

CONFORMATION

How many times have you heard, “that would be a great Horse if its conformation was better” or some similar comment about an otherwise good Horse? Conformation, or the lack thereof, is the “let the professional off the hook” excuse.

I have heard nationally renown trainers say they could not do anything more for a Horse because of its conformation. Sadly the owner didn't know any better, nor did their Farrier or Veterinarian. A Horse born with a defect will have conformational issues, and there are other conformational issues that cannot be adjusted, such as: “too long of a neck, too short of a back”. But these issues CAN be made better through committed care and proper Balance protocols. The thing is, thankfully most domestic Horses are not born with birth defects, they are given defects by “care givers” who do not understand WHY and HOW complete Balance is achieved and maintained.

DISCLAIMER HERE: The “subject Horse” mentioned from here on out is assumed to NOT have a birth defect or inflicted injuries.

Toed out feet, be they front or hinds, are a very common complaint with trainers and farriers. This condition will cause the Horse to “wing in” each step it takes on that leg. This gives the visual effect of a Horse “paddling” its feet in travel. This can also prevent a Horse from being able to collect itself for more advanced gaits and/or maneuvers like jumps, or flying lead changes. If this toed out condition is on the hind feet a “good” horseshoer can apply a special shoe called a Trailer Shoe. This contraption is nothing more than a “regular” shoe taken to the anvil and the outside heel of the shoe bent more than 90 degrees to the “normal” shape. This trailing edge is designed to hit the ground first which in turn causes that foot to twist and land more straight.

While this actually works sometimes, it does increase the torque that the entire lower limb has to endure. Over time this torque can create arthritic-like symptoms within the joints of the hind lower leg, and can even start causing back issues, which can lead to neck issues, which can lead to teeth issues, which can lead to further neck issues, then back to more back issues so on and so forth. It can get very cyclonic.

All of these issues could and can be avoided from day one with ONE small adjustment to the “offending” Hoof(s). However, this adjustment should be done without the use of shoes, as the level of adjustment usually requires a trim that



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will not support the application of shoes. Bear in mind, this is not a one time fix. With or without shoes, it may take several months to achieve a straight line of hoof travel. The important thing owners need to understand during this transition is exercise becomes THE important factor as this dedicated movement teaches new muscle memory to aid the trim. It may also be necessary to involve other Equine Professionals such as massage therapy, chiropractors and maybe Cranial Sacral to aid the Horse in a less stressful recovery.

The front feet pose an almost impossible solution to owners and professionals that refuse to get out of the "shoe box". Trailers are not an option as the trailing heel will get stepped on and then ripped off causing damage to the Horney capsule. Trimming the foot to the level necessary for limb correction is not a wise or safe thing to do when applying shoes. This quandary leaves most farriers and other professionals blind to what can be done. Over time with dedication from the owner and barefoot farrier, a severely toed out or toed in Horse can be brought to balanced health, without the need to inflict useless pain on the Horse.

This same level of balance can be applied to other so-called conformational issues, as well, such as camped out, standing under, base narrow, base wide, cow hocked and a host of other "bad conformation" sets. All is needed is a understanding of Whole Horse Balance and a willingness to work WITH the Horse to help him or her become soundly balanced.

So you may be asking yourself: How is this miracle preformed? First of all, it's no miracle. It's physics and geometry. Try this little experiment: Stand up, and relax. Look down at your feet. I'll bet you're toed out (most humans are). Now take a step and look at the flight of your foot. If you are toed out your foot in flight will move to the middle of your body. That's winging in!! Now imagine you had 4 feet and they ALL did the same thing. Could YOU walk straight with 4 legs swinging all over the place like that? (Bet that makes ya respect your Horsey more)

Okay. Now that you have seen the issue, let's fix you. Find something you can tape or non permanently attach to your foot. It needs to be about a quarter of an inch thick and only an inch wide or so and no longer than your heel (folded newspaper works well at my clinics for this demo). Okay. Got it? Good! Now attach this to the bottom OUTSIDE of your heel. Yep it's gonna feel funny but stand up, feel that "out of balance" pressure? Move your toes so they point straight ahead. BANG!!! The out of balance pressure dissipated or went away!



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Now take a step. I'll bet your foot did NOT wing in. I'll bet your foot traveled straight ahead.

While this little demo is funny to watch, it shows what can be done for our Horse friends and their leg travels. It takes time to develop an "eye" to understand how much can be done for a particular foot at each visit, but this should help you get on the way.

Because adding to a Horse's foot is not a good idea nor is it practical we have to remove hoof wall, this removal is done over time in most cases, with keen attention paid to Balance. I have had some clients that have taken 18 months to achieve balanced, straight travel. Most, however, take about 12 months. Once this Balance is achieved the owners are simply amazed at what their Horse is now capable of doing. The other thing to remember here is this amount of balance promotes Harmony with the Horse and THAT is a huge step to having great riding relationships!

So if you really like your Horse but the trainer keeps telling you its conformation is "bad" and it "can't" do something, there's no need to sell your Horse. All you need is someone that can BALANCE your Horse and maybe a new trainer that understands Balance, as well.



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