



Australian Equine Barefoot Movement



SMOOTH TRANSITIONS

Spring 2010 Edition



Major sponsor of AEBM Inc

Annual General Meeting –2010

The Annual General Meeting of the AEBM was held on Friday, 10th of September at Woori Yallock. Our new committee was duly elected and they are: President - Julie Leidl, Vice President - Mandy Etherton, Secretary - Kerry Dunlop, Treasurer - Deb Collins, ordinary member #1 - Tania Zalisz, ordinary member #2 - Susan Vickering and co-opted ordinary member #3 - Sue Woodruff.

Our AGM and ordinary meeting was followed by a great social evening, which included dinner, a quiz, a raffle, door prizes, and a slide show put together by members of the committee. Our wonderful major Sponsor, Cavallo Horse & Rider, supplied the prizes for the evening and will continue to support the AEBM during our next year.

The following is the President report as tabled at the AGM:

This last July marked our 8th anniversary since the incorporation of the AEBM. For those of us who have been around since the very beginning, and the beginning meaning the inception of the AEBM, like myself, are feeling pretty proud that the AEBM continues to be an organisation that, through the dedication of our volunteer committee and membership base, continues to support - without profit - horse owners in their search for information of how their horses can benefit through a barefoot and natural lifestyle approach.

During this last year we have continued our work to further develop the AEBM. Our system of committee meetings has changed as we now conduct the meetings in the comfort of our own homes, on our computers via Skype. This has enabled us to include people in our committee that would otherwise not have been able to



Karramar Mystique, 2000 - Photo by Kerry Dunlop & Peter Dunlop, AEBM Members.

attend meetings easily due to the demographics of where they live.

We have also stepped up our educational service by providing, when requested, riding clubs, with a speaker to give presentations on the benefits of barefoot, and natural lifestyle. One day information seminars - "No Hoof, No

The AEBM is a member of the Australian Horse Industry Council (AHIC)

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Contributors this issue:

- Wendy Elks, Member
- Glenn Wilson, Member - Hooves Naturally, www.waterfallcreek.com.au
- Susan Vickering, Committee Member
- Carlene Wilson, Member
- Julie Leitl, President - www.ausequinearts.com

AEBM Editorial contact:

Email: admin@aebm.org.au

Website: www.aebm.org.au

Horse" - are also now serving to both educate and raise extra funds for the AEBM. Riding and equestrian clubs can also organise one of these seminar events as a club fund raising effort.

Thanks to the continued generosity of our Major Sponsor Cavallo Horse & Rider, our organisation continues to promote barefoot through sponsoring equestrian events, and through further development, production and distribution of our newsletter. And new members now receive welcome gift bags that include Cavallo goodies, whilst all members are able to win Cavallo hoof boots through members' only competitions, and receive generous discounts on Cavallo products. Our website continues to show who we are to the world.



So, with the last year behind us, we now look forward to the election of the AEBM committee for the coming year. I would like to thank each of the committee members for their time and dedication over the last year and say that I have enjoyed the experience as the AEBM President.

Julie Leitl, President, AEBM

How can you help?

BECOME A MEMBER The AEBM continues to have a strong commitment to educating all Australian horse owners, promoting the enormous health and welfare benefits of barefoot, natural lifestyle with particular interest paid to hoof care. We cannot do this without our members! In order to help us continue this important work we ask that if you have previously been a member, please renew your membership now for 2010. For those who haven't yet joined us, please consider membership for only \$25 per annum.

AEBM SPONSORSHIP We are always looking for equestrian events where barefoot horses are likely to be competing so we can offer sponsorship of a "Best Performed Barefoot Horse". These events can be anywhere within Australia and can be any type of equestrian event. Our sponsorship package can include prize packages worth hundreds of dollars, and the feedback from our prize winners has been fabulous!

SPONSORSHIP If you have a business in equestrian goods, please consider providing some for us to add to our wonderful prize packs. This is a great way to promote your business and the AEBM.

HOOF CARE PROFESSIONALS The AEBM website has an extensive listing of Hoofcare Professionals from around Australia. If you are not on our list, please consider joining the AEBM and have your details added so we can continue to assist horse owners from around the country to find a HCP in their area. We receive many inquiries from people looking for HCPs as barefooting has become a more popular choice for horse owners. HCPs listing on our site report excellent results from this advertising media.

WEBSITE If you have your own hoofcare or other equestrian related website, please consider adding a link to our AEBM website.

