

Is NATURAL, Natural?

Let's start with this FACT: Riding a Horse is NOT natural for you or your Horse.

The Horse industry has a very long reputation of embracing all kinds of "quick fix" this or "quick fix" that as a substitute for life-long learned and practiced skills. It seems every year "new and improved" products and techniques are marketed as "over-the-counter style cure-alls".

"Natural" is a popular marketing buzzword, used to sell everything from vitamins to global warming-friendly gasoline. The idea that something branded "natural" must be superior is very appealing to the uninformed. Persons who buy into these copycat ideas have not made the effort to study nor understand the Horse's physiology and biomechanics. The best of these ideas may do little harm, except in the hands of the incompetent. The worst of these ideas may be harmful to Horses and can eventually cause very expensive treatments to "fix the fix" at best, or death in the extreme cases.

Sometimes these fads do appear to result in a miraculous cure when, in fact, most of these miracles are due to the restoration of neglected or improperly managed feet.

Skilled farriers who are allowed to maintain their client's Horses regularly can come up with better solutions for each individual Horse than a "natural" solution where one size fits all.

Horseshoes, be they made of steel or "natural" style rubber, do one thing very well -- they restrict the Horse's feet from performing as the biomechanics demand a hoof to function. Any farrier worth his rasp will tell you "a good shoeing starts with a better trim". And if asked, he should tell you "more corrective work can be accomplished through a trim than through shoeings". So why all the whoopla over "natural" shoes? MONEY.

Shoes can be bought, touched, and readily seen. This appeals to the uninformed owner, for they "see" something being done, thus the illusion of "I'm helping my Horse syndrome" sets in. Then there's the Horseshoer, who is operating a business. He sees a marketing advantage with physical products his customers can buy. Like the car world, the equine world is lured into new, shiny, better than last year's model products. If these "new and improved," eye-catching products can be marketed as "stabilizing" a poor condition, sadly, most owners due to their own lack of knowledge of hoof care or Balance buy into the thought pattern of "my Horse is not getting any worse". In most cases what has



David Qualls
Shoe - Less Farrier Services
678-314-0381
www.davidqualls.net

happened is the Horse adapted to the problem, causing the outward appearance of "better.

So just how is a Horse owner to know these things? First, they should learn to listen to THEIR Horse, as this is the best source of information about THEIR Horse. Second, they should research to find groups or individuals who have spent their lives studying and evaluating Horses from the inside - out. Why the inside? Because that is where most of the problems start. Third, they should listen to their own "commonsense". Fourth, they should ask questions of their farriers and if the answers are not forthcoming and understandable, question again. If at this point the question is still not answered to their satisfaction refer back to steps 1, 2, and 3.



David Qualls
Shoe - Less Farrier Services
678-314-0381
www.davidqualls.net