

Summary of Hoof Care Hints

- Begin when foal is only a few months old.
- Keep feet well rounded.
- Exercise foals on dry ground to allow natural wear.
- If kept in stall, rasp down every 2 to 3 weeks.
- Clean soles and clefts of frog frequently.
- Do not pare out sole, just clean.
- Do not trim away healthy frog unless there is clearly an excess.
- Keep foot straight with angle of short pastern.
- Hoof-to-ground angles should be approximately 45°.
- Rasp sharp edge of hoof wall to make bearing surface approximately true thickness of wall.
- Do not rasp outside wall.
- Rasp in such a manner that the heel is included in each stroke.

More Information

This is the second in a series of pamphlets on hoof care for the Newfoundland Pony. Further information can be found in the others (Structure of the Hoof; Hoof Trimming; Common Causes of Lameness, and Shoeing Your Pony), through the many magazines and books available on horses, and through your Regional Veterinarian.

Links

Newfoundland Pony Society

www.newfoundlandpony.com

For more information, please contact the Newfoundland Pony Society, your Regional Veterinarian or the Animal Health Division.

Other information pamphlets are available online from the Department of Natural Resources at:

www.nr.gov.nl.ca/agric/

Publication: HA 05-004
Last Revised: March 2010



Newfoundland
Labrador

Hoof Care of the Newfoundland Pony: Routine Hoof Care



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Introduction

The Newfoundland Pony is well known for its hardiness and flint-hard hooves. While these characteristics are desirable, they do not suggest that the pony's health needs are any less than those of other horses and ponies. It is for this reason that a series of pamphlets has been written on the care of the Newfoundland Pony's hooves. This is the second in that series.

Routine Foot Care

Disease organisms concentrate where animals are confined, so cleanliness is important. Ponies kept in a stall or small pen should have their feet picked or cleaned daily to reduce the risk of thrush. Thrush is the condition resulting from bacterial penetration into the frog and surrounding area. The bacteria produce a foul odour and cause the frog to become soft and mushy. If allowed to go untreated, serious lameness can result and extensive treatment will be necessary. Routine daily foot care means regular use of the hoof pick to clean the pony's feet. A fine bristled wire brush is also useful for cleaning the sole, frog and hoof wall. Take care not to damage the periople with too much pressure from the wire brush, the result would disturb the moisture balance of the foot.

Handling the Feet

Learning and practising safe handling of the pony's feet are important steps in routine foot care. Ponies should be taught early in life to yield their feet.

Most ponies are worked more from the left side than the right, so begin working with the left front foot. Rub down the leg toward the foot with your right hand, while your left hand is on the shoulder. Push off with your left hand if you need to move away.

Squeeze the tendon to get the pony to yield the foot if it will not do otherwise. Move the hand in front of the canon or fetlock as the foot raises. Position the foot firmly between your knees. If the pony struggles and wishes to regain its foot, let it do so. You cannot hold a front foot if the pony rears. Repeat the procedure until the pony learns to yield its feet willingly.

To lift a hind foot, keep one hand near the hip and go down the leg slowly with the other. Work in close to the pony. Pull forward on the cannon until the pony yields its foot. If you feel tense muscles, go more slowly. Step promptly under the raised foot with the inside leg and pull the foot into your lap. Lock it in place with your elbow over the hock and your toes pointed towards each other. Hold the foot in this position so both hands are free to work.

Foot Cleaning

When picking the foot, use a hoof pick and clean from the heel toward the toe, being especially careful to clean the commissures on each side of the frog and the cleft of the frog itself. Do not attempt to open the heel excessively as this weakens the area and interferes with proper contraction and expansion of the heel.

After work, clean the sole and check for gravel or other foreign objects that could be lodged in the natural depressions of the foot. A nail, gravel, stick or other object can work into the foot and cause lameness of long duration. Objects have been known to exist in a pony's foot for as long as a year before emerging at the heel or along the coronet. When a foreign particle emerges at the coronary area, a sore, called a quittor, usually develops. This problem can easily lead to serious infection.

Maintain Moisture in Feet

Moisture in the feet helps to maintain flexibility and prevent cracking. Most of the moisture needed in a healthy and well-protected foot comes from within.

Extremely wet conditions, such as muddy lots or wet stalls, promote rapid drying of the feet. The natural oils and protective films of the foot are eroded from constant contact with external moisture.

One way to maintain proper moisture is to regularly apply a good hoof dressing containing some animal fat such as lanolin. If the dressing is not a petroleum derivative, it can be massaged into the coronet, the frog and the sole, as well as on the hoof wall. The dressing helps to keep the sole pliable and eliminate dead tissue around the frog and heel. Also, massaging the coronet stimulates growth of a healthy new hoof wall.

Removing Loose and Old Shoes

Clinches of old nails must be cut or straightened to remove the shoe. If the shoe is pulled without this operation, it will not only be more difficult to remove, but the walls of the hoof may be injured. Clinches may be cut with a clinch cutter or rasped off. Use an old rasp no longer used to level the foot. Place the blade edge of the clinch cutter under the clinch and straighten it by light hammer blows. If you have difficulty getting it started, lean the top out and use the back corner nearest your hand.

If the fine side of a rasp is used to rasp the clinches off, use care so as not to damage the hoof wall because it has a protective coating to conserve moisture in the hoof. Handle the rasp to avoid damaging the coronary band at the top of the hoof. If the hoof wall is rasped very far above the clinches, a change in technique is indicated.

Place the shoe pullers under the shoe at the heel and push down toward the toe to remove the shoe. This manipulation is repeated on the opposite heel, always working toward the toe, until the shoe is completely free. Do not pry sideways because of the danger of sprains to your pony's tendons.

If the above method is difficult, complete the first step, then drive the shoe back down on the hoof, exposing the nail heads. Nails then can be pulled one at a time.