The Cushing's Horse

by Wendy Elks ©

Cushing's Syndrome is common in older horses, but it can strike younger ones too. Awareness is important, as early intervention can alleviate symptoms and postpone serious, life-threatening complications.

When an equine reaches their later teens, some start growing a longer coat, which may be seen as nature's way of keeping old bones warm. But in fact a long coat, which doesn't completely shed in the summer, is the definitive symptom of Cushing's disease, or syndrome.

Cushing's, as it's generally known, is a collection of symptoms rather than a specific disease, which can affect dogs, horses and people. The majority of cases are thought to be caused by a benign tumour on the pituitary gland, which is located at the base of the brain. There's no known cure, and though the tumour is progressive, it's slow-growing. As the pituitary gland governs the endocrine or hormonal system, symptoms indicating hormonal changes are significant indicators. Drinking copious amounts of water, muscle wastage despite good appetite, odd accumulations of fat, hirsutism (excessive hair growth), and lethargy are all signs of endocrine disease; but with horses, a shaggy, long, wavy coat is the classic sign of Cushing's. It is now thought that Metabolic Syndrome, a condition similar to type-2 diabetes which often affects overweight horses and ponies, can also predispose to Cushing's Syndrome.

By the time a horse displays the 'close-the-book' symptom of long hair, Cushing's is well-advanced. In the early stages it's difficult to detect at all. This is where an informed owner comes in, alert for signs of metabolic change, because Cushing's can be managed and postponed in



Photo courtesy of Sue & Graeme Woodruff, Members

several ways. This is well worthwhile, as it will almost inevitably lead to the serious, painful condition of chronic laminitis. Even without the symptom of a long shaggy coat, a horse that 'suddenly grows old' may in fact be aging unnaturally due to hormonal haywire. That 'good doer' with the cresty neck, for example, may have an overactive thyroid, and be suffering from Insulin Resistance - which as mentioned often goes hand-in-hand with Cushing's.

The 'iceberg effect'

On the positive side, Dr Mark West of Hastings Veterinary Clinic in Victoria says that tumours affecting the pituitary gland are almost always benign, and very slow-growing. It's the complications of Cushing's - laminitis and insulin deficiency - that can be devastating; like the iceberg to the Titanic, it's the underlying element that can do the most damage.

The classic advanced-Cushing's horse is skinny and lethargic, with long, colour-leached hair and a pot-belly. Loss of muscle tone has caused the abdomen to sag, and the top-line to fall away. The horse drinks large amounts, and urinates often. If the thyroid is affected there may be pockets of fat around the neck, root of the tail, sheath, and eyes (a sign of this is that the natural depression above the eyes is concave, rather than convex). As the disease advances the immune system breaks down and the horse will suffer from infection and parasite attack. There may be increased appetite but no weight gain, high temperatures, and sweating. Mares and stallions can suffer infertility problems. Hoof abscesses and laminitis become chronic. Eventually, euthanasia is the only option.

The clinical term for Cushing's Syndrome, named after the physician who identified it, about 70 years ago, is hyperadrenocorticism: 'hyper-' meaning increased; 'adreno-' indicating the adrenal glands, and 'corticism' referring to the adrenal cortex. In a

horse with Cushing's, the pituitary gland secretes excessive amounts of ACTH (adrenocorticotrophic hormone) into the bloodstream, this in turn stimulates the adrenal gland, located near the kidneys, to release cortisol, which acts as a kind of trigger to other glands. 'Hyper' means that, due to interference to the pituitary gland, cortisol is being released at an unregulated rate.

When the endocrine system is compromised, the delicate hormonal balance is upset, and this throws out the entire system. Symptoms present according to the glands most affected. There's an added complication: similar syndromes. Insulin Deficiency (Equine Metabolic Syndrome) and thyroid dysfunction can cause similar symptoms, but are not necessarily related to Cushing's. This is why the clinical profile differs from horse to horse, and why careful, individual diagnosis is necessary.

Testing for Cushing's

The endocrine system of mammals is mysterious and complex; much is still unknown, though more is being discovered all the time. Because of the nature of Cushing's, clinical diagnosis is difficult, and not totally reliable. Mark West explained that while blood samples and urine tests can reveal some hormonal changes, they cannot give a conclusive diagnosis of Cushing's syndrome. Several diagnostic tests which measure cortisol levels in the blood are inconclusive, especially in the early stages. The current, most reliable test for Cushing's is the dexamethasone suppression test, or 'dex' test.

