

The Natural Angle

A PUBLICATION OF PRACTICAL IDEAS AND SOLUTIONS FOR FARRIERS

VOLUME 5: ISSUE 4

GETTING THE SHARPER EDGE

BY ROY BLOOM

The following is a method for knife sharpening that I have been using for some years. You may be able to use this method to improve your knife's cutting ability.

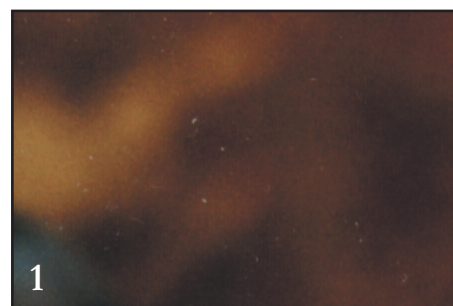
It is important that you maintain a thin blade. The thicker the blade, the larger the bevel at the cutting edge. If the blade is thick, you have to use too much pressure to pull the blade through the cut; the thinner the better. A fine bevel is easier to maintain and offers less resistance, allowing the knife to cut easily. Pay attention to the size of the bevel on a brand new knife and try to maintain that size throughout the life of the knife. As you sharpen and use your knife, the width will decrease and as it decreases the edge will thicken. The blade will need to be thinned.

In **photo (1)** I am thinning the blade. I have taken a belt and cut it about 1/2" in width. You can do this with any belt. Cut the back with a razor blade about 4" and carefully

tear the rest. With the edge pointing up, so you can see the bevel and not get too thin, grind the knife to the desired thickness. Don't let the blade get hot. If you see any color you have gone too far, too hot. Keep the blade cool by dipping in water after every couple passes. Use a new belt if possible, 100 or 120 grit. A new belt will cut quickly and the dipping of the knife in water will not allow the blade to heat up.

If your blade's width gets down to 1/4" throw it away. When the blade gets that thin it can break easily and that's when you find it in your leg or wrist.

Now that I've thinned down the blade I need to establish the bevel. **Photo (2)** shows different makes of diamond hones. You want one that fits the hook size of your knife. Work the bevel into the hook (**photo 3**) and then the blade (**photo 4**). Some knives are made of a soft enough material that a small rat tail or triangle file can be used. Using files is good for serious roughing in but it produces a serrated edge, which is not desirable. If you start with a diamond hone you may never need a file.



Now that the bevel is established I go to the Scotchbrite wheel. This is a medium grit Scotchbrite. I have found this to be best for cutting quality. In **photo (5)** I am cutting a groove in the edge of the wheel. I have braced a rat tail file to cut the groove. The groove will allow me to thin and sharpen the hook. Using the Scotchbrite wheel, I can polish the whole blade and the bevel. You want to maintain the angle of the bevel through all the stages so pay particular attention to how you hold the blade to the wheel. Make sure the edge is down, otherwise your knife may become a permanent fixture in your forehead. Start with the hook (**photo 6**) and sweep through the blade (**photo 7**), always maintaining the angle of the bevel.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

