

It is very pleasing that more and more horse owners are considering the barefoot hoofcare option – as distributors of barefoot hoof boots, we have seen an increase in retailers asking for details of our products, and also a general increase among horse owners that want to know more about keeping horses without shoes.

So, how do you choose your hoofcare practitioner, and what should you expect from their visits?

Naturally, we support the work of forward-thinking farriers that give performance trims for working barefoot horses, but we are also well aware that a successful outcome where de-shoeing a horse and transitioning to barefoot is concerned depends on the skillset of the individual practitioner. Trimming the high performing barefoot horse, diet and management of the horse are not currently taught as part of a farrier's syllabus, so it is important if you are working with a farrier to select one that has developed their own knowledge-base in these key areas. Make sure you seek recommendation from someone whose farrier has successfully managed their working barefoot horses, if you take this route!

If you choose to work instead with a barefoot trimmer, again seek recommendation from a horse owner that has used their services, and choose a trimmer that demonstrates the criteria outlined in the NOS (National Occupational Standard) set out for this industry.

Kent-based Lucy Priory of Barefoot South originally gained Certification with the AANHCP – the Association for the Advancement of Natural Horsecare Practices, which follows Jaime Jackson's hoofcare ethos. She offers barefoot trimming services in the South-East and beyond. "I can't emphasise enough the importance of a horse owner doing their research before considering the barefoot option, as it is important to arm yourself with the facts, and be prepared for what will be a rewarding and exciting journey with your horse," she says. "I would say that there are very few horses that do not thrive on a barefoot regime – however some owners find the additional responsibility and management required of them when owning a barefoot horse a challenge to their lifestyle. With barefoot there is nowhere to hide, your ability as a horseman is on show to all."

Lucy shares her tips for what to expect of your hoofcare practitioner when they visit your horse for a trim:

1 As Lucy Nicholas wrote in the April issue of LocalRider, hoof trimming rarely involves anything more than a small rasp – the equivalent to the filing of human finger nails. Only the hoof material that would wear away naturally, or needs to be removed to strengthen or prevent pathology, should be filed away.

2 Your practitioner should discuss with you how the hoof works, what common issues might appear and why in the barefoot horse, and prepare you for a potentially bumpy transition process. Your first few visits may include lots of information – take a notebook, and don't worry if you feel a bit overwhelmed. A good trimmer will be happy to explain things a dozen times over and more if necessary.

3 Your practitioner should discuss your horse's nutrition with you, as this is fundamental to a successful transition from horse shoes to barefoot. Hooves are a window to your horse's health, and if the diet is not right then the hooves won't be either. Basic guidelines include low sugar, low starch and appropriate minerals. Your trimmer should be able to advise you on how to obtain a forage analysis for example and what to do with the results.

4 Your practitioner should not 'take your money and run', in terms of what they see at your yard, or the property that your horse is kept at. It is their duty to comment on any issues of care that may affect your horse's barefoot journey, whether it be the type of grazing you have, or the amount of turnout your horse gets. So expect them to be up front and honest about your facilities, and offer solutions to problems you are facing.

5 A good practitioner recognises pain issues and works within the horse's comfort levels, so a very poorly horse may only be able to receive low levels of treatment. Rough handling, anger and unnecessary restraint should not have a place in their practice. But a good horseman or woman is usually assertive and assured around horses.

6 It is usual for the practitioner to ask to see the horse moving, so they can perform a dynamic assessment.

What to expect when your barefoot horse is trimmed

By Lucy Nicholas of www.trelawneequine.co.uk, distributors of barefoot hoof boots



Trimming the high performing barefoot horse; with thanks to DLT photography.

Lucy Priory, <http://www.barefoot-south.com/> / <http://barefoothorseblog.blogspot.co.uk/08450943391>.

Lucy Nicholas' book, 'The Barefoot Horse', launches spring 2012

TRELAWNE

Equine

Horses managed with a barefoot hoof care regime experience these benefits...

- Hoof function is not detrimentally affected, as with metal shoes
- Hoof boots may be used when required, to offer sole protection
- Hoof boots offer excellent traction, with none of the concussion of a metal shoe
- Shock absorption is provided, aiding long-term soundness
- Dramatically less heat is experienced in booted hooves than in shod horses - circulation dramatically improves, thanks to natural mechanisms of properly trimmed, non-shod feet

Speak to the hoof boot experts - Trelawne Equine Ltd:

tel: 0844 257 8585 web: www.trelawneequine.co.uk
 email: advice@trelawneequine.co.uk Like us at: [facebook.com/TrelawneEquine](https://www.facebook.com/TrelawneEquine)