In this test, Dexamethasone, a corticosteroid, is administered to the horse. Two blood samples will be drawn: one in the late afternoon, and one the following morning. The 'rush' of cortisol in the blood should cause the pituitary gland to shut down, or stop the production of natural cortisol. In response, the morning blood test should show a lowered level of natural cortisol. If the morning reading shows a double dose of cortisol – the natural and the synthetic, the pituitary gland hasn't done its job.

Vets hesitate to carry out the 'dex' test willy-nilly, for two reasons. In the early stages, the tell-tale non-regulation of cortisol may be so low that no abnormality will show up, and therefore the test, which isn't cheap, is inconclusive. In later stages, when the level of blood cortisol is already high, injecting more cortisone into the system can dangerously raise the level and

trigger an episode of laminitis - something to avoid at all costs. A 'low-dex' test is available but it's less conclusive, and still carries some risk. The long, non-shedding coat remains the simplest and most straight-forward sign that action needs to be taken.

Once a firm diagnosis is reached, there are several drugs which can help, with Pergolide, used to treat Parkinson's disease in humans, yielding the best results. Trilostane, developed in the UK, shows great promise as it blocks cortisol production. It's still very expensive, but when demand grows and efficacy and safety are proven, it should become more affordable.

With proper care and management, symptoms can be relieved or postponed for years, and even reversed to some degree. Janice Posnikoff, head of Orange Country Veterinary Services, in Southern California, says that Cushing's disease should not be feared, but respected. "When caught early, treatment is very successful in reducing clinical signs and allowing affected horses to live almost normal lives. For those horses in advanced stages of the disease, treatment still offers improved quality of life and longevity".

Therapists across the spectrum agree that a holistic approach is best. A supplemented diet which includes vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants such as vitamins C and E will boost the immune system and improve overall health. Chaste Tree berry (*Vitex agnus castus*), is an organic source of dopamine stimulation used by naturopaths to normalise pituitary function. Veterinarian Dr Judith Mulholland says that Chaste Tree berry, used primarily to level the hormones in mares, is helpful in reducing symptoms in around 50% of horses suffering from Cushing's. Her website, www.farriervet.com, has comprehensive information about Cushing's and other serious conditions.

Equine naturopaths using herbal treatments prefer to begin with a veterinary diagnosis, then treat specific symptoms. They advocate natural remedies to support synthetic drugs, or as the first step before a drug regime is begun, as treatment for Cushing's is life-long, and the human-use drugs which have been found to assist horses are not cheap. Renowned and respected equine herbalist, Victoria Ferguson, says that some medicinal plants, referred to as adaptogens, are known to equalise the metabolic system. Apart from the aforementioned Chaste Tree berry, circulatory

herbs can strengthen the system, and aid healing. Devil's Claw, for instance, is used as a natural alternative to phenylbutazone in the treatment of laminitis, and it doesn't have bute's negative side-effects.

How can owners help?

As with all cancers, and metabolic conditions such as insulin resistance, early detection can make a huge difference. Being aware of possible symptoms, and adjusting factors like diet and proper hoof-care, really can help to delay the onset of severe syndromes like Cushing's. For more advanced cases, a lot can be done to alleviate symptoms and make the horse more comfortable. Elevated cortisol in the system is similar to a constant state of stress, so added stress should be avoided. The owner can assist by:

- Sticking to a strict routine.
- Providing sheltered, comfortable surroundings, with conveniently-placed water and feed.
- Provide a GENTLE companion - horses hate to be alone.
- Provide a good rug in cold weather - but don't over-rug as hairy Cushing's horses can get very hot!
- Having the long coat clipped off prior to the summer months will keep the horse cooler and more comfortable.
- Groom regularly to minimise skin disease and parasites.
- Keep the feet well-trimmed, and watch for laminitis.
- Worm the horse more frequently, and immunise annually against tetanus and strangles.
- Have the dentist visit twice a year.
- Avoid giving phenylbutazone for pain relief; 'bute' weakens the blood-vessel walls, thus further compromising the system, and can actually exacerbate laminitis.
- Avoid subjecting the horse to bossy or new horses.