SHARPER EDGE

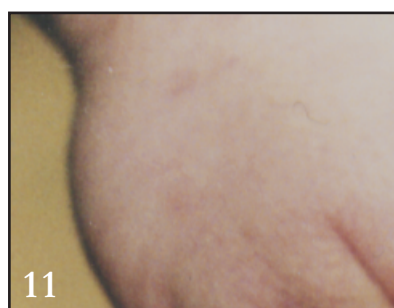
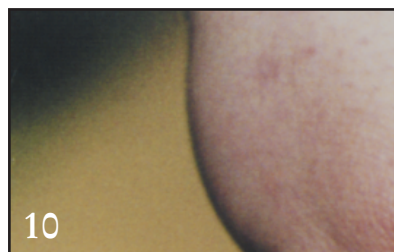
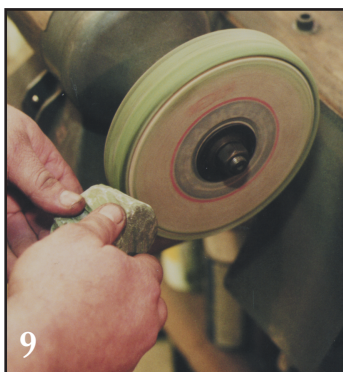
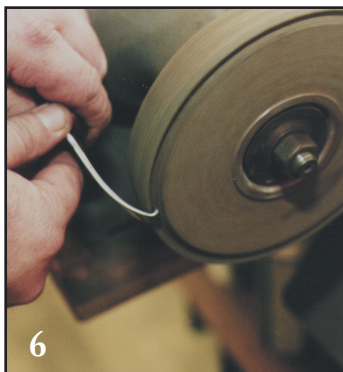
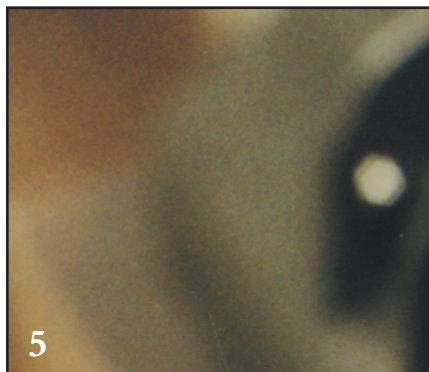
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Now for the final polish. I use a medium felt wheel (photo 8) with the same groove cut in its edge as I put in the Scotchbrite. Apply green rouge to the groove edge and face of the wheel (photo 9). Use the same

method as on the Scotchbrite so you can maintain the bevel angle and make as many passes as necessary to polish the edge (photos 10, 11).

you have achieved sharpness with the felt wheel the edge should last a long time, assuming you are using your knife carefully and cleaning the hoof. When your knife becomes the least bit dull, touch it up on the felt wheel. You should not have to go through all these steps again until the bevel gets too large. When it does just repeat these steps.

Many of the suppliers carry the various wheels, tools and materials you need for sharpening knives. If your supplier doesn't carry them have them contact Bloom Forge or FPD for info on where to get them.



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Keeping Track of the Numbers

Customer service and relations have been the focus of previous articles in the Natural Angle. These concepts are important but one of the other critical aspects in your business is the accounting. While businesses may thrive as a result of good policies and customer service- they can't even survive if the numbers don't add up and provide a profitable bottom line. It's important to have a good understanding of what the numbers are in your business.

A basic form used in business accounting is the Income statement, sometimes referred to as the profit/loss statement. There are many good books and easy to use computer programs that can help you put together the form for your business. The most important thing is not to leave anything out- especially on the expense side. You may feel you are making good money in your business but when you apply all the costs you could find the bottom line is pretty weak. If you have any uncertainty about how to proceed contact a good accountant in your area, one that can advise you on financial matters as well as doing basic bookkeeping.

Income Statement - There are two basic approaches to the income statement format. One assumes you are operating on a cash basis- meaning you declare the expense or income the moment it is actually paid or received. The accrual basis would declare the expense or income when it is incurred but it might not be paid or received yet. Many sole proprietors use the cash basis while many corporations use the accrual basis as it can provide more accurate view of your business for a given period.

INCOME STATEMENT - YEAR ENDING 12-31-99

INCOME	
Shoeing	\$40,000
Interest (from bank accounts)	250
Finance charges (on late payments)	250
TOTAL INCOME	\$40,500
EXPENSES	
Wages (paid to you)	20,000
Social Security Taxes (6.2% FICA 1.45% SS)	1,530
Retirement plan	2,000
Supplies (shoes, nails, etc.)	2,500
Propane	90
Office (envelopes, invoices, etc.)	500
Postage	200
Telephone (including cell)	600
Vehicle Fuel	2,400
Vehicle Maintenance	1,000
Commercial Insurance	750
Health Insurance	3,000
Vehicle Insurance	750
Professional Services (accountant, etc.)	500
Educational Expenses (seminars, courses)	1,000
Dues and Fees	250
Interest (on vehicle loans, etc.)	800
Bad Debt	500
Depreciation (equipment-shoeing, office, vehicles)	4,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$42,370
NET PROFIT (LOSS)	(\$1,870)

Study this income statement - then insert figures from your business to see where you stand.

