

# THE THOUGHTFUL HORSEMAN

ARE YOU READY? YOUR HORSE IS!

August 2008  
Issue 3



## It's The Little Things...

By Kristi Inzunza

Hello from Boston! As we prepare this month's issue, my family and I are spending a week on the East Coast, visiting family and touring some amazing cities! I mention this because it ties into the title, "It's the little things..."

One afternoon here in Mass. we were enjoying a family BBQ when my husband's cousin, David, and we began talking about the quarter horses he and his wife have in Florida. We got onto the topic of shoes (funny how that ALWAYS comes up ☺) and he, not knowing my position at this point, rather shyly answers..."Well actually, we don't believe in shoeing the horses, we don't think they really need them". I am sure you can imagine the grin that came across my face as I answered, "I knew there was a reason I liked you David!" We continued the conversation, and added another name to the newsletter mailing list...but, as the article title states, it's the little things that make a difference in this barefoot journey. Thank you David!

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Editor's Welcome	1
Force equals Force Part 2	1
Boots and Pads for the Barefoot Horse	2
Barefoot Spotlight: Pee Wee	2
Product Review: "Under the Horse" DVD Series	3
What to Feed: Forages & Supplementation	3
How Good is Your Horsekeeping Situation?	5
About Maria / Contact Us	6

The second wonderful moment this past month was when Maria and I arrived at a barn in Lakeside to trim several horses. Much to our sheer delight, we pull in and see Dazzle, a beautiful paint mare, having ALL FOUR feet soaked! Way to go Chris... you really made our day, and what we do worth doing! (For the record, Chris wasn't expecting us; Dazzle wasn't being trimmed that day!) So yes, for us happiness lies in the little things....

We hope you enjoy this month's newsletter. Don't miss our barefoot spotlight horse, Pee Wee. Maria also has an important message to share regarding the importance of our horses' living conditions: yes, they do matter! Enjoy!

## Force equals Force *Why a softer approach creates a softer response.*

### Part 2: Building Blocks

By Maria Siebrand

One of the phrases you'll hear again and again from "natural" horse trainers is "reward the slightest try". Unfortunately, few riders are tuned in enough to put this very basic -- and very valuable -- training tool into play. Part of the challenge in using this philosophy is being able to mentally break down the task at hand and understand precisely what the horse must do to achieve the complex task. The multitude of training systems labeled as "natural horsemanship" actually utilizes this technique nicely. The underlying -- and widespread -- problem with these packaged systems is that they generally fail to point out that that is exactly what they are trying to teach you! The catch phrase is repeated over and over, but the basic and very effective concept

is lost as individuals struggle to achieve the individual "moves" that the system describes.

All of the behaviors we would like our horses to become proficient at consist of what I like to think of as building blocks. Without a doubt, the very bottom block is simply the horse's undivided attention. And that attention must not be fearful, nor resentful, for fear and resentment create tension and resistance. To achieve a fluid, intuitive partnership, the horse must pay attention because he is interested, because he trusts you, because he is curious. Only then will he remain in an open, thinking frame of mind. And only then will what he offers you be truly soft and willing.

Horses are by instinct reactive and distrustful, and so to

*Please see Force equals Force on page 4*

## Boots and Pads for the Barefoot Horse

By Maria Siebrand

Most barefoot hoof care professionals worth their salt these days will advocate the use of hoof boots and pads to keep a horse productive and comfortable during the transition from shod to shoeless. There is no doubt that hoof boots are a valuable asset for rehabilitation. But boots and pads are not just for difficult transitions: even horses with healthy bare hooves can wear hoof boots for protection on terrain their hooves have not been adequately conditioned for. The reality is that boots and pads are the new horseshoe: an option for hoof protection and support that will not damage the hoof form or function like a nailed on shoe.

The hoof boot industry is still sorely underrepresented, and options are still frustratingly few compared with the myriad of technologically advanced athletic footwear available for our own feet. But new ideas and options are developing daily, and companies like EasyCare,

## Barefoot Spotlight: Pee Wee

By Maria Siebrand

PeeWee was a great example of what vets and farriers would classify a Grade 3 Club Foot. His right front had a pronounced dorsal flare, radiographs showed a rotated coffin bone, and the medial side (inside) of the hoof was crumbling and distorted. It was a scary sight to see, even if you knew nothing about hoof health.

