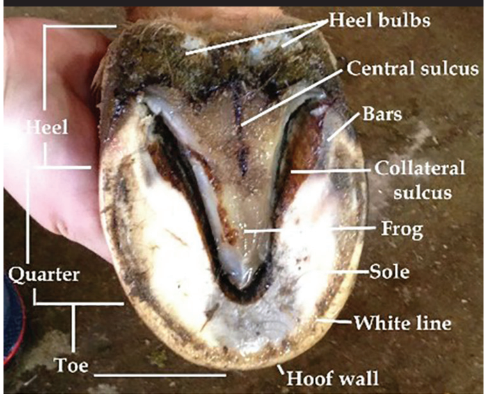
WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT BASIC HORSE CARE

PARTS OF THE HOOF



NORMAL

NOT NORMAL

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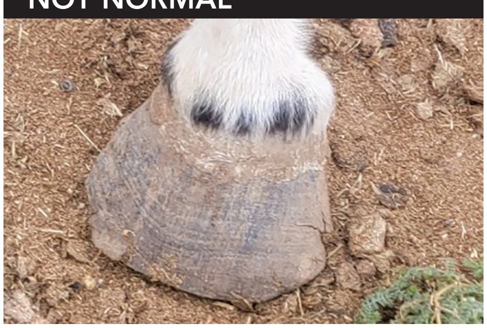


The importance of hoof care

Ever heard the phrase "A Horse Has 5 Hearts"? If so, do you know what it means?

Horses have no muscular structure in their lower legs. The main parts of the hoof are the wall, sole, and frog. As the horse walks, the frog contracts and pumps blood back up the leg. Thus, why horses "have 5 hearts": the heart in their chest and the frog of each hoof. This is just one of many reasons why regular hoof care is essential for horses.

The hoof wall is made of the same material as human finger nails and continuously grows. The average hoof grows anywhere from 1/4"–3/8" each month. It takes approximately one year for the average horse to grow a new hoof. A **farrier** is a professional who trims and shoes horse's hooves. On average, *a horse should be seen by a farrier every 6 to 8 weeks.* If hooves are allowed to grow too long it can affect the way a horse distributes its weight, putting undue pressure on tendons that aren't designed for this stress. This can lead to discomfort, compensation and pain, and ultimately will affect their quality of life.

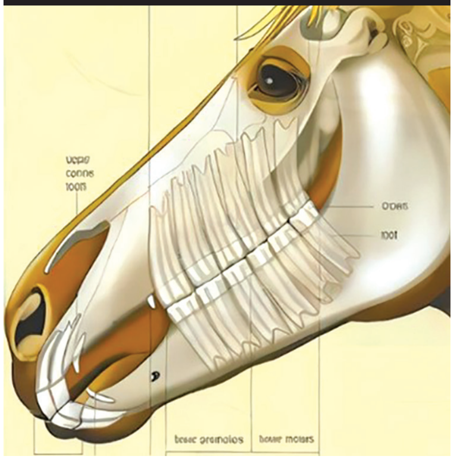
The proper angles and weight distribution are imperative for keeping hooves and legs healthy which is why a professional farrier is the best person to work on horse's hooves.

It's important to know what is normal and when it's time to ask, or require, an owner seek farrier care. The hoof wall, from the cornet band to the toe, should be straight. If it is beginning to curve out, the hooves are due for a trim. Both of these horses are overdue for a trim.

Basic Horse Facts

- The average body temperature for an adult horse is 99-101 degrees F; foal 99.5-102.1 degrees F.
- The average heart rate for an adult horse is 28-44 beats per minute; foal 80-100 beats per minute.
- The average respiratory rate for an adult horse is 10-24 breaths per minute; foal 20-40 breaths per minute.
- Horses should be fed 2-3% of their body weight each day in forage.
- Two percent of the average 1000 lb. horse is 20 lbs. of hay each day. Horses that are underweight, pregnant, nursing, or have other medical conditions, will need to be fed a higher percentage.