Diet is important

Providing a plain, easily digestible, high-quality diet is very important. High roughage and low protein are the key points, as Cushing's horses metabolise protein at far greater rates than normal, and protein overload causes cellular damage. Good quality grass hay should form the bulk of the diet (soaking the hay prior to

feeding will remove much of the sugars for insulin resistant horses). Eliminate rich foods, including lucerne, green grass (beware of Spring and post-drought flushes!), grains, starches and sugars, including apples and carrots. It may seem boring and bland, but sticking to what horses evolved to eat is what they need more than anything else.

Victoria Ferguson recommends linseed and/or sunflower oils, in moderate amounts, to provide omega 3 & 6 essential fatty acids; and Rosehips, Garlic, Seaweed, Dolomite and Brewer's Yeast to provide minerals, trace elements and vitamins in their natural form, which are more easily metabolised than their synthetic counterparts. She emphasises the importance of getting an individual diagnosis, taking and observing results at regular intervals, and adjusting treatments accordingly.

Over-feeding grains and keeping horses in a permanent state of obesity, out of misguided love or an enhancement for the show-ring, may pre-dispose horses to severe illnesses such as insulin deficiency and Cushing's (think of health issues such as diabetes amongst overweight people.) Lack of exercise is also a factor. Light work is of great benefit, physically and mentally, aiding circulation and pumping oxygen-rich blood throughout the body and inflamed, laminitic feet. If working the horse is out of the question, a walk or a groom will be enjoyable and beneficial, as well as lifting the old friend's spirits and interest in life. Plenty of roughage, water to stand in to soothe sore feet, and a bit of love and attention will keep your golden oldie happy and well for much longer.

Australian Brumby Research Unit

The Australian Brumby Research Unit has just developed a new initiative which will allow the community to experience first hand the brumby country of Australia.

Brumby Tours of the Outback are now available for groups.

So if you have an interest in being part of groups or organizing a group yourself just contact the Unit to book your experience:

<http://www.wildhorseresearch.com/Documents/BrumbyTours%20Australia.pdf>



www.australianhooftrimmers.com

Australian Certified Equine Hoofcare Practitioners



The AEBM proudly supports "**The Horse's Hoof**" magazine. In the next issue you will find:

- A Barefoot Milestone: Releasing The Fury - Garrett Ford's horse The Fury wins the 2010 Tevis Haggin Cup.
- Superstar Barefoot Endurance Horses! - Granite Chief reaches 10,000 Miles! And Bo tackles the Tevis.
- Darolyn's Barefoot Predictions revisited - Ten Year Predictions for the Barefoot Movement, written in 2002
- A Look Back at 10 Years of The Horse's Hoof!
- Marjorie Smith, Looking Back on Barefoot.
- Dr. Robert Bowker, BAREFOOT'N: Can You Hear Us Yet??
- Pete Ramey, Hoof Care in the 21st Century?
- Treatment of Disease in the Equine Frog - Part 3 of Health and Disease of the Equine Frog.
- Sabine Kells: Bonnie, the horse who started it all.
- Gretchen Fathauer: Barefoot and NaturalHorseTrim. com
- Cutting the Natural Barefoot Way - A barefoot, naturally cared for, and naturally trained cutting champion.
- Open Jumpers Barefoot, of course! - These two successful barefoot Open Jumpers in South Africa are the only ones in their country!
- Online Extras, 14 extra pages:
 - o Frog Disease Help: Useful Tools, Close Inspection of the Frog, Successful Treatment
 - o Understanding the Feral Horse Foot by Dr Robert Bowker
 - o Barefoot in Southern Spain! by Tracey Parker
 - o International Hoof Conference in Australia: February 2011
 - o ESA & Balance International
 - o Barefoot News & Photos from the Past

AEBM Membership Benefits

AEBM Membership is only AU\$25 a year. This money is used solely to promote the benefits of a barefoot, natural lifestyle for our domestic horses. Membership includes:

- o Member's only competitions
- o A \$25.00 Cavallo gift voucher for every member of AEBM which can be used towards the purchase of any Cavallo Hoof boots or saddle pad from Cavallo Australia
- o A 10% discount on any purchase from Cavallo Australia (not to be used with above voucher)
- o Priority sponsorship of members' club events

Website

- o Want more information about the AEBM?
- o Would you like to read articles about barefooting?
- o Looking for a Hoofcare Professional in your area?
- o Are you a Hoofcare Professional?

For this information and much more, go to www.aebm.org.au .

