What is the difference between a "farrier (paddock) trim" and a "barefoot trim"? (excerpt)

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Until the "professional barefoot trimmers" came along, it were – and still are - our farriers who also trim our horses' feet as part of their service. Trimming may be seen as the "cheap version" of hoofcare, quite adequate if our horses "can cope without shoes" – However, it seems that way too many horses can not "cope" walking on their own feet when "barefoot trimmed"! Why?
This usually has something to do with the way their hooves have been trimmed.

A typical farrier/paddock trim is one that "shortens" the hoof as part of hoof maintenance when conditions did not provide for adequate wear of the horn.

Hoofhorn is growing continuously, like your fingernail. If the hoof is healthy, the wall will grow at the rate of about 1cm a month and at the sole is produced at the rate of about one third of a cm – also, like the hoof wall, in a forward and downward direction.
Obviously, if the horse lives in an environment where the horn is preserved (not abraded/worn), the hooves will become pathologically deformed as they grow too long. Therefore- and in most domestic situations, we must provide the horse with hoofcare to mimic natural wear as it would be ideal for this particular horse.

A healthy hoof in its natural environment does not just "shorten" itself. It sculpts itself to its physiologically correct and functional form. There is nothing "flat" in a healthy hoof!

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The physiologically correct form and the functions that go with it, have been studied by those who saw problems with conventional hoofcare which comes from a mind set that originates from the desire to protect the hoof wall from wear by attaching a flat piece of metal to it.

To securely attach something flat (iron shoe) to another object (hoof), requires the attachment surfaces to be as flat as the attachment itself. Therefore farriers must prepare the hoof area that will be in contact with the shoe as a plane.
Why? Because something flat and level on something flat and level will minimise movement and lever forces.

This "dressing" (preparing) of the hoof for a shoe requires certain trimming techniques: When watching your farrier at work, observe how he is using the rasp in a heel-to-toe motion. (see pic)

This rasping technique will produce what is called "the solar plane": It will shorten the furthermost heel tubules and will create a flat area at the heel which is physiologically not correct as it creates forward forces on the hoof capsule with every step. (which can be a reason for underslung heels, for example)

The farrier at work, rasping "to the solar plane":

This rasping technique also shortens the toe area with every swipe, reducing the concavity and thinning the sole beneath the tip of the coffin bone.

The above hooves have been shortened in a "plane" and except the one in the top rh corner would be too short to be comfortable barefoot! These pictures were "borrowed" of "high profile farriers", explaining their barefoot techniques.

A "physiologically correct" barefoot trim however, is created almost like a "piece of art": It has "flow" and "balance" and most of all**: Function.**
Its model is a healthy self trimming hoof as we would find it in the wild.
A healthy self trimming hoof has certain **qualities.**
These are:

1. **It provides comfort for mobility**
   (no lameness, appropriate traction, tactile ability, surefootedness, correct break over, balance)

2. **It provides function**
   (Hoofmechanism for optimal circulatory and metabolic function, protection of sensitive internal parts, and shock absorption!

NOTE: 60-80% of concussion is absorbed by the suspension mechanism and reversible deformation of the functioning hoofcapsule alone! If this function is impaired by a brace, concussion will have to be absorbed elsewhere – joints, muscles, tendon, ligaments….will be stressed, causing problems like calcifications, arthritis, avoidable "wear and tear")

3. **A ground parallel coffin bone** for balanced weight distribution for skeletal and soft tissue health.

Prevention

A healthy foal is born with the blueprint of hooves that will fulfil all these qualities, providing it will be able to enjoy a natural lifestyle on breed appropriate terrain.

In a domestic situation we can provide these ideal conditions by

- allowing a breed appropriate lifestyle
- physiologically correct hoofcare that mimics how the hoof would wear in ideal conditions.
- Prevention of damage by providing **early**, correct hoofcare for the young horse & combine it with fundamental owner education)

Even though a farrier/paddock trim may look similar at first, the trimming techniques are quite different – and it may take the Barefoot trimmer a little longer than it would take a farrier to trim.
A physiologically correct trim requires the practitioner to be precise and skilled in the fine application of his/her tools as well as a deep understanding of the anatomy and physiology of each individual hoof, the horse and its environment.
Merely shortening the hoof in a few minutes will just not do!

Every feature of the hoof has a purpose, and this is what requires the trimming techniques to be different. Barehoof trimmers have been schooled to specifically recognize and enhance these structures so the hoof can work optimally and provide all the desirable attributes to its owner, the horse.

Conclusion:

Looking at the horse industry and how the "barefoot movement" is growing globally, the changes in equine hoofcare are more than just a shift in paradigms:
We are at the beginning of a new age in hoofcare and horse owner awareness.

Why and how?
According to the American Farrier's Journal, there are over 120million horses in the world, but only about 10% are sound.

The National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) conducted a study to evaluate and compare the economical cost of lameness related problems, colic, and equine protozoal myeloencephalitis (EPM). Equine lameness, combined with moderate levels of death, number of days of lost use, and veterinary services, drugs and additional care expenses ranked BY FAR as the most costly of the three disease conditions.

In Germany 83%-85% of teenaged performance horses have to be retired because of problems with their movement apparatus.

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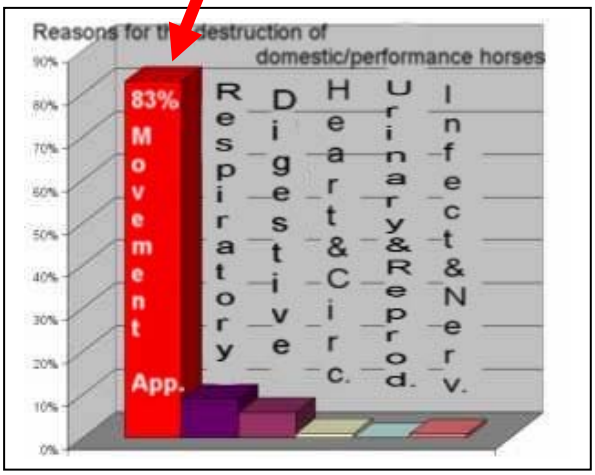

It's not rocket science that something needs to change.

Horses have to get a better deal!

Welcome to the world of "barefooting" !

Carola Adolf **NEP/fSHP**