You should calculate costs like insurance even if you are fortunate enough to have other coverage available at no cost. You should never overlook overhead categories in determining your profitability. Keep in mind there may be a day you have this overhead and then it may be difficult to adjust your prices to offset them. It's much better to figure them in now.

Remember this is just a guide with numbers that won't necessarily compare proportionately to yours. The important point is to make sure you have looked at all the expenses you incur before judging how profitable your shoeing business is. One thing you should notice- the percentage of your costs for supplies is actually quite low. It's all the other costs you incur that add up!

Did you ever wonder why you have to **back punch** so many nail holes?



Kerckhaert solved this problem years ago.



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EUROPEAN FIT

FPD recently co-sponsored shoeing clinics in Canada with Maréchalerie Bromont in Quebec and Ward Farrier Supply in Ontario. Werner Provoost of Belgium, sponsored by Kerckhaert, worked as a clinician in both clinics. Bobby Menker of the US also worked in the Ward clinic. These photos of Werner's work illustrate the type of work often applied by farriers from Belgium.

They strongly believe that the base of support for the horse is critical. In order to provide the strongest base they often use wider shoes (25mm=1") with nail holes punched coarser. There is even a special shoe series Kerckhaert makes for the

Belgium market. The design allows them to fit very full. Using a belt sander they bevel the shoe so that it is less likely to be stepped on.

The typical shoeing cycle in Belgium is 12 weeks. This requires a good full fit in order to avoid problems of the hoof growing over the shoe. The front shoes are typically toe clipped and the wall dressed so the shoe can be set back. The shoe is often rockered to further enhance breakover. The benefits of this Belgium style shoeing are a stronger hoof wall and fewer problems with cracks or other problems associated with thin walls. ■



Front before shoeing



Front after shoeing with wider, coarser punched shoe



Hind before shoeing



Hind after shoeing, again with wider, coarser punched shoe



Notice how wide the fit is but shoe is beveled to avoid problems



This photo gives a view of the toe clip and the slight rocker put on the shoe



Notice the good height and line of the nails on this hind foot

THE NATURAL ANGLE is published to provide the farrier with new and useful information about the industry. It is published through a cooperative effort of Bellota Tools, Bloom Forge, FPD, Kerckhaert Shoes, Vettec, and your FPD dealer.

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NEW PRODUCTS

Bellota now has a nail cutter that is proving itself to be very tough and durable. It is 8" in length with a rivet position that gives more leverage with less effort.

Lopez Farrier Tools has introduced two new tools in the market. A crease nail puller, 9" with cushion handles, uses the position of the rivet for leverage. The traditional saddle horse clincher is also available. This is a fully polished model.

The F Dick Company has two new knives with excellent quality. The Ascot is a rosewood handle narrow blade knife. The Grip Master has the same blade but a specially designed handle to minimize stress and fatigue in the wrists. Both styles are available right or left hand.



The advertisement for Equi-Pak features a dark teal background. At the top left, there is a small inset image showing a hoof being treated with a product. To its right is a logo for 'EQUITHANE Hoof Care Products' featuring a white silhouette of a horse. Below these, the brand name 'Equi-Pak™' is written in a large, white, serif font. Underneath the brand name, a paragraph in white text describes the product as 'The soft and supportive instant pad material (clear). To prevent sore feet or comfort a sore-footed horse.' At the bottom, contact information is provided: 'Call Vettec at 800.483.8832 For more information.'

Equi-Pak™

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Call Vettec at 800.483.8832
For more information.



F Dick Ascot



Lopez Clincher & Crease Nail Puller