TAFE of Tasmania: Certificate III in Agriculture – Natural Hoof Care

by Susan Vickering (June 2010)



I have been riding since the age of seven and was lucky enough to own my first pony when I was just 8 years old. I grew up in England and moved out to Australia in 1998. I now have two horses,

an 11 year old TB gelding and a 4 year old Arabian Riding Pony gelding.

I discovered barefoot about 4 years ago and after doing lots of research on the internet decided that it was in the best interest of my horse to give it a go. At that time I only had the one horse, my TB gelding Wal. I found myself a trimmer and had just the two back shoes pulled at first to see how my boy coped. He seemed to manage well after my initial doubts, and on the second trim the front shoes were pulled off. It was a reasonably trouble-free transition with the help of some hoof boots. I started to trim for myself after my horse was out of work for 3 months due to an injury. I took a hoof trimming clinic and have been trimming my own horse ever since.

Being very impressed with how my own horse was going barefoot, I was very interested when I read about TAFE of Tasmania offering the Natural Hoof Care course. I became aware of the course through something being posted on the AEBM website a few years ago. After registering my interest with TAFE I received the course information pack. I finally enrolled in the 2009 course and am really glad that I did.

The course started with an intensive 2 week block which I had to stay in Tasmania to do. This seemed quite daunting at first but I can honestly say it was the best 2 weeks you can imagine for someone with a passion for horses and hooves. The whole 2 weeks was jam-packed with learning amongst a group of like-minded people. It was a fantastic experience and some great friendships were formed.



Topics covered in the course included:

- Hoof Mechanism
- Shoeing and Traditional Methods
- Hoof Protection (booting)
- Tools & Equipment
- Correct Hoof Trimming
- Horse Handling
- Trimmers Body Posture and Fitness
- Assessing Conformation and Soundness
- Hoof Pathologies & Rehabilitation
- Feeding Plans
- First Aid
- Interacting with Customers

The course co-ordinators and tutors were wonderful and generously shared their knowledge and experience with the students. They created a really supportive and encouraging group in which to learn.

After completing the intensive 2 week block in Tasmania the course requires the following:

Mentorships – You are required to undertake a minimum of 3 mentorships with trimmers working in the industry and approved by the course.

Case Studies – 5 case studies must be completed which must cover a full hoof capsule cycle.

Assignments – 12 assignments need to be completed covering all aspects of the course.

Final Live Trim – You are required to either go back to Tasmania to perform a live trim assessment or video your live trim and submit it for assessment.

I am now only 1 assignment away from finishing the course and am looking forward to developing my own hoof trimming business in the coming months.





The AEBM will be sponsoring the "Best Performed Barefoot Horse" award at the upcoming HRCVAV Top Team Trophy

Dressage, to be held at Werribee Park on 13th & 14th November. Get your entries in!!!

Laminitis/Founder

by Julie Leitl

Spring – for most people it means sunny days and flowering gardens, but for those who own horses and ponies that are prone to laminitis, Spring spells dread!

The major cause of death in our domestic horse is colic, and the second is laminitis (Pollitt). There are many causes for laminitis in the horse, and although some breeds are more susceptible than others, it makes sense that all horse owners educate themselves about the causes, and risk factors, as prevention is certainly much better than cure!

The laminitis we see in Spring and Autumn is commonly known as IR (insulin resistance) or EMS (equine metabolic syndrome). IR is defined as the failure of tissues to respond appropriately to insulin (Frank, 2006).

Some laminitis risk factors for horses are:

- Overweight/Obese
- Diet high in non-structural carbohydrates (NSC = sugar and starch)
- Lack of exercise
- Stress
- Genetic predisposition
- Insulin insensitivity
- Cushings disease
- Colic episode/s
- Systemic illness
- Endotoxic/poisoning
- Inappropriate feeding of grain
- Retained placenta
- Injury to one or more limbs
- Reaction to some medications
- Poor or inadequate hoofcare

Some signs of acute laminitis:

- Shifting of weight from one foot to the other (usually fronts)
- Standing with front feet stretched out in front (usually with hinds tucked under)
- Lying down for long periods
- Unwilling to move, or move at normal pace
- Pulsating digital arteries
- Maybe generally unwell



This pony is suffering from the long term effects of laminitis and had not been receiving proper care. Note the slipped, neglected feet. He is now adopted and receiving the correct management and hoof care.