HORSE'S TEETH



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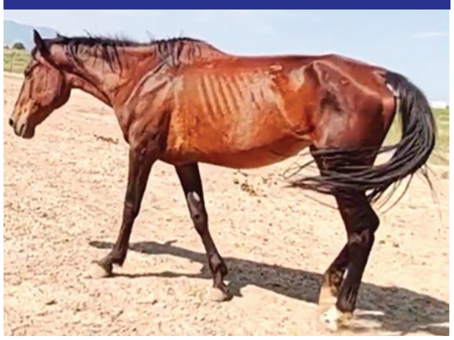

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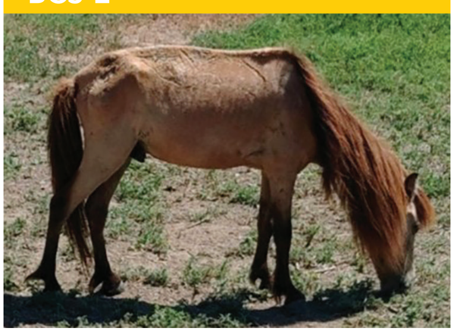
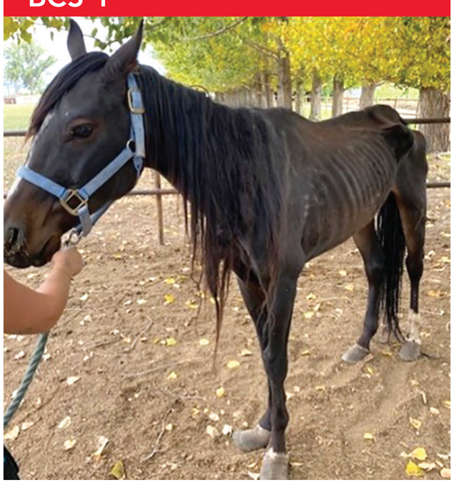


BCS 1



  - » Proper forage would be legumes (alfalfa, red clover, white clover, etc.), cool-season grasses (timothy, orchard, blue grass, etc.) or warm-season grasses (bermudagrass, teff, etc.).
  - » CRP is a very poor-quality hay and is not considered "horse quality". Additionally, straw has no nutritional value and should never be fed to horses. Horses are also very sensitive to moldy hay which can cause serious illness.
- Horses' teeth erupt throughout their entire lives. Because of the constant eruption and the way that horses chew food, sharp points, hooks, waves, and other abnormalities are created in the teeth which can cause mouth pain and affect the horse's ability to eat. Because of this, horses need regular dental care. "Floating" is the term used for when a veterinarian files down points so a horse can chew correctly again
  - » Dropping feed, like grain, may indicate teeth issues.
  - » Quidding is a sign that a horse is likely in need of a float. Quidding is when a horse balls up food and spits it out because they are unable to chew and ingest it properly.
  - » Weight loss is also a sign a horse may need their teeth checked, or may have another underlying medical concern that should be addressed by a licensed veterinarian.

Poor body condition is an indicator that a horse's needs are not being met. Acceptable body conditions would fall between a 4-6/9 on the modified Henneke Body Condition System. Anything below a body condition of 4 needs to be addressed. If calorie deprivation is not an issue, the horse is being fed at least 2% of its body weight of quality forage a day, then the animal should be seen by a licensed veterinarian.

A BCS 3 shows the horse is too thin. You will begin to see the skeletal structure of the horse. Ribs, spinous processes, hip, and tail head will all be easily seen and identified. There are 6 points on the horse that you will look at when assessing body fat and body scoring; the neck, withers, ribs, shoulder, tail head, and back.

Age does not excuse a thin horse. Say it again—Age. Is. Not. An. Excuse.

A horse is technically considered a "senior" horse after the age of 20. The average lifespan of a horse is between 25-30 years, but with modern veterinary care and proper horse husbandry, many horses are living well beyond 30.

With the natural aging process, the individual needs of any animal will change. Horses will begin to wear their teeth differently and may require dental treatment more frequently. Because horse's teeth erupt throughout their lives, they will eventually lose all teeth. Once that happens, they can no longer grind forage to ingest it. Older horses may have to be fed mash—soaked grass/alfalfa pellets and possibly a mixture of senior grain concentrate to meet their energy and calorie needs. They must still follow 2-3% of their body weight each day to maintain a healthy body condition.

Old horses can be maintained and being a senior horse does not mean it's acceptable for the horse to be underweight or emaciated. An elderly horse that is in a poor body condition means the owner is not providing the appropriate care for a senior animal.