

The Natural Angle

A PUBLICATION OF PRACTICAL IDEAS AND SOLUTIONS FOR FARRIERS

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Wire to Wire - The Pressure Never Ends

By Steve Norman

This is the first in a group of articles taking a look at Thoroughbred hoof care from the foal at the farm to the race track.

My work at the Thoroughbred farms in Kentucky always starts with the evaluation process. This is especially critical working with the foals, weanlings and yearlings. This is a process that includes the farm manager or staff member in charge of the particular horses I'm working on. In the very early stages, when confronted with serious conformation and hoof imbalance issues that may be better treated surgically, I will ask that a veterinarian be consulted. The pressure on all parties in dealing with high dollar bloodstock makes this type of cooperation critical.

I begin by having the horse walked away from me, always on a hard flat surface. This hind view allows me to look at medial and lateral deformities of the hoof capsule and the conformation of the hind limbs but it also gives me a good view of the heel length of the front feet. When they walk back to me I am looking at the front-end conformation. Is the chest narrow or wide? Are the knees, ankles and hooves in alignment in relationship to the rest of the body? This initial evaluation will usually give me some strong clues as to what I will

find when I pick up the foot. (Photo 1) shows evaluation of alignment problems - toed out at ankle, likely to have sheared heel or other medial heel problems.

My biggest concern in working with the foals less than 3 months old is the ankles. The growth plates are changing rapidly and close early in the ankle area so I have to address these deformities very quickly. I will usually be making my first evaluation at the age of 2 weeks to 30 days old. I trim the feet to balance medial or lateral angular limb deformities, in an effort to even and stabilize the growth plates. If it is not too serious a deformity we will often treat the hoof capsule by using extensions, as there is very little foot to work with in the first three months. If it is a serious toed-in (varus) deformity or extremely toed-out (valgus) the vet may do a periosteal elevation surgery. This is where the early cooperation between the farm, the farrier and the vet is critical. I never hesitate to ask the farm to call in a vet when I think the problem is too severe for the correction I might be able to offer. (Photo 2) showing ankle deformity from front, (Photo 3),



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showing high lateral heel, low medial heel.

One of the problems in dealing with deformities of the ankle is the resulting hoof capsule distortion. Whether I put the correction on or the foal tries to correct on its own there will be distortion to the hoof capsule. You can see from the photographs of some of the cases I worked on recently that you will often get a hoof that has a lateral flare (to the outside) and straighter medial (inside) wall. The hoof capsule of the foal in the Kentucky climate is very soft, wet and easily manipulated by compression, either weight bearing or weight shifting as in a lateral or medial extension. Unfortunately, most of the correction we are applying is creating an uneven weight bearing laterally. (Photo 4 & 5) showing resulting hoof distortion, lateral flare of left front.

If I see a knee deformity early I will begin to consider how to approach the correction but only after I have dealt with the ankles. I think knee deformities can be dealt with as long as 9-12 months after birth. But if I think the ankles are ok but suspect the knees have a tendency to bow out I will consider a lateral extension as an option to provide support. Here again, the reality of this support option is a resulting hoof capsule distortion. We are trying to fix something above - offset knees - at the expense of the hoof.

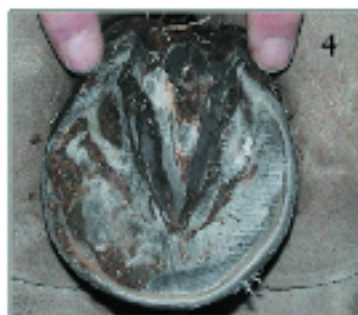


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(Photo 6) shows a knee deformity.



Some common problems to be addressed are deep flexor contractions that result in high heels, a mule shape to the hoof and pressures on the toe area. The excess of heel moves the heel forward, putting more pressure on the toe, sometimes even causing a separation or toe crack. I simply drop the heels moderately and reshape the toe area, often putting a bevel on the toe to aid breakover. (Photo 7 & 8) - Hoof with contracted tendons with tight, high heels, untrimmed and trimmed. (Photo 9 & 10) show distortion of toe and crack as a result of the high heels.