Some other signs may include:

- Heat in the hooves
- Blood visible in the white line
- Stretched white line
- Hard neck crest
- Short striding
- Sound on soft footing but not sound on hard ground

Treatment:

1. Determine and remove the cause.
2. Seek veterinary advice/treatment.
3. Expert hoofcare – this is essential, particularly after changes in the feet such as rotation of the coffin bone.

Are you a Rider of Distinction?

- Are you a member of the AEBM?
- Are you a Rider of Distinction?
- Are you a barefoot horse rider competing in your field – it could be jumping, trail riding, pony club, showing, endurance riding, dressage, eventing, orienteering, adult riding club, natural horsemanship, driving, campdrafting, western riding, racing?
- Are you a barefoot-friendly instructor, breeder or someone rescuing and re-homing horses?
- Is there something special of distinctive about what you do with barefoot horses?

You could be eligible for an AEBM/Cavallo Horse & Rider **RIDERS OF DISTINCTION** Award. You will receive a pair of Cavallo SIMPLE Boots and a Cavallo Total Comfort System Saddle Pad.

For more information and an entry form download the PDF document on our website.

Prevention:

- Maintain a healthy weight for the horse
- Organise a weight loss regime for overweight horses (whilst ensuring a nutritionally balanced diet)
- Limit amount of time grazing on high NSC pasture - use a grazing muzzle or strip graze (some horses/ponies will need to be removed from all grass and fed a predominately grass hay diet during times of high risk)
- Exercise your horse regularly
- Avoid feeding grain to inactive horses/ponies
- Feed hay with low NSC content (10%)
- Avoid sweets such as apples and carrots
- Avoid pre mixed feeds containing molasses

Horses/ponies suffering from chronic laminitis need to be managed very carefully and probably for the rest of their lives. Environmental conditions constantly change and management practices will have to adapt to those changes. It is the responsibility of the horse owner to provide a well balanced diet and exercise program along with lifestyle and environmental conditions required for laminitis management, both in the short, and over the long term.

Whilst specialist hoof trimming can help foundered hooves by re-establishing hoof function and balance, hoof trimming alone will not save your horse from the ongoing effects of laminitis.

If you suspect that your horse or pony may be prone to, or suffering from laminitis, seek professional advice as soon as possible as delaying treatment can have severe consequences.

For further reading:

www.equisearch.com

Dr Donald Walsh

www.safergrass.org

Kathryn Watts, Agricultural Scientist

www.laminitisresearch.org

Professor Chris Pollitt, Queensland University

With proper feeding and lifestyle management and specialist barefoot hoof care, severely foundered hooves can heal.

Before and After pictures of Skye, an aged pony suffering from chronic founder and Cushings disease.



No Hoof, No Horse Seminar ***Held at Seville Public Hall, Seville***

by Carlene Wilson

Julie Leitl hosted the AEBM's second No Hoof No Horse seminar at Seville in the beautiful Yarra Valley on 29th August 2010.



Only barefoot enthusiasts were in attendance, which is a real shame. The shoeing contingent of horse owners were not represented and after talking to a couple of friends that do shoe it is possibly due to the misguided belief that they would be ear-bashed about how cruel/wrong they are to shoe.... In my opinion after attending nothing could be further from Julie's objectives in holding this seminar.

It was a huge day indeed with lots to take in and I was thankful I wasn't out clubbing (yes ha ha, as if) the night before. Even though the sun was shining outside (not to mention I was missing out on precious riding time), it was important for me to go and learn about the influences that affect my horse's health, focusing on feet - and I can't emphasise enough how interesting the day was.

Julie took us through the structures of the horses' hoof in the morning, and after lunch we looked at the many specimen bones. I particularly found the differences in the diseased bones and how what is done to the hoof (be it farrier, barefoot or whatever) determined and affected the pressures on the internal structures and bones, and thus in some instances re-shaped them according to those forces (ie grew bone spurs or side bars or compressed pedal bones, the formation of ringbone, etc. We looked at foal bones and a

case study of a foal that had shocking feet and why/how that had happened. We looked at laminitis and how and what that does to feet, how the hoof capsule actually forms/grows (do you realise how thin that actually is!!!!) and bonds, the arterial and venous (and nerve) blood supply and how that all works in the hoof.

Whilst we were discussing founder/laminitis we learned that there was an auditor amongst us that had researched and gone as far as to re-seed her property to eradicate the different grasses that caused problems with horses, as the grasses sown here are primarily developed for the intense farming of cattle and not at all suitable for horses. I would dearly like for her to share her knowledge on that subject at a future seminar (or at the very least, perhaps she could write an article for the website?).