Club feet are not uncommon, come in a wide range of severity, and causes vary widely. A fractured coffin bone as a foal, an injury to the leg resulting in contraction of tendons and ligaments, shoulder injuries, back pain, poor riding, chronic thrush, even poor saddle fit can contribute to the shape of a club foot. Usually, it indicates a shortened stride on the affected limb. In addition to proper hoof care, body work may be helpful in identifying and alleviating contributing issues.

*"Ask your veterinarian, farrier or trainer about hoof care and the majority will freely admit that all equines are most healthy if they can be kept without steel shoes."*

*- The Natural Hoof Care Advantage,  
Dr. Tomas G. Teskey D.V.M.*



Renegade, Cavallo and others are listening to the requests and recommendations of the growing legion of barefoot hoof care professionals and barefoot horse owners.

Their products are being tailored specifically to the needs of the appropriately trimmed bare hoof. These products, combined with the diligent trial-and-error efforts of those of us in the hoofcare "trenches" can now accommodate just about any hoof pathology to make the horse more comfortable, as well as standing up to even the most rigorous riding.

If you think hoof boots are only for transitions, and that booting your barefoot horse is somehow cheating, think again. The new generation of boots and pads are the new answer to horseshoes...a long time coming, but certainly the best hoof protection in the history of hoof care!

Your hoof care professional should stock a variety of boots, and be able to fit your horse with a boot appropriate for your purposes.



*On left, PeeWee's right front the day his shoes were pulled.  
On right, PeeWee's right front after almost five months later.*

Traditional farriery often exacerbates the condition for several reasons. One of the goals widely taught in farrier schools is to "match" the feet; this is literally impossible with a true club foot, and can damage the opposite hoof as well. The traditionally recognized club foot grading system identifies the degree of dorsal flare, or dishing of the toe, as one of the factors for classification. In reality, a properly trimmed club foot should not bear a dorsal flare, and indeed, if the flare is allowed to persist, it can contribute to coffin bone rotation and descent within the hoof capsule.

My goal was to bring PeeWee's runaway dorsal flare back, create a more physiologically correct point of breakover,

*Please see Pee Wee cont. on page 5*

## Product Review: "Under The Horse" DVD Series

By Maria Siebrand

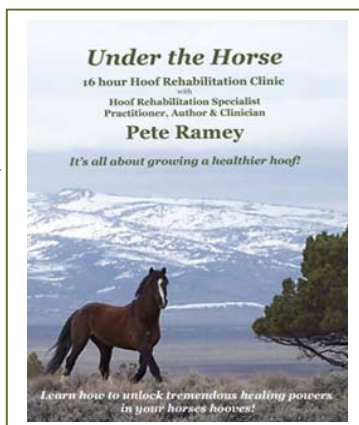
*"Under the Horse"*

*16 hour, 10 DVD Hoof Rehabilitation Clinic with Pete Ramey: Hoof Rehabilitation Specialist, Clinician and Author*

*9 hours classroom instruction/lecture  
7 hours real-world trimming*

*"If you own only one shoeing DVD series, this should be it."*

*-- American Farriers Journal May/June 2008 issue*



If you're on the fence about barefoot hoof care, the information herein will land you firmly on non-shod. Barefoot hoof care professionals and farriers alike will gain invaluable insight into how the hoof functions, how to spot hoof pathologies and reverse them, and how to trim for a healthier hoof. Detailed instruction and protocols for the treatment of laminitis, navicular disease, club feet, and under run heels as well as booting to ease a hoof toward health are all covered in depth.

Pete Ramey's landmark DVD series will benefit horse owner, veterinarian, and hoof care professional alike. If you have any interest in the health of your horse and his four hooves, this set belongs in your possession. Ramey's passion for the subject matter is infectious; his compassion and affinity for horses palpable; and his instruction makes a very technical subject interesting and easy to understand.

"Under the Horse" is available online through Pete & Ivy Ramey's website, <http://www.hoofrehab.com>. Service is streamlined and courteous, and the set ships promptly via USPS Priority Mail.

## What to Feed: A Look at Forages & Supplementation

By Maria Siebrand

Without turning this into a science class, I'm going to give you a little background on the main factors that make a forage or a concentrated feed "good" or "bad". In a really oversimplified nutshell, one of the main things we're interested in is sugar: not only the amount, but also the type of sugar a plant stores. This is because the horse metabolizes each type of sugar differently. The way in which the horse metabolizes the sugar affects how much glucose is ultimately produced, and glucose -- not any of the other sugars -- is what triggers the insulin response.