No matter what decisions you make when working on these young horses you have to realize there may be repercussions. Most of the time you are making decisions that have trade-offs, but that is part of the pressure of the industry. ■

STEVE NORMAN is a farrier living in Lexington, Kentucky. He has been shoeing thoroughbred horses his entire career and divides his time between the breeding farms and the race tracks.

T H E T O O L C O R N E R



Inexpensive but Effective Sharpening System

by Scott Kelber

I used to work at a packing house sharpening knives for the whole first shift. I usually sharpened about 500-600 knives a day. Knife sharpening has always fascinated me, so I am always looking for and trying different systems.

This set up involves going through a system using coarse abrasives down to a fine buffing compound, to produce a razor sharp edge. I got the basic idea from one of my fellow shoers. He glues sand paper to a piece of leather and then uses a piece of leather for his buffing compound. He would use his step vise to hold the pieces of leather while he stropped the knife. I tried gluing the sandpaper to the leather and found it to be a lengthy process and the glue I used didn't hold up. I then remembered that emery cloth, which is meant for use on metal, comes in strips 1 inch wide, and can be bought in a roll.

I happened to come across the clamps at Lowes and bought a few of them and figured I could use them for something. Now instead of having to glue strips on leather when the emery cloth wears out, I just have to tear off a new piece and put it into the clamp. The emery cloth I found comes in roles of 50 feet, and is inexpensive to use. I used to use a deburring/buffing wheel but since I have found this system I haven't used my wheel at all. This process doesn't require any electricity and unlike a deburring wheel, this process can never over heat the knife blade.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Alligator clips purchased from Lowes
- Emery paper, 1 inch wide, purchased at a farm store. I use 80 grit for the coarse and 120 grit for the fine. This can be adjusted for personal preference.
- Buffing compound used on a worn out piece of 120 grit. The more worn the better. A person can also use a piece of smooth leather 1"-2" wide for the buffing compound, which is what the barbers used to use on their razors. I put the strap on a flat surface and rub the buffing compound into it.
- Piece of 1/4 inch rope approximately 3' long. This I will staple a piece of the fine emery cloth around so I can get the hook of the knife sharp as well. Make a loop in one end and a knot in the other end. Put the emery cloth around the rope and staple the two ends together all the way down the rope. Then staple the emery cloth to the rope, at the top so it will not slide on the rope.



Above and Below:
80 grit for first step



Above and Below:
120 grit



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Deburring the backside.



Buffing compound.



Thinning the knife.



Fine emery on rope.



Working the angle of the hook.



Your strips should hang on solid hooks.

PROCESS TO SHARPEN THE HOOK KNIFE:

A person needs to first make sure the knife blade is adequately thinned. A new knife is probably already thin, an older used knife may need to be thinned out pretty aggressively. For the thinning process I use a 6" knife file, which will remove a lot of metal and you can see the bevel being put on the edge. I am trying to put on a long bevel with the file, which is thinning the blade so the emery cloth can do a finer job. Depending on my workload each day and how much I am sharpening my knife on the emery cloth, I will re-thin the blade about every 2-3 days with the file. This keeps the knife from developing a thick edge. Using the round edge of the file I also thin out the hook of the knife.

Once the blade is thinned then I go to the coarse emery cloth. I have my strips hanging from solid hooks on my back door of my shoeing truck. Hold the emery cloth taut with your left hand, and hold the knife with your right hand, using light pressure starting at the top drag the knife away from the knife edge in a downward motion holding a consistent flat angle to the emery cloth. Only light pressure is needed. Do this for a couple of strokes until you can feel a burr edge developing on the backside of the knife. That little burr edge is going to be your fine edge eventually.

Before I finish my edge, I go to the rope and stop the hook a couple of times. Starting at the top, find the angle of the hook then drag downward lightly again. From the hook then I go to the finer emery cloth to refine that burr edge I put on earlier. Again start at the top, and with real light pressure drag the knife downward 2-3 times. Remember on this strip you are just trying to thin that little light burr edge you put on with the coarse emery cloth. Now I turn the knife over to the back side and starting at the bottom of the emery cloth I very lightly go back up the strip, keeping this edge flat to the sand paper for 2 strokes. The next step I go to the buffing compound strip, start at the top again, drag backwards for 2 strokes, then turn the knife over to the flat edge. Keep this edge flat to the emery cloth, starting at the bottom of the emery cloth. Dragging away from the knife edge, go back up the emery cloth.

