



The Cavallo Barefoot Trim

— A Guide for
Keeping Horses
in their Natural Barefoot State

The Cavallo Barefoot Trim

by Carole Herder & Lynn Seeley

This manual was written for those who want to understand how to keep their horses' hoofs in their natural barefoot state.

Unlike the wild horse hoof which is conditioned to the varied terrain of its living environment, our horses are domesticated. They do not have as much area to move and they are usually kept on ground other than that on which we wish to ride. Even if we could emulate the horse's natural terrain, environment and lifestyle, many of us do not have the time nor inclination to maintain the hoof conditioning necessary to ride barefoot over any landscape. **SIMPLE Hoof Boots** and a proper trim will serve to compensate for our horse's domestication.

This manual will assist those who wish to keep their horses barefoot, but will still need to use **SIMPLE Boots** to ride on aggressive, rocky, hard surfaces or any ground that differs from the living environment that the hoof is conditioned to.



This manual is intended for qualified and experienced trimmers. The Cavallo trim is simple and straightforward, using basic landmarks that exist in all equine feet. We do not intend to endorse or contradict any particular trimming method but simply draw upon years of experience working with and observing equine feet from many different breeds used in various riding disciplines. Our intention is to manage the transition to barefoot while still allowing the horse a useful lifestyle.

We persuade the hoof to develop appropriate concavity by removing any material that inhibits proper function. We are not trying to duplicate the wild horse hoof, but rather to encourage our domestic animal to develop a naturally functioning foot that will promote blood circulation and adequately support his weight in movement.

The transition to barefoot requires attention, skill and dedication. Each horse is different and will progress individually. Some horses may be very tender and take more time to condition to their natural barefoot state, while others will adapt quickly and hardly miss a step in the transition. The difference is dependant on the shape of the hoof to begin with, the conditions or damage that already exists, the living environment, frequency of trimming, the length of time in metal shoes and a host of other variables.

It is important to take the whole horse into account. Look at the lifestyle, exercise program, general nutrition, attitude and way of going. Horses differ in their trimming needs. Some have naturally higher heels, such as gaited horses. Some are naturally lower in the heel, such as the wild mustang. Look for base narrow and base wide, toed in or toed out, over-reaching, forging or any

other interference issues, and trim accordingly. Look specifically for horses that twist their feet when contacting the ground as this may initially require extra attention. Once the hoof has transitioned, it becomes more basic.

Extra attention to the barefoot trim is not yet a widely used procedure. Many traditional practitioners are most familiar with trimming to accommodate nailing on metal shoes. Take a metal shoe and bang it against a rock or hard surface; you will feel the reverberation all the way up your arm. Metal transmits shock. Take a SIMPLE Boot and do the same, and you will see that the specially-formulated sole does not transmit concussion, but rather absorbs it. Using **SIMPLE Hoof Boots** offers horses shock absorption that can be compared to the feel of a great pair of running shoes on our own feet.

When the horse is in movement and weight descends, the hoof is compressed between that load and the ground. The hoof is meant to spread apart to allow the coffin bone to drop down, managing impact like a trampoline. This is the natural shock-absorbing feature of the hoof. Metal shoes restrict that function. So give the hoof a chance: even if you just remove the shoes for a portion of the year and encourage riding with Cavallo, you will be aiding in the health and longevity of the horse.

Your skills as a barefoot practitioner require a close attention to detail and a working knowledge of hoof function.

You will need the following tools:

- farrier's rasp
- felt tipped pen
- sharp hoof knives
- gloves
- ruler
- nippers

Preparation • • •

1

Observe the horse in motion, preferably at the trot on a hard surface. Look for abnormalities or lameness. Carefully examine the entire hairline; if there are bulges or unevenness, trim appropriately. If a situation is unfamiliar or beyond your skills/qualifications, STOP and SEEK ADDITIONAL HELP.

If the horse is shod, remove all the shoes at once to allow a balanced condition. The nail clinches should be removed and the nails pulled one at a time wherever possible to prevent further damage to the hoof wall and undue stress on the joints and sole while levering the shoe off.

Clean Dirt Line • • • 2



Clean dirt line

Clean the foot of all debris.

Using the hoof knife, trim the sole from approximately the mid point of the frog to and around the front of the apex of the frog, leaving a trimmed area about $\frac{3}{8}$ inch (10 mm) wide. Use the clean dirt line in the groove where the frog and sole meet as your depth guide.