Last month we discussed why feeding high-protein diets to working horses is not advantageous. And so, while alfalfa typically contains lower non-structural carbohydrate levels, warm season grasses are still the better choice.

Grain hays like rye, oats, barley and wheat are extraordinarily high in starch, particularly when harvested in in flower. Some samples of 3-way grown here in California have tested as high as 30% non-structural carbohydrates (NSC).

Warm season grasses and grasses of tropical origin (such as bermuda or summer prairie grasses), because of the type of sugar they store, and the way in which they store it, are typically the best choice forage for horses. These plants store starch only in specific parts of the plant. When these starch holders are full, starch production stops, no matter the conditions. Cool season grasses (for example orchard or timothy), on the other hand, store fructan, and store it throughout the plant. This enables the plants to store much higher amounts of sugars, and continue producing sugars, for as long as conditions are favorable for sugar production.

To really complicate things, even forage that is genetically "safer" can vary widely, depending upon everything from the soil it is grown in, to the time of day it is harvested. But all things considered, our best alternative locally is bermuda grass hay.

Is a supplement necessary? Without testing EACH BATCH of hay, it's hard to make a sweeping statement. And truly balancing your horse's diet is much more complex, because just adding more of everything doesn't work.

*Please see What to Feed cont. on page 4*

**Force equals Force from *page 1***

make the most rapid progress in training them, we must become incredibly skillful at avoiding the moment when misunderstanding becomes fear. The moment the horse becomes reactive, and stops thinking, he stops learning. The most effective way to escalate understanding without escalating fear, then, is to break lessons down into the most basic increments. That is precisely what "rewarding the slightest try" is all about.

The process becomes more complex as the task becomes more sophisticated, but if you drill the idea into your own brain, you will ultimately be successful with any horse, with any task. Keep in mind that this involves a keen knowledge of how the horse must use his feet and his body to achieve what you expect, and so you must train yourself, before you train him, to understand how he operates.

The simplest of examples is teaching a horse to back on a leadrope. A proper step backward starts with flexing at the poll and yielding his head. Then a slight rocking backwards. Then a step. Any of these is a try on the horse's part: a try to understand what you are requesting, and a try to figure out how to gain a release from pressure. Some horses ask the tiniest question -- for instance, a minute weight shift, or dropping the



*Riser backs, one step at a time,  
with just a slight feel down the rope.*

head just a fraction of an inch -- and it requires great focus to recognize and reward. But if you miss it, you have effectively told the horse that he was wrong, and it will be a while before he offers that answer again. If you catch that tiny try, and immediately reward it with release, you have told the horse "YES, that's correct!" Now he knows where to start; now we build on it, asking for just a little more. It's okay to offer just a partial release after you acknowledge the initial try. But the quickest way to teach a horse any behavior is to reward his efforts; sometimes lavishly, with lots of petting and praise, and sometimes with a small partial release from pressure.

A horse brought along using force, fear, shortcuts and training gadgets may demonstrate the movements requested of him, but a horse brought along by instead using softness and a positive approach steadily becomes less reactive, more confident, and much more likely to think his way through difficult tasks.

"... the fact that he'd figger and think on the subject between times was proved by the way he'd go at things in a decided and knowing how way, when the day before the same thing had left him puzzled and wondering."

- Will James, "Smoky the Cowhorse"

**What to Feed from *page 3***

But the more common mineral deficiencies seen in our part of the country are copper, zinc, magnesium, chromium, and selenium. And biotin, a B vitamin proven to improve hoof wall quality, is now being touted for overall metabolic health, and aiding in maintaining healthy blood-sugar levels. So supplementing judiciously to prevent imbalances is a good idea. Some good choices for a pelleted concentrate are LMF Feeds Low Non-Structural Carbohydrate Stage 1, or where that is unavailable, popular alternatives include Purina Strategy GX or Nutrena Safe Choice, all of which provide adequate selenium. Biotin hoof supplements contain a good ratio of copper and zinc. Magnesium and chromium deficiencies are rarer, and might be considered if the horse does not thrive or shows signs of those particular deficiencies.

