

# THE THOUGHTFUL HORSEMAN

ARE YOU READY? YOUR HORSE IS!

September 2008

Issue 4



## Time Flies...

By Kristi Inzunza

Welcome to September! In our continuing effort to 'go green', and having listened to your feedback, we have converted the newsletter to a more "E-friendly" format. The articles will now read from start to finish, instead of starting at the front of the newsletter, and being continued several pages down. This means we can help save those trees, by making it easier for you to read it in its entirety on your computer screen. We hope you enjoy this new format! If you prefer to print this out, be our guest (we won't tell, promise).

Is it just me, or did this summer seem to fly by? (No pun intended) Speaking of flies.... WHEN will they migrate North, or go wherever they go at the end of the summer? This season has seemed worse than those in recent memory. Maybe it's because I have been working with Maria all summer, in the heat of the day, that I have noticed the flies so much more, but I welcome their departure anytime now.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Editor's Welcome	1
Force equals Force Part 3	1
Barefoot Spotlight: Underrun Heels	2
Encouraging Round the Clock Foraging	3
Sore after a trim - is it ever okay?	5
About Maria / Contact Us	6

For some of us, summer's passing also marks the kids going back to school. For me this means three kids, three different schools, three drop off's, three pick up's... need I continue? But for all the shuffling we go through, I am still happy to send them back...ok that came out wrong, I meant I am excited for them to embark upon a new year of learning!

We hope you enjoy this month's issue, and as always, we welcome your feedback, questions, and ideas.

Happy Trails!  
Kristi

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

### Part 3: Life in the feet, & why it is critical to lightness

By Maria Siebrand

"Ride the life." "Ride his feet, not his mouth." "Bring the life up."

Hang around the Ray Hunts or Tom & Bill Dorrances of the world, and you'll hear similar mantras over, and over, and over again. But most folks instinctively scrunch up, grip the reins, and resist forward movement as soon as the walk they wanted escalates to a trot, or trot to canter, or canter to gallop. Even on the ground, when the horse needs to move his feet, the usual response is to do everything in one's power to STOP the feet. It's self-preservation in action, and it's darned hard to train it out of yourself. But USING that life is the single most powerful tool we have. Constantly endeavouring to stuff that life back down in the horse is an awful lot like packing down gunpowder: the energy

is still there, but now it is so tightly compressed that if a spark hits it, honey, you're goin' to the MOON.

Learning to instead find an outlet for that energy does a number of things: it gives the horse the comfort of being able to move his feet, which in itself soothes him; it literally harnesses that power to do your bidding; and probably most importantly, it preserves the incredible lightness innate to the horse, and makes it available to us at an instant's notice.

It's important not only to direct the life when the horse offers it on his own, but also to understand the necessity of bringing up the life in the horse -- both on the ground and under saddle -- early on, and getting him reliable to be around when things are moving a little quicker. That's when you're really going to need control of his feet, and when

you'll need him to keep thinking.

If you're having a tough time with this idea, think about what's likely to happen when just two of the feet get stuck. If both front feet get stuck, and the hind feet keep moving, well, then, we've just taught Junior to buck. Stop the back feet instead, and hi ho, Silver, we're pawing the sky with both arms around Junior's neck! In these situations, it's critical to get the STOPPED feet moving again in concert with the other two. It doesn't really matter where those feet go, just as long as they start making hoof prints again.

We never want to stifle energy...we just want to direct it. We want that life available to us, we want those feet freed up, and so we have to learn to get down to each of those feet and put them where we need them, without having to bring all four to a complete stop first. A horse brought along this way will be MUCH happier and more relaxed: turned loose on the inside, as folks like to say. A horse who's been schooled that it's BAD

## Barefoot Spotlight: Underrun Heels

By Maria Siebrand

Instead of spotlighting a single horse this month, we're spotlighting a pathology: underrun or "crushed" heels.