Clean Dirt Line continued • • • 3



Clean dirt line

Blend trimmed area outward to within approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (13 mm) of the white line at the toe and to the approximate white line at the quarters. Remove any runaway/excess bar that is forward of the midpoint of the frog. The sole should be passive to the wall (i.e., the primary ground contact should be with the outer wall; the sole makes secondary contact with the ground as the weight descends).

Clean Dirt Line • • •

4



Clean dirt line

Determine the proper height of the heels measured from the hair-line. Trim the heels by blending the cut into the quarters. The average heel height vertically from the hairline is $1\frac{1}{8}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches (30 to 40 mm). Common sense must be used at this point. If you are uncertain, seek additional help.



Bar Height and Location • • •

5



Bar height

Trim the bar height passive to the wall height at the heel and blend in at the approximate halfway point of the frog. Do not cut the entire bar out. Time is on your side. Proceeding too aggressively may jeopardize soundness.

Center Point of Frog • • •

6



Frog position

Taper frog height in a straight line from midpoint of the frog to the frog apex where it joins the sole. Trim remaining frog from midpoint back making it passive to the wall height. A transitioning horse may not have sufficient frog to allow any trimming at this time. After the transition to barefoot is complete, a healthy frog will go from heel to heel being just passive to the heel height. All cuts should leave the sides of the frog straight and the top surface flat, like a table.

Frog Height • • •

7



Frog height

Trim away excess debris and overlapping or diseased frog at the sole frog commissures. Again, not too aggressive as this is a tender area. In general, you can do more harm than good by overtrimming.

The properly trimmed frog should be flat on the ground surface, not peaked like a mountain. When trimming the sides of the frog the knife blade should be straight up and down.

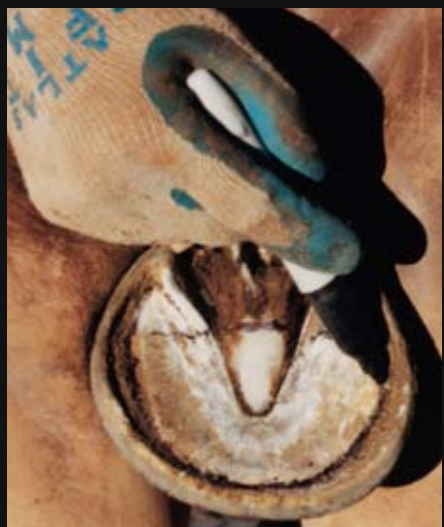
Wall-Bar Triangle • • • 8



Wall-bar triangle

Trim the sole at the wall-bar triangle passive to the bar height. The heel-bar corium is located underneath the sole at this point. Be careful – the sole is thin in this area; do not overtrim.

Inner Sole Line • • • 9



Inner sole line

Using a felt tip pen draw a reference line around the edge of the sole. This is where the sole meets the wall or, if separation is present, where the sole meets the separation.

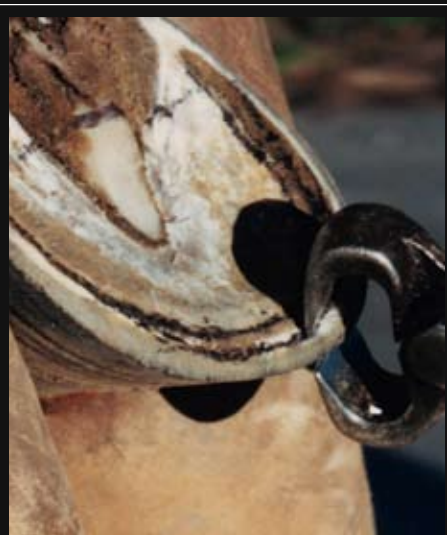
Width of Horn at Heel ••• 10



Outer sole line

Using the width of the wall measured at the heel, draw a second line outside of the first line shown in the figure of Step 9.

Width of Horn at Heel continued ••• 11



Excess wall

Using a rasp or nippers* held at approximately a 60-degree angle to the sole, nip off the wall beyond the outer line.

**Nippers should be used only by experienced professionals.*

Width of Horn at Heel continued • • •

12



Clean finish

This newly-trimmed outer margin will now require rasping for a clean finish. Keep the rasp perpendicular to the bottom surface of the hoof.

Width of Horn at Heel continued • • •

13



Tapered heel

From the point of the wall-bar triangle, draw a guideline parallel to the center of the foot. Taper the horn at the heel on the inside of this line so that it is lower than the heel outside of the line.

