



## **Natural Hoofcare FAQ**

**I've been told that my horse's feet are not a good enough quality for him to go barefoot. Could that be true?** A horse with poor quality feet will benefit most from a natural hoofcare approach. His issues are probably stemming from environmental or dietary causes which a natural approach will more thoroughly address.

**What will transitioning to barefoot be like?** Most horses have decent hooves and go off quite well after having shoes pulled. Those with soft infected feet or imbalance issues may be tender on hard surfaces and require boots for riding for a period of time. Proper management and plenty of movement will put every horse on the path to success.

**I ride hard almost every day and have a full competition schedule. I've heard that show horses need shoes because they wear their feet down too quickly if their feet are bare and get sore. Is this true?** No! If a horse is wearing his feet to nubs, then they are being trimmed much too short in the first place! Natural hoofcare helps a horse prevent sore toes and excess wear by creating a thick, resilient bevel around the hoof that wears off smoothly and evenly. Most show horses are working in soft footing that does not wear their hooves any more than pasture, and endurance horses and those working on hard surfaces that wear their feet more are simply trimmed less aggressively and less often because they wear more.

**Won't my horse have sore feet from having to bear so much weight without support when I ride him barefoot?** No. Pregnant horses carry plenty of weight around on bare feet and stay sound. The important thing to remember is that the horse's digital cushion, frog, and heel area of the hoof are designed to bear the most weight. The back part of the hoof is supposed to land first, taking the brunt of the force. The incorrect assumption in shoeing is that the hoof wall is the main weight bearing structure of the hoof. This erroneous assumption has been disproven with various experiments and observations.

**Will I have to ride my horse less when he goes barefoot?** Definitely not! Even if he is a bit tender right out of shoes, **movement is medicine!** The absolute BEST thing for a barefoot horse – or any horse! – when it comes to their hooves is lots and lots of movement on different surfaces. **The key to soundness is the development of the digital cushion, which is only made stronger by lots of varied movement.** Long pasture hours and plenty of riding are a huge part of good hoof management.

**I have heard that Thoroughbreds and jumpers just can't go barefoot. Is that true?** No. Although Thoroughbreds often require special techniques in trimming, they are usually the most helped by natural hoofcare because they tend to have certain issues that shoes can exacerbate, such as shelly hooves and quarter flares. Jumpers do great barefoot, and often a great gain in traction is seen. Jumpers will not bruise or go lame just because they are barefoot. Bruising or lameness is an indication of a bigger problem.

**What if my horse has navicular?** Horses with chronic heel pain can suffer from a wide range of issues. Padding the problem to cover it up will not help the horse or heal him, even if he may appear better. Navicular can have neurological, conformational, and management related causes, and each case should be carefully examined and treated. In general, severe navicular horses do equally well barefoot or shod, and mild to moderate horses do best barefoot. I have had many “navicular” cases who were merely suffering from too-small shoes and who became sound after just one or two trims and full-time turnout.

**I tried barefoot before and my horse was really sore every time he got trimmed. Am I right in assuming that my horse just can't take being barefoot?** No. The horse was most likely trimmed too short or too frequently. My current mare's trainer warned me against taking her barefoot because they tried it and “she wore her feet to nubs.” She had a short two month transition period and has had gorgeous feet that stay sound and problem free on any surface at any level of work ever since. It's all in tailoring the trim to the individual horse. Sometimes it takes time and adjustment to find a trim and management program that keeps the horse in the perfect condition. Every horse is different and some are more complicated than others.