

Hoof Care and Farriery



“Horses, ponies and donkeys are all extremely mobile animals and anything which impairs their ease of movement affects both their physical and psychological well being.”



The Charity's purpose is to provide and promote the welfare, care and protection of horses, ponies, donkeys and mules.

Redwings Welfare

Hoof Care and Farriery

Hooves may look like fairly simple structures, but even the slightest hoof weakness or deformity can have a detrimental effect on the function of the whole body. Hooves act rather like a pair of shoes, protecting the sensitive structure of the foot from hard ground, sharp objects, dirt and bacteria. Horses, ponies and donkeys are all extremely mobile animals and anything which impairs their ease of movement affects both their physical and psychological well being.

Although some hoof is worn away as the horse walks around, in Britain the soft ground won't usually wear away the bottom of the hoof as quickly as new growth is produced at the top. This means that the hoof will need trimming to stop them becoming too long.

On the other hand, if a horse is in work and spends time being ridden or driven on roads or hard surfaces, too much hoof will be worn away and shoes have to be fitted by a farrier to protect the hoof.

Hoof care is therefore a balance between both preserving and trimming the hoof to keep it in the most comfortable and efficient shape. There is no simple way to maintain such a balance. Not only will every equine have different hoof care requirements, but even one animal can have four feet with varying needs. Factors

which affect the individual strengths and weaknesses of a hoof include conformation, diet, living environment, veterinary conditions and the amount and type of work an animal undertakes. Finding



Top. A very upright hoof, known as a 'club foot', is a common deformity which will require special consideration.

Bottom. Some veterinary conditions improve with therapeutic shoeing. Horses suffering from navicular disease can benefit from an eggbar shoe being fitted to the affected hoof.

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a qualified and experienced farrier who can devise and undertake a hoof care program to suit your horse's individual needs is a basic essential for every horse owner and should never be overlooked.

As well as regular attention from a good farrier, an equine's feet must also be maintained with a vigilant hoof care routine.

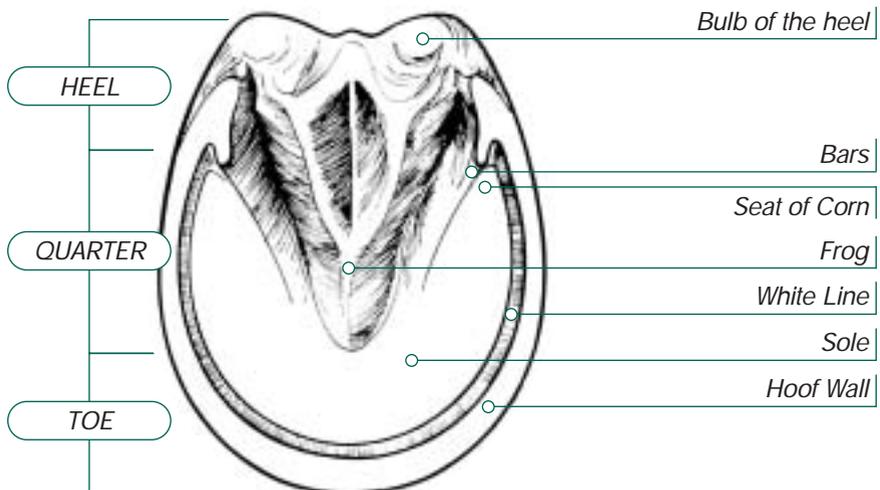
A hoof pick should be used everyday to remove dirt, stones and other debris from the underside of the foot and the general health of the hoof should be checked. The cavities of the foot are an ideal environment for bacteria and possible infection if not kept clean and aerated. Watch out for any signs of discomfort, discolouration, swelling, heat, moisture and odour.

- An unpleasant smell emanating from the underside of the foot usually indicates the presence of **thrush**, which

develops in damp conditions and attracts bacteria that can subsequently cause infection.

- Infection can also enter the foot through the white line if dirt is pushed up into this delicate interface. This particular condition is known as **white line disease** or **seedy toe**.
- Objects lodged against the tissues of the foot can cause **bruising**, **corns**, **puncture wounds** and **abscesses**, all of which cause pain and lameness.

When disease does affect the hoof, the consequences can be serious, not least because a horse will still want to spend the majority of its' time standing and moving about. This makes the recovery process much slower than that of a human who can sit and literally 'take the weight off their feet'.



Laminitis needs a particular mention as this common ailment can cause long-term damage to both the hoof and the internal structure of the foot. The main symptom of the disease is extreme pain within the foot, being caused by swelling in the laminae which hold the hoof and the bones of the



foot together. Much of the damage is irreversible. A hoof that has been affected by severe laminitis will always tend to grow with long heels which can push the toe forward into the slipper shape generally associated with neglected feet. An experienced farrier will be able to manage laminitic hooves with specialist trimming techniques and therapeutic shoes if necessary. If you suspect even the slightest case of laminitis it is important to call a vet immediately to begin treatment which can help prevent permanent distortion of the hoof and the associated discomfort.

Below Left.

Neglect of hooves that have been affected by laminitis can result in deformity, discomfort and immobility.

Below Right.

The same hooves are transformed following treatment from an experienced farrier. The tendons in the legs can now also return to a normal, comfortable position.



There are many other veterinary conditions which can affect the workings of the hoof and may require special attention from a farrier as well as a vet. These include **navicular disease, tendonitis, ringbone** and **coronet band injury**.

Redwings Welfare Contacts

The following are useful sources of further information:

The Farriers Registration Council

Sefton House,
Newark Road
Peterborough
PE1 5PP
01733 319911
www.farrier-reg.gov.uk

The Laminitis Trust

Mead House Farm
Dauntsey
Chippenham
Wiltshire SN15 4JA
0870 4440676
www.laminitis.org

British Equine Veterinary Association

Wakefield House
46 High Street
Sawston
Cambridge CB2 4BG
01223 836970
www.beva.org.uk

Redwings Horse Sanctuary

Hapton
Norwich
NR15 1SP
Horse Care and Welfare 01508 481008
General Enquiries 01508 481000
www.redwings.co.uk

Redwings Welfare Information

Redwings Welfare Team is proactive in the promotion of equine care and welfare, believing that access to accurate and up-to-date information is vital if owners and carers are to meet the needs of their animal.

Redwings' welfare leaflets are designed to provide an overview of many important issues which are encountered regularly in welfare cases with which the Sanctuary is involved. The series includes information on the following topics:

- **Laminitis**
- **Hoof Care and Farriery**
- **Worms and De-worming**
- **Food, Digestion and Energy**
- **Veteran Horses and Retirement**
- **Horse Psychology**
- **Donkeys**
- **Equine Welfare and the Law**

To request copies of leaflets or to speak to one of the team about any equine welfare issues, please feel free to contact the department by post, phone or email.

The Welfare Team

Redwings Horse Sanctuary

Hapton

Norwich

NR15 1SP

Tel: 01508 481008 (8.30am - 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Email: info@redwings.co.uk



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