

No Hoof, No Horse

A Healthy Horse Has Healthy Hooves

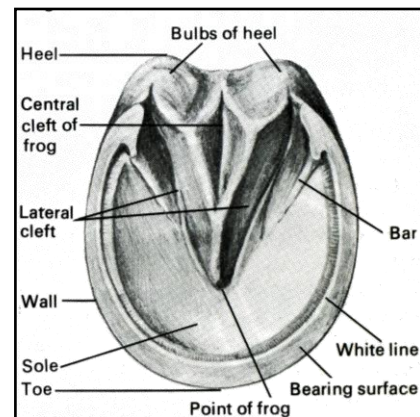


EQUINE GUELPH
helping horses for life

Whether your equine friend is in hard competition or ridden lightly, it is important to consider the surface and intensity of training. The hoof supports the whole weight of the horse, absorbing concussion and allowing the horse to move forward freely. Dr. Thomason, an award winning researcher who studies hoof anatomy and mechanics at the University of Guelph, explains, “To fully understand lameness issues, it is important to understand the science of the hoof. Proper management of the hooves is essential to the well being of the horse.” Read on to learn more about how the hoof functions and the requirements for a healthy hoof.

What’s What?

A firm understanding of the parts of the foot and leg is necessary to properly maintain the hoof. You will be more readily able to notice potential problems if you understand how a healthy hoof looks and functions. Additionally, you will be able to better communicate any concerns to your vet and farrier. The diagram to the left illustrates the anatomy of the bottom of the hoof.



Routine Care

The key to encouraging the growth of and maintaining a healthy hoof is routine care, both inside and out. Here’s what you can do to help your horse put its best foot forward:

- ✓ Clean the hooves daily – remove any rocks and dirt from the hoof.
- ✓ Inspect the hooves and legs daily for any wounds, cracks, bruises or punctures. You may be able to address minor issues yourself, but when in doubt call a vet or farrier.
- ✓ Maintain a consistent trimming and shoeing schedule – your farrier and vet will suggest the best schedule for your horse, but six to eight weeks is a general guideline.
- ✓ Proper nutrition makes for healthy hooves. Ensure your horse is getting the correct amount of vitamins and minerals needed to build healthy hooves.
- ✓ Be informed – talk to your farrier or vet about any questions or concerns you may have. A good professional will be happy to help you learn.

“Not all healthy hooves will look exactly the same,” explains Dr. Thomason, “The textbook picture is not necessarily best for your horse. You and your farrier must take into account the horse’s conformation and training when trimming and shoeing.”

For more information on hoof care visit the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food’s [factsheet](#) which was co-written by Dr. Thomason.