Perform this sequence until you can no longer feel a burr edge on the knife. It should only take a couple of times. You should now have a razor edge. ■

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Vetec

SCOTT KELBER is a farrier from Rhodes, IA. He can be reached by email at k1knowboy@aol.com if you have any questions or comments.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

Two of the major educational programs in the industry have been scheduled for 2003. These venues provide exceptional opportunities for farriers, vets and others to continue pursuit of their educational goals.

In mid-January the 16th annual Bluegrass Laminitis Symposium will be held at the Galt House in Louisville, Kentucky. The program runs from Thursday, January 16th through Saturday, January 18th.

This event began in the '80's as a forum for discussion of laminitis and treatments for the disease. Over the years it has become a much broader forum and covers a wide range of topics related to the hoof and the lower limb. This year will be no exception. Speakers include Hilary Clayton from the Michigan State equine sports medicine department, Hans Castelijn, farrier/vet from Italy, John Arkley, farrier from Alaska and Ric Redden, DVM, the host and organizer of the event.

Topics will range from foot size to heel

pain, hock joints to handling of difficult horses. This is one of the most diverse programs yet, with a significant number of topics dealing with everyday issues. For more information contact Nancy Redden at 859-873-5294.

The 32nd annual American Farrier's Convention will be held in Salt Lake City from February 26 to March 1. This is an event that draws members and participants from all parts of the world to a program of lectures, live demonstrations and the two-day forging and shoeing competition. This year's featured speakers include Dr. Doug Butler, George Platt, DVM, Bernard Pelletier, and Jerry Black, DVM. Jim Poor, Jim Keith, Billy Crothers, members of the American Farriers Team and the Anvil 21 club will offer a full range of practical demonstrations.

The AFA Convention is by far the largest farrier event in the world. There is a very popular anatomy lab (to be conducted by Allie Hayes. Other events of interest are the video learning center (runs

daily), auction and of course the marketplace which runs three days and offers convention attendees a chance to see the latest in the product side of the industry.

For AFA info contact the office at 859-233-7411 or visit the website at www.americanfarriers.org.

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TREATING BURNS

Burns can be caused by fire, heat, sunlight, chemicals, electricity or radiation. Working with horseshoes, you have probably experienced some kind of burns and know they can be very painful. What you might not know is that the most serious type of burn may be the least painful.

3rd degree burns are also called full thickness burns because they are deep, with damage to all layers of skin and sometimes the tissue, bones and nerves. It is the nerve damage that causes the loss of feeling at the center of these burns. The outer edge of the this kind of burn may be a bad second degree burn and be extremely painful because the nerve damage hasn't occurred.

2nd degree burns are generally the most painful as both the first and second layers of skin can be damaged. Blisters are a good indication of a 2nd degree burn, as are swelling and intense red or blotchy areas.

1st degree burns affect the first layer of skin and are considered minor burns if they are small. 1st degree burns are still quite painful and if they cover a large area of the body they can be serious as well. Some redness and swelling followed by peeling in a few days are good indicators of minor burns. Proper and quick treatment is important to minimize damage, relieve pain

and promote healing. Once safely away from the source of the burn, treatment can begin. Improper treatment may actually cause problems with further treatment or even cause greater damage. So called "home remedies" as well as uses of some over the counter products are responsible for making things worse. ■

HERE ARE A FEW THINGS NOT TO DO:

- Do NOT use ice or ice water
- Do NOT use butter, grease, or oil
- Do NOT use potatoes or anything else you have in the fridge or cupboard.
- Do NOT use creams or ointments
- Do NOT use alcohol-based sprays or treatments that contain lidocaine (even if they say for burns)
- Do NOT use home made treatments

THERE ARE A FEW THINGS TO DO:

- Do seek emergency direction for all chemical, electrical or radiation burns and serious burns before any treatment
- Do stop the burning process with the cleanest water available. Sterile, bottled or clean tap water. Or immediately apply a Medi-Burn dressing or hydrogel
- Do use a sterile dressing or gel with bacteriostatic properties like Medi-Burn to help minimize the chance of infection.
- Do use a cool, moist dressing to relieve the pain
- Do use a dressing or hydrogel that will not stick to a burn
- Do use a dressing or hydrogel that will rinse off with water
- Do seek medical attention