Julie also had recently received real brumby feet from outback Australia that she brought along to show us, they were fascinating and to my eye were perfect looking feet. They smelt to kingdom come but we got over that. She also had a cross-section in formaldehyde to show us the differences and, in particular, how far up the pedal bone sits in the wild horse compared to a domestic horse (the difference being determined by the terrain and the restriction in movement and the difference in nutrition due to what they are eating).

Be your horse barefoot or shod, it truly was the examination of form and function of the horse's hoof.

Of course I'd like MORE info now.... hmmm, when is the follow up seminar Julie???



Horses, Italy, Barehoof - what's next?

By Glenn Wilson

Mention Italy to a group of Australians and the range of responses may include fine dining, classical art, Rome, Ferrari, beautiful shoes and fashion, the Pope, Ducati, Fiat, Florence and culture.

Not too many of us will think of 'Italy and horses' despite that country's long and proud equine history that makes our, and our American friends', relationship with these animals look like we are just coming out of kindergarten.

Yes, Italians have been 'doing horses' for a very, very long time. There are some classical Italian breeds, including the Murgese, whose ancestry dates back to the 15th century; the Maremmana, originally from Tuscany; the Salerno, an Olympic winning show jumper; the Sanfrantellano, and what is considered Italy's most prolific native breed, the flaxen maned, solidly built Avelignese pony.

So now we are over the mental hurdle of mixing Italy with horses, I will introduce you to Maurizio Patti.

Maurizio is an Italian who is also very much into horses; especially if they are barehoof (or could be), as he is a barehoof trimmer. He is also a follower of the Nevzorov Haute Ecole (NHE) and Italy's official representative of NHE. He has two horses, Mr Cypro and Mrs Lency, and according to Maurizio, "both enjoy a life where they are allowed to live like horses. That means freedom, barefoot, no riding and enough good quality food."

Maurizio is coming to Australia later this year to conduct three workshops in the NHE method in Tallangatta Valley, North East Victoria.

This is exciting for me for a number of reasons: as the co-host of the three workshops, as a barehoof trimmer, as a keen 'L' plate horseman, and as someone who was quite awestruck when I first discovered Alexander Nevzorov's website a couple of years ago (I was also quite shocked at the images of cruelty and abuse of horses involved in 'equine sports' Alexander's wife Lydia had amassed and posted to support the Nevzorov's passionate campaign to free the horse from abuse at the hands of humans - but that's a whole other different basket of eggs).

The opportunity to find out more about all these things and explore the world of barehoof horses from the Italian/European perspective was compelling.

But rather than wait until Maurizio arrived on Australian soil, I thought I could 'interview' him by email and share with the reader what I had gleaned.

It would seem that life for the Italian domestic horse is very similar to the life an Australian domestic horse has, and that is the full spectrum of living and 'uses' that our horses seem to enjoy, or endure.

Maurizio says, "Well, they (horses) do the same things other people from around the world do with their horses. They practice jumping, dressage, races (legal and illegal), classical riding, Parelli etc. There are not many people here following NHE as most of them still look for results and horses are seen as toys to play with. Not many people take good care of horse's welfare. What I usually hear from people is that horses are expensive to maintain, therefore they must do things to amuse themselves - such as riding etc."

"In Italy you can find all kinds of activities. Housing is still pretty traditional, especially in south Italy: stables are really common and it is really rare you will see horses together. North Italy is a little better because they have pastures and groups of horses together, but still there is a lot to do towards the welfare of horses. We have all kind of breeds but most are Arabian breeds. The San Fratellano is an Italian breed which lives in Sicily and they can be seen in the Nebrodi's mountains. It is a black and rather tall horse. In Puglia region we have the Murgese breed, which is also black and it is usually used for dressage. Then we have the Sella Italiano, which is used for jumping and of course we have many more Italian breeds."

Our email conversation then turned to the really important subject of barehoof. I asked Maurizio if barehoof was very popular in Europe and Italy in particular? Maurizio said, "Compared to the shod horses in Europe, barefoot is yet not so popular but a lot has been done towards it. I, for example, have had my horses barefoot since the beginning of 2006. Right now those who try to keep a horse barefoot is that owner who has an unsound horse and after spending thousands of Euros in vets they decide, as a last resort, to remove the shoes." This sounds very familiar, doesn't it?