In my constant quest for the latest information on hoof care, I recently came across the fledgling website of farrier Ian McKinlay. Ian found himself in the spotlight as the shoer of Kentucky Derby and Preakness winner Big Brown. Big Brown wore some unusual shoes to run his Triple Crown, and his glue on Yasha shoes garnered quite a bit of press. McKinlay highlights his approach to "fixing" underrun heels in a video clip on his homepage. But while McKinlay dabbles in some unconventional

to offer life is a horse that will do lots of uncomfortable things when you DO ask for life, a lot like that powder keg. Want a reliable, relaxed partner that doesn't require a cattle prod to move forward? Take the life the horse offers and put it to good use. Give him a job to do, something to keep his mind and his feet engaged. But use the life that he offers. It will ultimately make that life available to you whenever you need it. And you WILL need it. Naturally, that doesn't mean we're not aiming to regulate how much life we get...but getting just as much as you want is, interestingly, much easier if you start by using what you're offered.

Life in the horse is a GOOD thing. Keep telling yourself that. That very life is what you'll need to get some of those more advanced things done. Repeat after me: "I will not stuff the life back down in my horse! I will not stuff the life back down in my horse! I will not stuff the life back down in my horse! I will not stuff the life back down in my horse!..." Keep repeating it.

shoeing techniques, and his treatment strategy for underrun heels is perhaps unique, he is staunchly traditional in his view of the pathology. His treatment plan amounts to applying what is essentially a synthetic hoof wall, instead of truly reversing the problem by simply growing a healthy hoof. Granted, his job is to keep racehorses racing, which doesn't allow the hoof much time to recover, and with all due respect, he is a talented shoer: his approach successfully does keep colts with less than perfect hooves running their races. But when push comes to shove, as they say, the problem has only been



*Paris, 12yo QH mare, improvement in 4 months*



*Wing Kai, 6yo off-track TB gelding, improvement in just 4 weeks!*

patched -- not healed.

Underrun heels are far too common. McKinlay comments in his video that the cause is thin walls from birth; I have to respectfully disagree with this analysis. The pathology is especially prevalent in racehorses; in fact, research has linked the condition to gallop training, and certainly the still common racetrack practice of encouraging long toes (once thought to increase stride length) exacerbates the problem. The hoof wall at the back of the foot begins to collapse, and the entire hoof capsule begins to be pulled forward. The point of heel purchase, where the most posterior flat part of the heel meets the ground, winds up far forward of, sometimes even in front of the back of the bony column of the leg. In non-racing horses, shoeing itself is often the cause; leaving the dorsal wall too long and removing stability from the heels can encourage the

problem as well.

In young Thoroughbreds like the one in McKinlay's video, healing an underrun heel might take no longer than a month with a proper trim and no shoes. In older horses, the pathology tends to become a little more persistent, but in time, they too can be corrected. The sooner the problem is addressed, however, the more quickly we can elicit a positive change. The basic trim strategy involves:

- Keeping the toe from continuing to pull the hoof capsule forward by aggressively rolling the wall;
- Paying careful attention to maintaining adequate collateral groove depth at the heels, while still discouraging bent hoof tubules;
- Keeping the heel buttress robust by not allowing the mustang roll or wall bevel to extend behind the quarters.

## Encouraging Round the Clock Foraging

*Slow 'em down & make 'em work for it...*

By Maria Siebrand

It is an established fact that the digestive tract of the horse is designed to be processing food constantly during the horse's 18 waking hours. But modern horsekeeping practices provide the horse with a big ration all in one convenient pile twice a day. There are two profound problems presented to the horse's health with this set up: first, the horse mows through a forage ration that should last 9 hours at light speed, and hours lapse before the next meal; and second, the horse stands perfectly still while the aforementioned mowing takes place, instead of being forced to walk constantly in search of the next mouthful. Not only is the entire ration consumed far too quickly for digestive health, but also the horse is left with nothing to do but wait for the next meal. The boredom breeds bad habits and

additional health issues. The most obvious solution, feeding more to keep the horse eating and the gut busy, quickly leads to overweight horses -- who are STILL eating their ration too quickly!

