over until every word is crystal clear.

On page 63 of my book, the drawings and text depict one of the most common hoof forms we have to fight in the real world. The hoof wall is flared away from P3 and the P3 tip is too close to the ground. This situation is usually caused by someone continually rasping the sole from under P3 at the toe, while letting the heels grow without regard to bone position. (Trying to make the hoof wall rather than P3 line up with the pastern) The new hoof capsule we need to grow surrounds P3 in a normal way and is shown by

the dashed line in the drawing at the bottom of the page. Look carefully at this drawing. The dashed line at the future ground plane that crosses through the heel is often where we need to trim to fix a troubled hoof. This leaves a rockered shape to the toe for a while, until the well connected hoof wall and missing sole under P3 grows in correctly. The alternative to doing this is to wait for the missing material at the toe to fill in and thus gradually correct the heels as the ground plane becomes more normal. The problem with waiting for this is that sometimes when the heels are too high the frog is out of function and sensitive. It will stay that way until we can put it to work.

This sensitivity forces a toe first landing which can continually flare the toe and wear the sole, perpetuating P3's "too-close" relationship to the ground. If a trimmer lowers the heels to a natural height in this hoof without using this "bevel", the sole at the quarters would be quicked. By beveling the heels back closer to the future correct ground plane while respecting the sole at the same time, you can start to bring the frog into function and encourage natural movement which will help forge a natural hoof.

Beware: This is a powerful tool in the right hands, but is also dangerous turf and should be done very gradually.

How do you apply it in the field? First apply the normal trim used in my book (respecting live sole as the guide) and then evaluate the situation. The collateral grooves along the frog are a very consistent gauge of P3 position. If the groove at the **apex** of the frog is very shallow in reference to the adjacent sole and hoof wall, but the collateral groove at the back of the foot is deeper than what is natural, we can safely assume we have the bone position in the capsule we are discussing here. (If in the slightest doubt, use a radiograph) If you allow the rasp to float $\frac{3}{4}$ inch above the bottom of the collateral groove at the apex of the frog while starting to rasp the heels, you set up the future correct ground plane at the back of the foot that will be present after the missing sole under P3 fills in. Rasp the heel until you get $\frac{1}{16}$ inch above the sole or to the height of the frog, whichever comes first. (While continually floating the rasp $\frac{3}{4}$ inch above the frog apex groove) Never remove more than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch per trim using this method, as you definitely could overstress joints and tendons by doing more.

When natural sole thickness under P3 is finally achieved, this method will eliminate itself. When the rasp is touching the heel and floating above the apex, it will also be touching the toe!

Don't taper the bars and sole away from the heel height, but leave a flat area of "heel purchase" that includes part of the bar (KC La Pierre). The worries about tapering the inside of the back of the foot to allow heel expansion have been way overdone. Jaime Jackson coined the term "heel buttress" after studying wild horse hooves in the 80's. That's exactly what you want back there: Strength and power! If you have a strong frog and leave low, but powerful heel buttresses, the horse will land on the back of the foot and you'll get all the expansion you need. Solar concavity

isn't that important except as a gauge of current sole thickness.

NOTE: When you look at a hoof and see a "bent" bar, try looking at it from a different perspective. Trim the bar to the height of the live sole. Generally speaking, you will find that the half of the bar closest to the frog is straight and descending into the solar concavity as it should, while the half of the bar closest to the heels goes flat with the sole. Why is that area flat? It is not thick enough. As you let the sole get thicker, the flat area disappears, and the sole adjacent to the bar concaves itself. As you continue to trim the bar with the sole, the bar thus becomes straight.

As with everywhere else on the foot, this added sole thickness does not cause the hoof capsule to become longer. The sole will pack into dense callous and drive the inner structures upward, actually making the capsule shorter; the heels lower. The flipside of that, is that if you continually cut into the sole to straighten the bars, you will never see the true potential of the hooves. Don't take my word for it. If you are a confirmed "bar trimmer", I challenge you to try this on four horses in your care for four months. You'll see, like I did.

Balance is tricky, using this method. Generally, assuming no one has been recently trimming the sole, the quarters (live sole) will be the correct height (thickness) in relation to P3. You are working the heel height to a more natural level (and plane, relative to P3 and the lateral cartilages), but the missing sole under P3 becomes more obvious. You have to train your eye to pretend this missing sole is there to balance the hoof. For this reason I only recommend this method for very experienced professionals, but it is a life saver in many situations.

