

Barefoot Trimming Trainer's Visit to Northern Ireland.

With more enlightenment nowadays concerning the natural keeping and training systems for equines, there was a good turnout at the meeting organised by local horse owner, Laura Webster, at whose invitation barefoot practitioner and field instructor from the U.S. based Association for the Advancement of Natural Horsecare Practices (A.A.N.H.C.P.), Nick Hill, came to speak on the evening of Tuesday, February 2nd. Nick trained with the association's founder, acclaimed barefoot trimmer, Jaime Jackson, and is himself based in Scotland. You are invited to visit his website at www.cloverroseequine.co.uk . His principal engagement was a seminar at the Temple Golf and Country Club, Boardmills (near Lisburn) , and all profits from the admission were donated to the excellent cause of The Crosskennan Lane Animal Sanctuary, which is currently experiencing an unprecedented demand on it's resources. The following two days were taken up by his attending ponies and horses around the country, when he enthusiastically imparted advice and demonstrated his skills. He will be back again through the year, and interest has already been expressed by some owners wishing to learn the skill of barefoot trimming themselves, and Nick is willing to train a group on a regular basis. Anyone wishing to register their interest in such training should contact Laura on 077 9654 0475.



Above is Nick Hill, explaining aspects of his craft to NICPBA member, Lesley Harvey, whose daughter Jenny recently qualified as a barefoot trimmer.

More information on the holistic approach to horse-keeping and the natural method of hoofcare can be found on www.jaimejackson.com . The philosophy behind natural horsecare systems is to keep

domesticated horses in as near as possible the conditions which the horses themselves would choose if they were living in the wild. That means freedom to move over a variety of country, to eat a natural (grass or hay based) diet, to have others of their own kind for company, and therefore achieve all the advantages of physical and mental health which a wild life would offer. A major part of this is the relation of structure to function in the horse's foot. Studies conducted in the wild laid the foundation for the barefoot method - with trimming to attain the shape and structure of the 'wild horse model' or mustang foot. Left unshod, the foot is able to flex and function as evolution has fashioned it in the millions of years before man first nailed iron upon it. It only makes sense that something so well designed for species survival is better not interfered with any more than it must be. Since, however, domestic horses are not free to choose to move as far and wide as wild stock, the barefoot trimming method effectively mimics the wear which the foot ought to receive in nature, thus resulting in the best possible foot .



Above are the hind feet of the bay mare shown in the first picture. The nearer hoof has been trimmed by Nick to the 'wild horse' model, and the middle one is yet to be trimmed. The white hoof belongs to the colt foal. Despite appearances, the actual amount of hoof removed was minimal - the method is completely non-invasive - but emphasis is on balancing the foot and achieving the correct angle of growth (as is evident just below the coronary band) and the correct height of the heel, which should be low. All crumbling tissue is removed, (as it would be naturally worn away if the horse were travelling over varied country), thus allowing the hoof to flex freely and be the dynamic organ it is meant to be, functioning properly, and is not just like a block of solid wood on the end of a leg !

For a chance to see the contrast between shod and unshod hooves on the horse as it performs, a visit to the website below is highly recommended. Links are provided to video clips which run simultaneously, clearly demonstrating the concussion absorbed by the foot in it's natural state, whereas the shod foot jars the entire leg.

The photos below show a laminitic hoof before and, in the bottom picture, after being trimmed by Nick on Feb. 3rd in the method pioneered by Jaime Jackson. The improvement in the form of the foot gives the owner real hope that the hoof can, in time, be returned to normal. The mare was a little tender for a few days, due to the old material being taken off the sole, but was soon going much better again. As her comfort in movement increases, the healing should increase in pace. On the base of the foot, the sole, frog and separated white line are to be scrubbed daily with a wirebrush and vinegar, to cleanse and gently disinfect the foot.



