

NEWSLETTER

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The Error in Our Ways

The fundamental flaws with the typical horsekeeping practices preclude development of a healthy hoof.

Traditional farriery, and indeed, traditional veterinary medicine, instead of aiming to fix the problem, is essentially aimed at damage control.

That local vets continue to recommend shoeing for horses with difficult to diagnose and often elusive lameness issues is a symptom of their failure to yet embrace the most basic truth about the equine foot: the hoof is a very sensitive and dynamic mirror of EVERYTHING that's going on with the horse. Body balance, diet imbalance, systemic or metabolic problems, overall health, inadequate movement, poor footing, poorer hygiene, imbalanced riding, ill-fitting tack, incorrect training techniques...anything and everything that can impact the overall health of the horse is almost immediately reflected in the shape and health of the horse's foot.

Recommendations for so-called "corrective" shoeing protocols are routinely pronounced for navicular horses and laminitic cases. But the very shoeing protocols that sometimes provide some degree of comfort initially in some cases are in fact only compounding the problem. The hard truth – and a truth that even those embracing these ideas will echo – is that shoeing has never healed a hoof.

Equine veterinary medicine continues to ridicule and punish researchers who are delving deeper into what is clearly still the mystery of the equine foot. The most prominent of these rebels, as a result, invariably become frustrated and eschew traditional venues for their research. As a mere practitioner in the field, I can feel their pain. The resistance is a veritable brick wall that I pound my head against daily. But I am also in the enviable position, with my well-read, open-minded and compliant clients, of validating the research these forward thinking individuals have put forth. The things I recommend and suggest – like eliminating excess non-structural carbs in a tender footed horse with otherwise healthy feet, or aggressive thrush treatment for a horse with heel pain and a ratty frog – WORK. First hand experience and a close-knit barefoot hoof care community reporting identical results can't be ignored.

The bewildering part is the continued resistance to ideas that are ridiculously easy and almost shocking in their sheer simplicity. At the same time, it's true that properly caring for a barefoot horse for optimum soundness requires a much more diligent horsekeeping situation than many owners are either willing or capable of providing. The question is, would you rather have an equine health care professional that essentially caters to a lazy horsekeeping public? Or an enlightened equine health care professional that truly understands, supports and recommends a healthier paradigm for your beloved horses?

The choice is yours!

Halfway's Not Good Enough

The whole goal of natural horsemanship in its purist form is to teach the horse to respond to any request by looking for a release.

It is not about a conditioned response; it is, instead, a matter of teaching the horse to think through a situation, instead of reacting to it.

Note I didn't use the term "pressure" in that paragraph at all. I think that's an important distinction to make, because traditional horsemanship, or at least the common variety of horsemanship, is all about applying pressure to achieve a response, without offering a release to communicate that the horse has answered your request correctly. In essence, instead of teaching the horse to yield to pressure, this common approach teaches the horse to either dread and avoid it, or simply endure it. A more refined, thoughtful approach employs not pressure, but a physical request. We literally are physically posing a question, via body language, touch, or a combination of both, to which the horse must find the appropriate answer.

This works brilliantly when applied to the entire training regimen. But by its very nature, it cannot work if it is only used for *some* aspects of the horse's training. A stellar example is the concept of using natural horsemanship techniques to teach the horse ground manners, while riding the horse in the common way.

Think about this. If you've ever attempted to teach a horse using the natural horsemanship concept of feel, you know how easy it is to miss the horse's "try". When you do, any progress you've made up until that failed moment is gone....you're back to square one. The horse interprets the lack of release to his correct answer as meaning that it was, in fact, NOT the correct answer, and he should keep trying different things.

In exactly the same way, if you teach the horse to feel of you and be soft on the ground, and then get on his back and pick up the reins and ride with constant contact, or training devices which offer no release, all you've managed to do is confuse the horse, and negate your original deal with the horse.

To the horse, there is no difference between interaction on the ground and under saddle. Just as poor or incomplete groundwork will quickly show up under saddle, so will poor feel and timing under saddle show up in your horse's ground manners. Natural horsemanship at its best – horsemanship with true feel – teaches the horse an alphabet from which a silent language evolves. It is a whole approach...not a quick fix for ground manners only.

Australia Brumby Research Unit Seminar



Brian Hampson, Postgraduate PhD scholar
School of Veterinary Sciences, The University of Queensland

Saturday August 14th
The Embassy Suites in Los Angeles, CA

Many of you have heard me talk about the University of Queensland, School of Veterinary Science's Australian Brumby Research Unit. The Brumby Research Unit has been studying the Brumbies specifically with the goal of understanding the foot of the feral horse in an effort to improve the health of our domestic horses' hooves.

Launched in 2008, the project includes GPS tracking of feral herds, hoof analysis, DNA analysis, and habitat analysis. In addition, the team is looking at variations on paddock design in an effort to increase the movement of domestic horses within their enclosure.