This will bother many people, who will think I am leaving the quarters higher than the heel to toe plane. Understand that we are making the quarters and heels correct (relative to the inner structures), and waiting for the missing material at the toe to fill in to give us our naturally hollowed quarters and proper P3 position within the capsule. The only alternatives to this are either leaving the heel too high, or cutting the quarters too deep. Neither are options for me. I have been using this method on severely rotated hoof capsules for six years, and routinely brought it into less severe cases for two years and have seen nothing but excellent results with it, but again, be careful and do it gradually.

P3 Rotation?

We need to all get behind the push by Dr. Barbara Page, Dr. Bowker, and farriers Gene Ovnicsek, Lisa Lancaster, and others to standardize radiographs. The method was first presented by Dr. Robert Linford in 1987. A wire is taped firmly to the dorsal wall that stops precisely at the coronet. A thumbtack is placed in the point of the frog (we use barium paste now). A measured wire is attached to the block to give scale so precise measurements can be taken. The foot not being radiographed is picked up by an

assistant, to load the other. This gives much greater ability to view vertical displacement of P3 in the capsule and the ability for vet and farrier to communicate in precise measurements from points readily located in the field (even over the phone). Read "The Sound Hoof" by doctor, farrier, and Michigan State vet student Lisa Simmonds Lancaster.

The world has come a long way in recent years, but I still feel that a misunderstanding of P3 rotation is causing a lot of unnecessary harm to horses. Phalangeal rotation basically means that the pastern bones don't line up with the coffin bone. This is readily seen with the naked eye if you use the methods in my book of estimating bone position. It is usually caused by someone trying to trim a foot so that the dorsal wall rather than P3 lines up with the pastern. Occasionally it is caused by a horse avoiding pain or by suspensory, tendon or muscular problems. In my very humble lay opinion, it is **NOT** a product of founder, except that a foundering horse with inflammation of the sole's corium and laminae will be leaning back to lighten the load on the toe and the toe wall. [More recently we have also noticed that horses with flexor contracture tend to relax and put their heels down when the foot is blocked. This suggests an involuntary tightening of the flexors as a result of foot pain.] On top of that, it is a static position that a horse is never in during any phase of any stride, and not relevant to movement. Those joints are in motion all the time, except when the horse is standing on an x-ray block. Usually when a horse grows a normal hoof and is free of pain, the problem goes away.

Capsule rotation is when the hoof wall moves away from a natural position around P3. It is almost always easily fixed using the simple methods in my book if the whole horse can be made healthy. We are closer every day to a point where no one is putting horses down for this.

The real problem we face in the field with founder rehabilitation is vertical displacement of P3. In most radiographs this can't even be measured and most veterinarians don't understand the normal relationship that P3 should have to the coronet. I hope veterinarians will study the works of the doctors and farriers mentioned above and follow their lead.

Boa hoof boots [The Easyboot Glove is my most recent tool of choice]

Thank you Garrett Ford! Finally we have a boot that is so durable and user friendly, it has created a brand new category of "natural hoof care" customer: People who don't care about the health benefits of barefoot turnout, but just want to ride in the Boa boots for the superior convenience, traction and protection. They just like the Boas better than metal shoes!

I have used them extensively, not only for mountain trail riding, but for limited turnout of lame horses as well. When I turn out a lame horse in boots, I place a piece of neoprene saddle pad as an insole in the boot and sometimes make "vet wrap" socks.

Applying Gold Bond foot powder (available at drug stores) keeps the environment in the boot cleaner.

I instruct the owner to pull the boots off daily, clean the hooves and the boots and check for rubbing. I have seen very little rubbing while doing this. A piece of duct tape placed on the rubbed area helps the problem when it does come up.

I have also found the padded boots to be very effective for riding horses with weak digital cushions and frogs. These horses are often mildly lame on all terrain in shoes, barefoot or in boots. The padded boots often give relief to such horses when nothing else will. My theoretical explanation of this is that the pain is being caused by vibration at the weak digital cushions and that the neoprene material in the boot creates an artificial vibration dampening system to replace the weak structures. The result of extensive riding in the padded boots, plus barefoot turnout, is a quickly strengthened frog/digital cushion and excellent healing of the problem when nothing else seems to work.

Boa tips:

The tightening mechanism is strong and durable. It is so strong you could easily use it to pinch the hoof right off your horse. It should be just snugged down so that hoof can't come out of the boot, but not tightened around the coronet. A rub at the coronet at the center of the toe is a sure sign the mechanism was too tight. The boot should fit so that the boot doesn't twist on the hoof while the mechanism is open. If the boot is a half size too big, add a leather insole the proper thickness to stop this twisting.

