

NATURAL TRIMMERS

Natural trimmer? What an oxymoron. If ever there were two words that did not belong together in the Equine World, these two should rank in the top 5.

According to www.dictionary.com #6 defines *natural* as : growing spontaneously, without being planted or tended by human hand. The same site defines *trimming* as #4 the act of a person or thing that trims.

Natural trimmers? If you have read other articles in my web site then you already know I don't think all that highly of "put shoes on to fix everything farriers". Yes; I do respect their skills at the forge and anvil, which is great for blacksmiths, but not always necessary for a farrier to help a Horse. For me when a person declares their desire to be a farrier they are saying they have a desire to transcend pure blacksmith skills and use their craft to help the health of Horses, whether that skill be the use of some ferrous or composite material.

Natural trimmers? What can I say? The dictionary definitions say it -- a person CANNOT BE a *natural* anything. When it comes to Horses, if you really want a natural trimmer then this is what you need to do: Move your Horse to a range, allow the Horse to become a member of a herd, allow that herd to move unrestricted 20 to 30 miles a day, and never, ever ride that Horse again. IF you do this, then your Horse will be getting a "Natural Trim". If this is not something you can or desire to do, then you have to find the next best thing.

What is the next best thing? Is it a trim that mirrors feral Horses' feet? That sounds natural, that may be appealing BUT, is it what a domesticated Horse needs? Yes! It is **IF** you have thousands of acres, **IF** you have a numerous head count herd, **IF** you never intend to ride that Horse again. What if you don't intend all these things? Do you need a "Mustang Trim" even if you have a Mustang? I don't think so. My advice would be to trim the Horse to be Balanced, whatever the breed.

So called "natural trimmers" are being taught trims based on what a couple of farriers observed about wild mustangs. These farriers took a trip to America's west and studied herds of mustangs and how these wild Horses managed to exist without "man" trimming their feet. Some of the things that were discovered were:

- Most Mustangs have dished quarters
- Most Mustangs have somewhat of a squared toe
- None of the Mustangs have shoes

With this information these farriers started teaching students to trim domesticated



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Horses in the same manner and they declared EVERY Horse should be barefoot. While it's admirable to put this much work into studying Horses and their health, I believe this question has to be asked: "What does a feral Horse have in common with a domesticated Horse?"

Once this question is asked, the answer should come forth as "Very Little". I, too, have seen herds of wild Mustangs and yes, they are beautiful! BUT, my quarter Horse and my neighbor's Arab live on less than 20 acres. They **require** Human attention (hay, water, de-worming and hoof care). Mustangs live on millions of acres. They can travel as much as 30 miles in a 24 hour period. They do better when "man" leaves them alone. A mustang may wake up in the morning in a lush, lowland field, and by dinner time be 5000 feet higher on very rocky terrain. This environmental change is one of the things that enable a wild Horse to "self trim".

One other little thing that separates wild Horses from domesticated ones is this little fact, Wild Horses do not in the wild have to EVER worry about hauling a 300 pound burden on its back. With this last point I have to ask: "Is it really wise to trim a foot to mirror a Horse that is Never ridden?" Personally, I don't think so. As a matter of observations I see these trims often causing severe hoof and overall Horse problems.

Remember, I said these farriers went to the American west to study wild Horses and their feet. This leads me to another question: What about the wild Horses on the East Coast of America? (Barrier Islands) They self trim but do not have dished quarters and square toes. These Horses usually have just the opposite, they tend to have very flat and round feet. So, if we are to believe "every Horse" should have natural trims based on wild Horses, which wild Horses are we talking about?

I truly believe in trying to be natural-like, and love being "in touch" with nature. But I also believe in not misleading my fellow Horse lovers with catch phrases that promote products and or ideas that can be harmful to our beautiful grass-eating friends. Going barefoot is usually more healthy for the Equine System, but going barefoot just to be natural could, in fact, be harmful, especially if the trim the Horse gets is a trim modeled after Horses that are not asked to carry us around for our pleasure/work.

At the end of the day, whether your Horse gets a natural trim, pasture trim or shod with gold egg bars, he or she is depending on you to ensure they get regular care from a professional that understands how to manipulate each foot to complete a fully Balanced Horse.

"IT'S ALL ABOUT THE HORSE"



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