"What barehoof style/philosophy do you generally follow?" I then asked.

Maurizio started with Pete Ramey and Jamie Jackson, but then looked into the Strasser method too. "However, horses are not the same and trims cannot be standardized. Some proceedings could be fine for lots of horses but for others they may just get lame. In a trim I would never look for the beautiful shape of the hoof but for what makes the horse sound and comfortable", he said.

Maurizio discovered barefoot from a guy he met during his Parelli 'stage', who later became a very good friend of his. He was a blacksmith (farrier) and a barefoot trimmer too. Today he only trims.



"What types of horses do you normally trim?" I asked.

Maurizio replied, "Definitely mine and as I said those horses with problems such as laminitis, navicular syndrome or those horses with an undiagnosed problems. Like one who had pain in a hind leg and the vet did all he could. The owner took the horse to Rome to have a Scintigraphy without being able to diagnose the problem. So they called me and I unshod the horse and after a few months she looked and moved as if she never had that problem. Then I trim some ponies. You have to know that trimming for me is not a job but a passion so I do not have that many."

Realising that the world of horses has many similarities indeed, I posed the next question, "What time interval between trims do you try

and achieve?" Maurizio said, "I usually trim with a time interval of 4 weeks. Then it depends on the season too, like in winter I can wait a bit longer as the hoof grows slower than spring/summer." No real surprises here either it seems!

"I do trim 6 horses in Switzerland - 3 belong to a NHE school member and 3 to different owners. In September I am going to have a NHE workshop in Slovenia and the organizer, who is also a member of the forum, asked me if I could trim her horse while I am there. She is not happy with her trimmer, not because he is not a good trimmer but because he is too hard with her horse and makes him very nervous."

GW: What does your tool kit comprise of?

Maurizio: "I have an Ascot Dick knife, a rasp, a hoofjack and, when needed, a nipper."

GW: What are the common pathologies in hooves you find most?

Maurizio: "I think common pathology in hooves here is contracted hooves. An improper shoeing is usually the cause of hoof contraction and most likely I get called only when the horse cannot walk anymore. But then by barefooting the horse it soon gets better, especially if owners give horses better living conditions, which means lots of movement, proper feeding and no stalls. Also, as all over the world inf domestic sport horses, the other two common pathologies are laminitis and navicular syndrome."

GW: What attracted you to Alexander Nevzorov?

Maurizio: "The absence of fear in both man and horse and that can be achieved only by communication and respect."

GW: Have you studied or followed any other horsemanship teachers/teaching/styles?

Maurizio: "Yes, before NHE I was following Parelli, which was surely better than traditional but still very violent compared to NHE."

GW: Do you think horses are better off today than they were 10, 50 or 100 years ago?

Maurizio: "If I think of my horses then I would say yes. In general I would say No. A long time ago horses were used to help humans in

the daily working time, so maybe horses then were part of the family. Today horses are not needed to help people so they are now used for sport and sport looks at horses as machines, pushing them until horses are completely broken. Once they break them, next step is slaughterhouse. However, things are changing and we are working hard with *Horse Revolution* (a Nevzorov term) to make things happen."

GW: Do you think horses have a 'higher' agenda with humans?

Maurizio: "Horses do not have agenda, they just live the moment. Usually people have agendas with horses but just because they don't know better."

GW: Any other thoughts you'd like to share with Australian readers?

Maurizio: "With Australian readers I would like to share my endless happiness. Since I have met NHE a new kind of awareness has enlightened me: it has made me realize that what counts in life is to try to make my soul always free, free of expectation, free of any agenda, free to respect and free to love."

GW: Do you know much about Australia?

Maurizio: "I know it is a wonderful place and that people are very respectful toward nature and community life. I also know about Aborigines, then kangaroos and that Australia is a very big and beautiful country."

GW: Do you know what 'G'day mate' means?

Maurizio: "What I have heard of it is that if I plan on visiting Australia I should ensure I pack: 1 x big stick and the ability to say 'G'day' which it should mean 'hello'. Yet I need to learn it better and maybe you can explain it to me."

Well I shall try to explain it to Maurizio when he arrives here in Tallangatta Valley just after Equitana in November.

Further resources:

www.hauteecole.ru

www.nevzorovfilms.com.au

http://www.hauteecole.ru/en/nevzorov_haute_e_cole.php?sid=0&id=977

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