

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR EQUINE HOOF CARE

Includes advice for the care of both the shod and unshod horse

A. INTRODUCTION

1. In the context of this Code of Practice, the term “horse” includes horses, ponies, donkeys and any hybrids of these, and refers to horses both maintained without shoes and shod.
2. Owners and keepers of horses have a duty of care to ensure proper hoof management, showing regard for the need for protection from injury and treatment of disease. There is a significant probability of suffering associated with pain and lameness if care is neglected.
3. The majority of horses require some attention to their hooves every four to eight weeks, occasionally more often. The exact period depends on the individual animal taking into account their conformation, rate of horn growth, environment in which they are kept, workload required of them and any abnormalities they may have.
4. Where horses are shod it is particularly important to ensure shoe removal, appropriate trimming and reshoeing as necessary is carried out at regular intervals as indicated above.

B. ROUTINE TRIMMING *by owners and keepers of horses*

1. Owners and keepers of horses are permitted to carry out simple maintenance of unshod feet.
2. There should be no pain or lameness during or following trimming.
3. There should be either no or minimal alteration of gait following trimming.
4. There should be negligible adjustment of the shape of the foot and associated lower limb conformation following trimming.
5. This trimming corresponds to minimal removal of excess horn, including loose and damaged horn from the walls of the foot and frog.
6. Trimming may also be carried out in an emergency to relieve suffering where a portion of hoof has become dislodged from the wall of the foot.

C. TRIMMING AND SHOERING FOR REWARD

1. Under the provisions of the Farriers Registration Act 1975, shoeing may only be legally undertaken in Great Britain by registered farriers, apprentices working under them or veterinary surgeons. Such farriers must be registered with the Farriers Registration Council. Registration follows an approved apprenticeship, completed course of study and practical and theoretical examination. Registration on the basis of long professional experience was allowed when the Act came into force and the law also provides for the recognition of equivalent overseas professional qualifications and certified experience. Farriery in this context is legally defined as *the preparation and trimming of the foot for the immediate reception of a shoe* and includes both conventional shoeing and the use of acrylics and stick-on shoes. Farriers of course may trim feet without the subsequent application of a shoe.
2. Other individuals may trim horses' feet for reward without the provisions of the Farriers Registration Act. Such persons are not to be classed as Farriers but

should have received adequate training to ensure trimmed horses are protected from pain and suffering.

D. TREATMENT FOR LAMENESS

1. Such procedures are carried out by or require the involvement of a veterinary surgeon to comply with the provisions of The Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966. This is for welfare reasons because
 - a) Diagnosis is required in most cases. For example even severely overgrown and misshapen hooves often require radiography for proper assessment prior to trimming.
 - b) The management of diseased and overgrown feet frequently involves the control of pain, part of which will involve the prescription of appropriate medication.
 - c) The diagnosis and treatment of related systemic disease needs to be addressed where relevant.
2. Farriers and other competent persons may undertake the trimming of lame horses' feet under the direction of a veterinary surgeon. While a veterinary surgeon will remain ultimately responsible for a case throughout, the degree of veterinary involvement will be in more chronic cases proportional to the clinical signs presented, although regular veterinary review of such cases is necessary.
3. Farriers are specifically trained to undertake trimming and shoeing of horses' feet in relation to the modification of a horse's action and in the correction of developmental abnormalities. This should be carried out in conjunction with a veterinary surgeon as necessary depending on the degree of abnormality identified.
4. First aid may be administered to horses with penetrated, infected or bruised feet with subsequent appropriate veterinary advice as necessary. The risk of tetanus infection or the involvement of deeper structures within the foot must always be considered.
5. There is a joint responsibility on the part of an owner and/or person directly responsible for an animal, on the veterinary surgeon, trimmer and/or farrier, to ensure that the horse's need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury or disease is being met.

E. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Horses managed without shoes often suffer varying degrees of foot soreness especially during the adaptive period and will require careful management, including the use of protective boots and limited workload to ensure there is no pain or suffering. The adaptive period is that which following shoe removal allows the foot to assume natural hardness and resilience permitting usage without shoes (and may take many months). Some horses will continue to always require the use of such measures under certain working and ground conditions. Care should be taken to ensure that any protective boots are fitted properly to avoid significant injury from straps and fixings.
2. Only suitable persons should be allowed to trim horses' feet. Such persons should be either registered farriers or competent adults with appropriate experience and training.