**References:**

*Nutrient Requirements of Horses, Sixth Revised Edition 2007.*  
Various articles, <http://safergrass.org>

**Barefoot Spotlight *from page 2***

and by so doing, begin to help PeeWee grow adequate sole under his coffin bone. I did not trim his heels aggressively, but simply took off the bent hoof tubules to keep the heel from folding under the hoof. Twice monthly chlorine dioxide soaks addressed fungal and bacterial issues in the damaged wall, the thin sole, and atrophied frog. PeeWee's diet was addressed as well, because he showed insulin resistance tendencies especially dangerous with his rotated coffin bone. PeeWee was fitted with EasyCare Epic Boots and 12mm Comfort Pads immediately after his first trim. He was extremely careful when walking on hard ground without them, but continued taking owner Colleen on long trail rides with his Epics. His transition has not been without discomfort, but he has done surprisingly well considering the extreme pathology we were addressing. At no time has he been unsound for his rides. Growing a new hoof takes time, and after four months barefoot, PeeWee is well on his way to healthy bare hooves!



*Pee Wee wears EasyBoot Epics during his transition.*

## How Good is Your Horsekeeping Situation?

By Maria Siebrand

As I made my rounds last week, I was depressed to find several of the horses in my care still suffering from nasty, chronic thrush. While a good trim is essential to grow a healthy hoof, it is utterly useless if the horse lives in conditions that literally rot the hoof...small pens that make it impossible for the horse not to stand in urine or manure; deep, soft bedding or footing that holds moisture and easily packs into the hoof; and minimal exercise.

It brought to mind the story often told about how horseshoeing became popular in medieval times: horses kept in stalls in the castle, standing in urine and manure, quickly developed soft, rotten, painful feet. An enterprising blacksmith nailed a metal semi-circle on the bottom of a horse's feet, lifting him out of the muck, and the hoof seemed much healthier. We didn't know then what damage that nailed on shoe was really doing (and never mind that it has taken us an embarrassing span of time to finally figure it out), but it did seem to solve the problem of the hoof falling apart in horrendously unsanitary stabling conditions.

Like we humans often do, we approached the solution from entirely the wrong angle initially, and are only now realizing the repercussions. Not only was the horseshoe a bad solution to the problem, it was only addressing a symptom of the problem. The problem, it turns out, is really the stabling of a horse in a very small space where he is forced to stand around in his own excrement. That's not to say that a horse in a 10 acre pasture won't walk through manure; but that is entirely different than standing in it for hours on end. It's as if the hoof melts. The wall flares. The sole grows in desperately, in lumps and ridges, but crumbles from the constant soaking in muck. The frog becomes mushy, full of flaps, black, stinky, and sludgy, not to mention *very* painful.

If you love your horse, find a way to improve his living situation. Pay for daily -- and I mean all day -- turnout in a drylot pasture. Find pasture board (but be very picky about the forage in the pasture!). Rent two adjoining pens, make them into one larger pen; then invest in pea gravel and/or sand to fill it, do everything in your power to see that the pen is cleaned not just once but TWICE a day, and make sure the horse's hooves are cleaned daily. Be creative; think outside the 24X24 box.

Sound extreme? Not really. Just extremely different than the way we've done it for far too long.

**The Thoughtful Horseman**

Editor: Kristi Inzunza

Trimmer/Trainer: Maria Siebrand

**Phone:**

619-865-9614

**Website:**

[www.thoughtfulhorseman.com](http://www.thoughtfulhorseman.com)

**E-Mail:**

[editor@thoughtfulhorseman.com](mailto:editor@thoughtfulhorseman.com)

[maria@thoughtfulhorseman.com](mailto:maria@thoughtfulhorseman.com)

---

*We're on the Web!*

*Visit us at:*

[www.thoughtfulhorseman.com](http://www.thoughtfulhorseman.com)

---

## About Maria...

My name is Maria Siebrand. A lifelong student of the horse, and a serious information junky, I reside in San Diego, California. With a background in the life science and software industry, publishing electronic submissions to the FDA, among other things, I have a bit of a bent for research. When my corporate career derailed after my third layoff in as many years, I realized it was time to turn my energy back to horses full time.

Ever dissatisfied with the stodgy traditionalist thinking still dominating equine training, veterinary care, and hoof care, I couldn't help but dig deep to find

better alternatives for the horses I knew and loved. The information – the knowledge – is out there, and it seems to be gradually percolating up through the stubborn layers of “but we’ve always done it this way”. If I can help it perk just a bit faster, I will have served my beloved horses well.

I offer barefoot hoof care services, foundation training and horsemanship lessons in the greater San Diego area.

Interested? Please contact me at 619-865-9614 or [maria@thoughtfulhorseman.com](mailto:maria@thoughtfulhorseman.com)

The Thoughtful Horseman  
P.O. Box 181472  
Coronado, CA 92178

