

More Information

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

Image Credit:

Figure 1: Lameness in Horses, O. R. Adams, Lea & Febiger Publishers

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/

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Hoof Care of the Newfoundland Pony: Hoof Trimming



Introduction

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

Trimming Maintains Foot Balance

Trimming of feet is important, though not needed as often as cleaning. Trimming should be done at approximately 4 to 6 week intervals, although re-sets may be required more often. The main goal in trimming is to retain the proper shape and length of the foot. Most people should feel comfortable in cleaning feet, pulling shoes and trimming feet while they wait for the farrier.

The hoof wall should be trimmed with nippers to remove excess length, and then a rasp should be used to smooth and level the bottom of the foot. Be sure to rasp from the heel through the toe with each stroke to prevent uneven areas in the hoof wall.

The white line is external evidence of the lamination (sensitive laminae) between the hoof wall and the coffin bone. The sole of the foot is usually of uniform thickness in a normal pony. Because of that, the sole should not be trimmed to an unnatural shape as that would cause the sole to be dangerously thin and tender.

Trimming the sole, referred to as lowering the sole, is done to keep the pressure on the hoof wall rather than on the sensitive inner parts of the foot. The dead, flaky tissue should be trimmed from the sole. Live tissue, elastic when stretched between the fingers, should not be trimmed away.

Do not trim the frog excessively, it should contact the ground with each step. Trim the frog only enough to remove dead tissue and to provide a uniform, adequate fissure along the junction of the sole and the frog.

After the bearing surface has been rasped to a level surface of proper length, the edges of the wall should be rounded if the pony will not be shod. This prevents chipping and peeling as the foot contacts rocks, logs or other obstructions.

Maintain Hoof Wall Angle

Maintain the proper angle of the hoof wall in relation to the ground and the angle of the pastern (see figure 1). Shoes that are left on too long change the angle of the foot relative to the pastern and can cause lameness. When possible, the angle of the hoof wall should approximate the angle formed by the shoulder and the pastern - usually 45° to 54°.

Since the hoof wall is narrower at the heel than at the toe, heels wear first, whether the pony is barefoot or on shoes. Low heels put more stress on the tendons of the leg. If a pony is shod at a 50° angle, this angle may change. A 50° angle might be down to 46° or 47° in 4 to 6 weeks. This greatly affects the action of the pony and puts more strain on tendons and ligaments.

As the hoof grows, the walls at the heels may overlap the shoe. When a shoe presses on the bars, there is serious danger of producing corns in the foot. Working a pony with shoes that have been left on too long also can cause bowed tendons. Regular trimming and shoe re-setting are essential in avoiding these problems.

Trim the heels low enough to promote expansion and prevent contraction of the heels. The main concern is to trim often enough to prevent cracking and uneven wear, which could eventually contribute to the improper set of the feet and legs. With a little practice, most pony owners should be able to routinely trim ponies feet that do not need corrective work. It is wise, however, not to take a chance on compounding a problem on ponies that need corrective trimming. To prevent harmful mistakes, seek the help of a professional farrier when trying to correct an improper turn or set of the feet and legs.

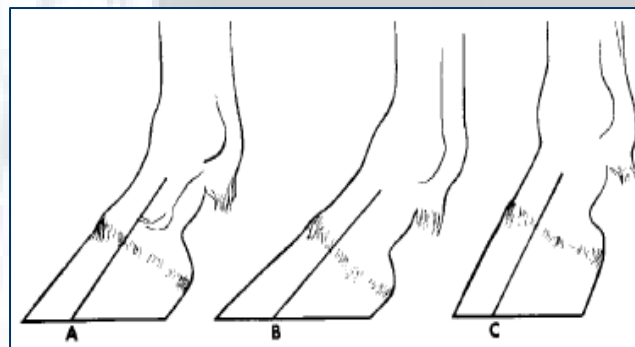


Figure 1: A – Normal angle between hoof and pastern.

Corrective Trimming

The most common deviations from a normal set of feet and legs are **toe in** (pigeon toed) and **toe out** of either front or rear feet. Other problems commonly helped by trimming are cocked ankles, buck knees, calf knees, sickle hocks and slight rotations of the cannon bone. Also, some common faults in movement of feet in stride - forging, scalping, interfering and brushing – are corrected by careful trimming.

The most important aspects of good foot care are regularity, frequency, cleanliness and the use of proper corrective measures.

Scalping - The front foot toe hits the hairline at the coronary band or above on the hind foot of the same side.

Forging - Defect of the trotting gait in which the hind foot toe overtakes and strikes the bottom of the front foot, same side at the moment the front foot is starting flight.

Toe In (Pigeon toed) - Foot position in which toes point toward one another when viewed from the front.

Toe Out (Splay footed) - When viewed from the front, the toes point away from one another.

Interfering - This is a fault of gait that causes the ponies to strike any part of the inside of one limb with the inside of the foot or shoe of the opposite foot.

Buck Knees (Over in the knees) - The knee has a forward deviation.

Cal Knees - The knee (carpus) deviates backwards placing excessive strain on ligaments.

Sickle Hocks - When viewed from the side, the angle of the hock joint is decreased so that the horse is standing under from the hock down.

Brushing - This is a general term for light striking, especially as interfering or forging.

Cross-firing - When the hind foot on one side contacts the front foot on the other side.