Use common sense: with a grossly deformed hoof, you may only be able to meet your objectives over several trims. Again, proceeding too aggressively may jeopardize soundness.

Crescent ... 14



CRESCENT

Crescent

On the under side of the hoof rasp off any excessive horn growth including any protruding fibrous or laminitic tissue forming a crescent at the toe of the sole. Finish rounding the outside wall to the approximate white line using the rasp.

TouchUps ... 15



Touch Ups

The trim is complete at this point. Step back and take a moment to re-evaluate and touch up the hoof, making any minor adjustments necessary and removing any obvious flares.

SUMMARY...

The perfect hoof does not exist. The completed hoof should be:

- Symmetrical, straight, level, leaving a good hoofprint free of flares, dishes and other obvious abnormalities.
- The sole, bars and frog should be passive to the wall, allowing proper concavity and restoring hoof mechanism.
- The sole in the wall/bar triangle should be passive to the bar.
- The frog should be angled from its midpoint to the apex of the frog at the frog sole juncture.
- The heels should be relieved and made passive inside of the parallel line from the point of the wall bar triangle.
- The heels should be of equal length if at all possible.

You are now ready to measure and fit the newly-trimmed hoof with the **SIMPLE Boot** ... the multi-purpose Hoof Boot.



About the Authors



CAROLE HERDER, President and founder of Cavallo Horse & Rider, has an obvious passion for Natural Hoof Care and for the well-being of horses. Horse Boots were an integral part of Carole's personal journey from frustrated rider to a Barefoot Horse advocate.

An accomplished rider, Carole recounts, "It's easy for me to advocate horse boots because I have a lot of history in horse care as well as in business. Early on, I identified that metal shoes didn't seem like a natural treatment. I, like most horse owners, had problems with every horse – problems that in retrospect I can trace back to their feet. These included unexplained swellings and on-and-off lameness. Dot, my 4-year-old mare, was previously a champion cutting horse who'd won the Canadian Supreme Cutting

Horse Futurity. In order to achieve that, she'd obviously been worked hard as a young horse and had likely been shod before the age of 2. I now know that shoeing so early prevents the natural growth and development of the hoof.

When I got Dot, we started training for Barrel racing. She quickly developed symptoms that pointed to an eventual Navicular diagnosis. In frustration, I began my search for alternative answers. Along the way I learned that her feet were actually too small for her body – a tiny 00 for a high performance animal. After pulling off her shoes, and unsure what direction to take, I found the answer in a barefoot hoof program and horse boots. Now when we trail ride, I simply put on our SIMPLE Boots and can go anywhere, over any terrain, at any speed. Dot is comfortable, confident and always willing. And no more lameness and problems. Her hooves have naturally expanded to a healthy full shape, she is symptom-free, and we've shaved seconds off our previous best barrel-racing times!"



LYNN SEELEY's lifelong relationship with horses started at the tender age of six months when he was first put on a horse. At age 10 he began his shoeing career on ranch horses, and his mid-teens found him starting a seven-year apprenticeship program under the tutelage of a good family friend. This relationship instilled a deep respect and sensitivity for horses. He worked on a number of equine disciplines –from racehorses to ponies, gaited horses to mules. Lynn was a sergeant in the US Army. He also became a firefighter/paramedic while continuing to shoe and trim. This increased medical knowledge added another dimension to his pursuit of the best shoeing and trimming techniques, and resulted in a good understanding of how the hoof affects the whole body. He enjoyed the many challenges of shoeing thousands of horses in many disciplines. Many had hoof problems that required correction, reconstruction, resection and/or an assortment of techniques

that can only be developed through working with a variety of horses over an extended period time. Then came a major turning point: after a year of effort employing every option from his forty years' experience, he was unable to restore his wife's severely foundered horse and had to put it down. Reflecting back on his early years as an apprentice, he remembered the words of his first teacher, that shoeing was not necessary for the horse, but meant only to satisfy the whim of the owner. Lynn realized that a barefoot and natural lifestyle held the answers to the healthy horse.

This has proven to be a most rewarding path for Lynn. He sees horses with debilitating conditions, including founder and laminitis, improve dramatically on a daily basis when put into a barefoot program and booted with the SIMPLE Boot. Today, using the knowledge gained from a lifetime of caring for horses, Lynn is barefoot trimming horses used in all disciplines with great success.

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