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Basic Farriery: No Hoof No Horse

The importance of good quality hoof care in competition horses cannot be denied. Farriery can be a major asset during the show season and beyond. The farrier can be proactive in keeping the horse's feet healthy and thus preventing lameness. Learn more as [Dr. Stephen O'Grady](#) of Palm Beach Equine Clinic in Wellington, FL, explains the philosophy behind correct basic farriery in sport horses.

The Hoof

The equine hoof is unique as it is comprised of a group of biological structures (anatomy) that follow the laws of biomechanics. Therefore, if the veterinarian and farrier know the anatomy of the equine foot combined with an understanding of the biomechanics and good basic farriery principles, proper physiological farriery can be consistently applied (see Figure 1A and 1B). There are three important aspects of farriery used to keep the horse sound, beginning with the appropriate foot trim, along with the correct size and placement of the horseshoe.

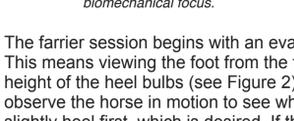


Figure 1A. The illustration shows the biological structures of the hoof and the biomechanical focus.

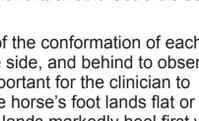


Figure 1B. Biomechanical properties of the foot (black arrow is COR). Note the moments on either side of the COR.

The farrier session begins with an evaluation of the conformation of each foot. This means viewing the foot from the front, the side, and behind to observe the height of the heel bulbs (see Figure 2). It is important for the clinician to observe the horse in motion to see whether the horse's foot lands flat or slightly heel first, which is desired. If the horse lands markedly heel first with a toe flip, it is a sign the heels have migrated dorsally (toward the front), decreasing the ground surface in the palmar section of the foot, or the size of the shoes is too small. The foot that lands toe first is an indication that the musculotendinous unit of the deep digital flexor tendon is shortened or the horse is experiencing palmar foot pain. Lastly, the foot should be observed for an asymmetrical landing pattern that is dictated by limb conformation because, if severe, a heel bulb can be displaced proximally resulting in the foot conformation termed "sheared heels."

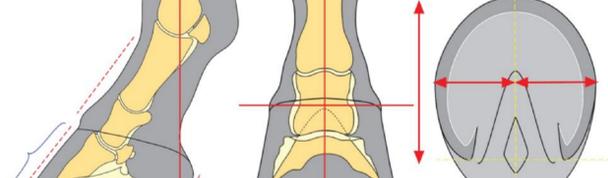


Figure 2. Illustrations of what is considered good foot conformation. The lateral view shows straight bony alignment of the digit and a parallel hoof-pastern axis. DP view shows straight alignment of the digit and a line across the coronet is parallel with a line on the ground. Ground surface of the foot shows good proportions on either side of a line across the widest part of the foot. Note foot is basically as wide as it is long.

The Trim

The use of guidelines or landmarks when approaching the trim provides consistent, repeatable results that can be used on each foot regardless of the conformation.

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Sport Horse Educational Night

Presented by Boehringer Ingelheim, Covetrus, Palm Beach Equine Clinic, and Zoetis

Join Palm Beach Equine Clinic for Sport Horse Educational Night on Wednesday, March 8, 2023, at The Wanderers Club in Wellington, FL. Dr. Hilary Clayton and Palm Beach Equine Clinic's Dr. Stephen O'Grady will be discussing how podiatry relates to sport horse soundness. The event will start with a wine reception at 6 p.m. followed by presentations beginning at 6:30 p.m. Please email Kate.Leggat@equineclinic.com to RSVP.

Meet the Speakers:



Hilary Clayton
BVMS, PhD, Dipl. ACVSMR, FRCVS



Stephen O'Grady
DVM, MRCVS

Topic: How the Hoof and Footing Affect Soundness

Dr. Hilary Clayton is a rider, veterinarian, author, researcher, and clinician. Dr. Clayton is known internationally for her ongoing contribution to the understanding of equine biomechanics particularly relating to performance and conditioning. Dr. Clayton's targeted studies in biting, saddle fit biometrics, kinematics and kinetics, and locomotion have provided valuable insight into the mechanics of equine sports.

Topic: What Constitutes Good Foot Conformation, and How Do We Determine It?

Dr. Stephen O'Grady combines his skills as a veterinarian and a farrier to better understand and treat problems of the foot. In 2003, he was inducted into the International Equine Veterinarian Hall of Fame, and in 2009 he received the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) President's Award for his work in farrier education.

[RSVP](#)

PBEC Service of the Week: Sport Horse Medicine

Veterinary care is an essential part of the equine athlete's support team. Sport horse medicine by Palm Beach Equine Clinic is specialized to the individual horse's career, discipline, performance level, and training demands. As riders themselves, the veterinarians and staff of Palm Beach Equine Clinic understand the effort, time, and training involved to compete at the highest level.



Palm Beach Equine Clinic veterinarians take into consideration a horse's career, discipline, performance level, and training demands when evaluating them. Photo courtesy of PBEC

Palm Beach Equine Clinic is dedicated to enhancing the performance and career of sport horses by offering an array of services to maintain health and soundness. From supporting your primary veterinarian, providing onsite care at the horse show, or as your team partner around the clock, Palm Beach Equine Clinic is committed to helping you reach your competitive equestrian goals.

Pre-Purchase Exams



Palm Beach Equine Clinic uses diagnostic imaging to evaluate horses during pre-purchase exams. Photo by [Erin Gilmore Photography](#)

A thorough pre-purchase exam is necessary to allow a potential new owner and veterinarian to investigate the horse's health and condition, regardless of breed or discipline. This exam helps protect the owner's investment and gives a comprehensive picture of the long-term viability of the horse's career.

Lameness Evaluations



Palm Beach Equine Clinic veterinarians perform flexion tests during a lameness evaluation. Photo courtesy of PBEC

Palm Beach Equine Clinic frequently provides lameness evaluations to assess the source of an alteration in a horse's gait. If an owner suspects a horse may be lame, a prompt and thorough evaluation should be performed. Lameness may be demonstrated by issues in areas of the body besides the legs, and owners may notice the physical changes as well as a difference in the horse's attitude and behavior. A thorough lameness examination includes many modalities and techniques to identify the root of the lameness.

[Learn More](#)

PBEC Photo of the Week From the Winter Equestrian Festival

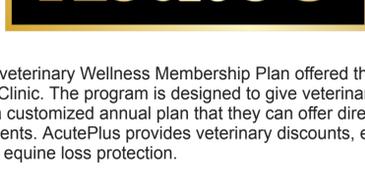


Photo by [Sportfol](#)

Catch Up With PBEC on Instagram



Palm Beach Equine Clinic Works With AcutePlus



AcutePlus is a veterinary Wellness Membership Plan offered through Palm Beach Equine Clinic. The program is designed to give veterinarian practices a way to create a customized annual plan that they can offer directly to their clients and patients. AcutePlus provides veterinary discounts, equine protection, and equine loss protection.

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