Before use, "break in" the boot by twisting, folding, and manipulating every part of it in your hands. Sit down and do this while watching a TV show. In thirty minutes you can change the boot from a rigid "ski boot" feel, to a very soft, pliable feel. This is very important, because in motion, the fetlock drops and has to flex the boot.

Go for a few short rides in the boots before you take off on an all day trip. Just like a new pair of shoes you buy for yourself, the boots must conform to the individual hoof, and little calloused areas must form at pressure points. You wouldn't pull a pair of hiking boots out of the box and put them on for the first time right before a backpack trip. Don't do this to your horse, either.

Garrett is busy designing even better boots. The other boot manufacturers have undoubtedly seen sales drop, so I'm sure they are redesigning as well. The fierce competition of boot manufacturers I hoped for in my book is upon us. I predict we will see better and better super-boots hit the market over the next few years.

I am not being paid to promote Boa boots. As soon as someone shows me a boot that works better in the field, I'll let you know.

Added September '05

Easyboot Epics

Well, Garrett has outdone his own Boa boot with the new Epics. When he first told me he had designed a boot that outperforms the Boas, I was very excited until I saw them. I was disappointed to see that this “new” superbboot was just an old Easyboot with a gaiter attached. “That’s not new”, I said! I was so wrong.

The gaiter stabilizes the boot so well, we don’t need the rear straps, the teeth or the tight fit that was necessary with the Easyboots.

I almost always use a razor knife to remove the rear straps and the tooth covers, then use pliers to squash the teeth flat. This usually makes a smaller boot size fit the hoof. I have also found that the tongue of the boot usually hits the coronet, so I trim about 5/8 inch off the tongue of the boot with a razor knife as well.

The result is an incredibly stable, light, compact boot that is very user friendly. The big advantage is that all of the rigid parts fall below the coronet. They are less likely to “rub” than anything I have used.

Garrett plans to have a new model out very soon that is even lower profiled and has these changes already made, plus a sole that is shaped more like a bare foot. This will increase traction in wet conditions.

Hoof Armor

I’ve been experimenting with the hoof epoxy; “Hoof Armor”. It is applied to the soles of horses in transition from shoes. It can be a great tool for horses that have been having their soles thinned by the previous farrier or trimmer, to get the horse comfortably through the first few months of barefootedness. Once the horse builds in the natural callous and sole thickness, it is no longer necessary.

It also has a powerful psychological effect for customers who fear their soles will wear away. As long as they can see that the epoxy is still there, they know their sole hasn’t worn at all.

Success with the product depends on how well you prep the hoof prior to application. If you follow the directions, it stays on. If you don’t follow the directions it falls off.

What’s in a name?

I still don’t know what we should call ourselves. Barefoot trimmers, hoof care specialists, natural hoof care practitioners.....Have the names been tainted too much by the invasive trimming techniques practiced by some practitioners and by visions of misguided people trying to ride lame horses? Maybe, maybe not. “Hoof Podiatrist” is cool, but KC owns that one, I guess. Personally I find that most of the names we’ve tried just take too long to say and lead to unnecessary conversation. I have a truck full of ways to protect the

hoof during rehabilitation: A full stock of two types of boots and the tools and equipment to customize them, four types of founder pads, two types of epoxy, cast material and I am more opposed to riding horses without protection (if they need protection at a given time and terrain) than the average farrier, so I don’t think I’m exactly a “barefoot” advocate. I just don’t protect the hoof using methods that contribute to pathology and perpetuate the need for protection.

I respect and get along very well with most farriers and veterinarians and disagree with many barefoot trimmers. I can still heat up an old pair of nippers and rework them to be better than new. The ring of the anvil still has an appeal, for sure. I still know how to shoe a horse, but just found other ways that I feel work much better. Hundreds of horse owners rely on me to take care of their horses’ hooves. I smell just like a farrier and have the same eternal backache, so until someone comes up with something better, I just went back to calling myself a farrier.

I think the long-respected farrier trade just needs to modernize with the times; not be eliminated. We kept the same title of “Captain” from sailing ships to motorized ships to nuclear submarines and on to spacecraft. There was no need to invent a new word for the master of each technological advancement.

These days with such a rapidly increasing body of hoof knowledge, and new hoof protection methods that don’t violate the modern understanding of hoof function; I just hope farriers everywhere will adjust with the times; adding the new information to their bag of tricks, rather than facing extinction.

Please read the rest of the articles on this site for the complete update. I will add more as I continue to learn, myself and someday I’ll find the time to write another book. Thanks for your time, Pete



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