



HEARD ABOUT



By Paul Wahl, Editor

A Toe in the Water

Love it or hate it, the natural horsemanship movement has changed the face of the equine trade industry for good. I remember not that many years ago when it was nearly impossible to find a hand-knotted rope halter.

They were called “cowboy” halters and were poorly understood. Pat Parelli, Clinton Anderson and other proponents of natural horsemanship used them and that was all it took to make them a hot product.

Now it’s hoof care and the barefoot movement. For this month’s issue, we asked freelance writer Darlene Craven to look at the developments in this category and try to make sense of them for our retail readers.

Affixing iron shoes to a horse’s hooves seems completely natural to a lot of us old-timers. After all, it’s what you do to protect a horse’s foot and give him a better life, right?

Not really, according to a cadre of new thinkers. They contend that most of the time, leaving a horse barefoot works just fine, thank you. Open-minded farriers even agree that not every horse needs shoes. The interesting debate comes when you get to the polar opposite ends of the debate. Those who say that a horse should always wear an iron shoe and those who say that every horse should be barefoot often cause more heat than light.

I remember a time not so long ago when you tossed a hoof boot into your saddle bag before a trail ride. If your horse happened to throw a shoe, you pulled it off, affixed the boot and walked home. Today’s boots are significantly better and, indeed, can be effective at any gait. Purists still resist the idea that they are as secure as the nailed-on iron version.

Our story, which begins on Page 10, isn’t presented as the complete be-all, end-all story on this topic. We recognize there’s a lot of room for debate on both sides of the issue.

We attempted to present the leading ideas on the issue and the products retailers need to be aware of to fill the wants of their customers. If your company produces a product that’s gaining popularity in the barefoot movement, we’d like to hear about it. We’ll include your information in the online Monthly Companion to the June issue, which expands on stories printed in the published version of the magazine.

There are several thousand companies in our industry. Some we’re very familiar with, some we’re not. So if we did happen to leave you out, don’t be angry or sad, just send your information and we’ll make sure it gets out to our readers. 📧

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