THE THOUGHTFUL HORSEMAN

To learn more, or to register for the seminar, go here:

http://www.pacifichoofcare.org/8_10Meeting.html

SEMINAR COST:

\$75 for PHCP Members, includes lunch

\$100 for non members, includes lunch

Prices above if paid by August 1st. \$10 additional fee if paid after that date.

Topics/Agenda:

- Wild horses worldwide
- Background on brumbies in Australia
- Domestic and wild horse movement through GPS studies
- The brumby foot – morphology and radiography
- The brumby footprint through pressure plate loading studies
 - Foot pathology in feral horses
 - Sole depth and its relation to weight bearing
 - Brumby nutrition in wilderness environments
 - Hoof moisture content in wet and dry habitats
 - The effect of environment on horses' feet
- Hoof wall architecture – the lamellae and outer hoof wall
- What it all means for equine husbandry and foot care



The images used in this article are available as high quality, high definition posters.

Proceeds help support the work of the Australian Brumby Research Unit.

To purchase, go here:

<http://wildhorseresearch.com/Documents/photo%20gallery.htm>

Feed Profile: Winnie's Cookies

I was having a conversation with a client recently about the supplement cookies I'm working hard to get into production. My client commented that the daily dose – 4 cookies – was similar to Winnie's cookies. I'd heard of Winnie's, but hadn't bothered to look at the nutrition profile until then.

Winnie's cookies have been around for a while. They are billed as a complete nutritional system. A look at the profile for the average daily recommended dose shows they fall far short of filling in the major and trace mineral gaps of the typical horse on a bermuda grass diet. They do contain Omega 3 fatty acids, although the quantity is not disclosed, and there is no mention of Omega 6. They also contain biotin, but at 1.71mg per 5 cookie dose, nowhere near the amount that studies have found optimum for improving hoof quality. They boast a long list of amino acids, although again, quantities are not disclosed, and the truth is, requirements for most of the amino acids are not strongly understood, with the exception of lysine and methionine.

While there are some things I like about Winnie's – especially the fact that they are made from all-organic, human-grade food products – they fail to disclose the non-structural carbohydrate (a combination of starch and sugars) content. Molasses is used for flavoring, although probably in small quantities. Used as a treat, and fed sparingly, they are probably fine for horses with no metabolic issues.

Crude Protein: min 14%; Crude Fat min 6.5%; Crude Fiber Max 5%

Starch/Sugars: not disclosed

	1 dose (5 cookies)	Needs added to meet optimum requirement	Deficit or Excess
Calcium	1.94g	0	1.94g excess
Magnesium	.65g	7g	6.35g deficit
Phosphorous	1.62g	7g	
Potassium	1.91g	-	1.91 excess
Sodium	(not listed)	11g	11g deficit
Iron	21.42mg	0 (hay is iron overloaded already)	21.42mg excess
Copper	0.6mg	≥300mg	≥300mg deficit
Zinc	4.28mg	≥750mg	≥746mg deficit
Manganese	19.45mg	200mg	180mg deficit

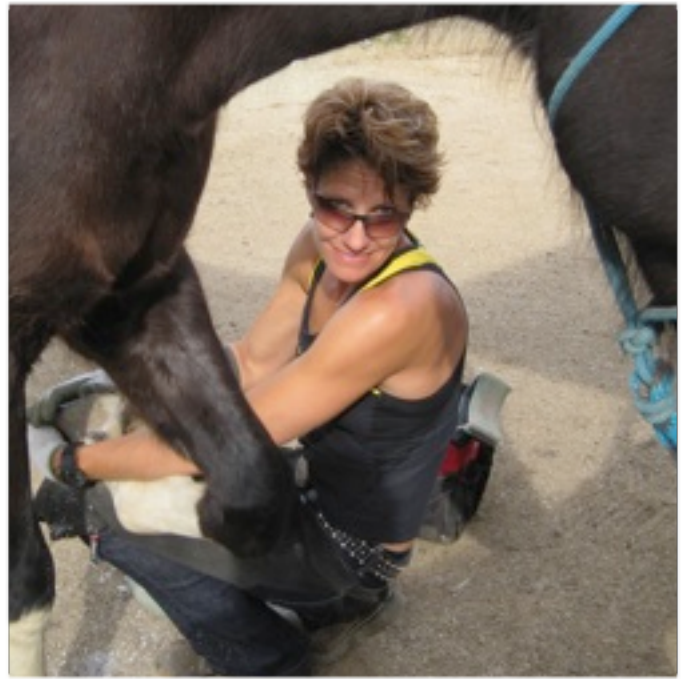
THE THOUGHTFUL HORSEMAN

About Maria Siebrand

& The Thoughtful Horseman...

With a background in the life science and pharma industries, and a determination to make life better for our domestic horses, Maria brings a science-based approach to horsekeeping, equine nutrition, and the field of barefoot hoof care. She offers barefoot hoof care services, nutrition consultations and diet formulation, horsemanship coaching, as well as a line of supplements formulated to fit the typical Southern California equine diet.

Maria is available for clinics, lectures, and mentorships on barefoot hoof care and progressive horsekeeping practices.



THE THOUGHTFUL HORSEMAN

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