

MYTHS AND LIES ABOUT HORSES' FEET

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Myth: we have bred the feet off our modern horses

Truth: we have managed the feet off our modern horses

Myth: horses have more problems with their front feet because the front feet carry more weight

Truth: when the horse is moving, the back feet carry more weight. Young domestic horses are able to develop their back feet more, so the back feet are healthier.

Myth: healthy horses' feet come in a wide variety of shapes

Truth: there is a specific shape that is healthy for horses' feet to be. The more their feet deviate from that shape, the less healthy the foot, even though the horse may not be clinically lame at that time.

Myth: bigger feet are healthier

Truth: many sick feet are bigger than they should be

Myth: feet should be trimmed to match the pastern/ shoulder angle

Truth: feet should be trimmed to where the feet want to be trimmed

Truth: if feet are correctly trimmed the shoulder & pastern angles will be fine

Truth: the way the feet are trimmed changes the pastern/ shoulder angle

Myth: horses with upright pasterns are prone to foot problems

Truth: foot problems create upright pasterns

Myth: front toe angle should approximate 45 degrees

Truth: healthy feet have toe angles from 48-58 deg depending on the shapes of the bones in the foot & lower leg

Myth: navicular syndrome is an incurable genetic degenerative disorder

Truth: navicular syndrome is a management problem that is usually easily cured if the owner has the resources & willingness to change management

Truth: navicular syndrome is totally preventable if young horses are managed appropriately

Myth: weak slow-growing feet are nutritional or genetic

Truth: allowing feet to be too long or the wrong shape continuously causes them to grow slower & weaker in compensation

Truth: feet trimmed correctly at appropriate intervals immediately start to grow faster & stronger

Myth: feet that crack & chip when bare need shoes

Truth: cracking & chipping is the means that feet were given to trim themselves when overgrown or incorrectly shaped; shoeing prevents them from helping themselves

Truth: correctly trimmed bare feet do not crack or chip

Myth: narrow, weak heels are "contracted"

Truth: weak heels did not develop properly due to insufficient movement on firm ground as the horse grew

Truth: metal shoes stop heel development in young horses

Myth: high heels help to prevent/ treat navicular syndrome

Truth: high heels increase the likelihood of navicular syndrome.

While they may temporarily relieve pain, they accelerate the destructive process inside the foot.

Truth: horses with truly healthy feet walk on their heel bulbs just like other hooved mammals

Myth: aluminum shoes are healthier than steel shoes because they are lighter

Truth: aluminum vibrates at higher frequencies than steel on hard surfaces, so causes more chronic bone density loss & tissue damage than steel

Myth: it has no effect on the rest of the horse to change the normal shape of horses' feet to affect their way of going

Truth: abnormally shaped feet radically alter the distribution of weight, force & concussion up the horse's legs & throughout its body, causing or exacerbating many soundness problems

Myth: the outer hoof wall is the structure intended to bear most of the horse's weight

Truth: the horse's weight is intended to be distributed almost entirely over the sole, frog, bars & inner hoof wall; the outer wall is the only structure not intended to bear weight

Myth: the horse's feet act like auxiliary hearts, pumping tremendous amounts of blood with every step

Truth: only in unshod healthy correctly shaped feet

Myth: wounds below the hocks & knees heal slowly because of poor circulation that far below the heart

Truth: only in horses with shod or incorrectly shaped bare feet

Myth: feral horses have great feet because of their genetics

Truth: feral horses managed like domestic horses from early ages have

feet like domestic horses

Truth: domestic horses managed like feral horses from early ages have feet like feral horses

Myth: the frog pumps blood through the foot

Truth: blood is pumped by the expansion & contraction of the entire foot

Myth: founder/ laminitis is a sudden-onset, unpredictable condition

Truth: signs of founder are visible in many feet before the horse becomes noticeably lame

Truth: cresty-necked horses are giving warning of likelihood of diet-caused founder

www.hoofrehab.com

www.ironfreehoof.com

www.safergrass.org

www.thehorseshoof.com