Some horse owners fortunate enough to have acreage have implemented the "paddock paradise," an innovative approach to creating a more natural lifestyle for our domestics, pioneered by natural horse advocate and barefoot hoof care guru Jaime Jackson. If you have even a little bit of room, I highly recommend the concept. You can order Jaime Jackson's book by the same name off of his website [www.primechoice.com](http://www.primechoice.com), or simply Google "paddock paradise" for lots of interesting ideas.

Many horse owners, however, are forced to board their horses, usually in pens no larger than 24X24. While it is virtually impossible in that setting for the horse to get the thousands of steps a day optimum for his overall health and well being, there are ways to improve the situation. You can move feed and water on opposite sides of the pen. Or buy a special feeder (or build one yourself for a fraction of the cost) to slow down hay consumption, like the ones from [SlowDownHayFeeder.com](http://SlowDownHayFeeder.com) or [BusyHorse.com](http://BusyHorse.com). Better yet, place several such feeders around the pen to encourage

the horse to walk instead of standing in one place.

Remember that horses are inquisitive and social creatures. Use these traits in your favor, and be creative: see how many steps you can add to your horse's day, and how long you can make his forage ration last!

Have you already implemented successful creative solutions to your horsekeeping? We'd love to hear them and share them with our readers!

## When is it okay for a horse to be sore after a trim?

By Maria Siebrand

In a word? Never. But the fact is that transitioning a horse out of shoes can be and often is uncomfortable. I won't go into a detailed description of the myriad possible reasons for this, because that's simply not the point I'm trying to make here. Suffice it to say that the discomfort is NOT because the hoof of the domestic horse is inherently weak, but because the prolonged effect of the nailed on shoe or a poor trim has weakened the hoof. It is never okay for the horse to be more uncomfortable after a trim than he was before...but that doesn't mean it isn't sometimes inevitable.

The goal during transition is to do no more damage to the hoof, but to trim the hoof in such a way that the new growth is progressively healthier. It's a tightrope walk between leaving enough of the "old" hoof while still setting the foot up to improve. The ideals set forth by the feral hoof are just that -- ideals. What we have to do, then, is regard those ideals as our perfect goal, but realize that most of the hooves we trim will be most healthy and comfortable with variations: a little deeper collateral groove depth at the heel, slightly more wall above the sole plane, more or less relief through the quarters, a more pronounced bevel on one side than the other. We ease the hoof in the direction of the ideal, without simply cutting the hoof to those parameters before the internal structures have been developed by thousands of steps of correct movement. It often requires extreme patience; sometimes keeping a horse

as comfortable as possible means growing out pathology and developing internal structures through not one growth cycle (hoof wall grown from the coronary band all the way to the ground), but possibly several.

Fortunately, companies like EasyCare, Inc. are providing more and better options to allow transitioning horses to never miss a beat. Good trimmers will fit the horse with boots immediately after the shoes are pulled and the first trim has been applied regardless of how we \*think\* the horse will respond to the trim. Some horses absolutely need those boots to be kept comfortable while the hoof heals. Still, the onus remains on the trimmer to balance the goal of ideal hoof form with good judgement, and trim a hoof that the horse can use as comfortably as possible without boots and pads whenever possible.

Does that mean a good trimmer will never have a horse walk away more tender after a trim? I wish! Unfortunately one needs to be a little clairvoyant to ALWAYS do the right thing. Experience, good judgement and intuition all play valuable roles. Continuing education and networking with others in the trenches, comparing notes, sharing ideas, and learning from each other's mistakes is vital, and the barefoot hoof care community is full of folks like myself, completely obsessed with the hoof of the horse. Believe me, no one wants the horse to walk away 100% comfortable more than a good barefoot trimmer!

Dear Readers:

The end of Summer '08 saw me busier than ever. I am proud to now be a member of Pacific Hoof Care Practitioners ([www.pacifichoofcare.org](http://www.pacifichoofcare.org)). I've also been burning the midnight oil taking an in-depth nutrition course with Dr. Eleanor Kellon ([www.drkellon.com](http://www.drkellon.com)). Our September issue is a bit late and shorter than usual as a result. But all that activity has given me LOTS of article ideas for the rest of the year, so stay tuned!

Sincerely,  
Maria

**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

