



Star's Story

Star is my Tennessee Walker. He was six when I brought him home and I soon discovered that he had serious behavioral issues. A character description of his behavior was stubborn, lazy, unsocial, green broke and dangerous. He had a bad attitude with anything I tried to do with him. He would turn and travel out of sight as soon as he saw me approach, along with a hind leg kick. He would buck every time I rode him. The most serious problem was that he would trip, stumble and/or fall every time I rode him and at every gait.

His poor attitude and body ailments were increasingly evident the more I worked him. I did not have the confidence to ride him and feel safe. Most of his free time was spent standing under a tree resting and being miserable. This was evident in his eyes. He would not play or socialize with the other horses. My 31-year-old mare had more enthusiasm and energy than Star.

He was apprehensive and nervous when the hoof care professional was trimming or putting shoes on him. He did not like to pick up his hooves and would plant them solidly on the ground, which made hoof care very difficult.

In search of help for Star, I changed our hoof care provider twice. I also contacted many different professional people and practices. The only definition of cause that was given (more than once) was it appeared that he had some neurological disorder. It was recommended to stay off him and best case scenario was that he could spend his life as a pasture pet.

At this point, I was feeling pretty down. My gorgeous and spirited horse was still suffering. I had spent all of my "horse money" with nothing safe or sound to ride and hemorrhaging money monthly for professional visits trying to find cause and solution.

Fall of 2006 a friend brought to my attention that a Natural Hoof Care provider from Georgia was giving a seminar at a local college. I decided to enroll myself and Star in the clinic given by Pete and Ivy Ramey. It was a new hoof care practice and theory to me, the barefoot horse. I did not have anything to lose by listening. Star at seven was so body sore and lame, I could not ride him. His quality of life was poor and I was still perplexed as to why.

The first day of the class was life changing for myself and soon for Star. Some basic topics discussed were environment, diet and nutrition, mechanics and internal structures of the hoof, and how all of this played a roll in having a sound horse. I was introduced to a method of trimming for barefoot soundness. Hoof boots were also talked about. They were to be worn during work, through the transition time. Some horses may be sore for a period of time coming out of shoes or from having inadequate care. The boots are used for comfort until they can grow a healthier hoof and callused sole.

The second day of the clinic Star was evaluated, not only by the guest speaker, but also by the other seventy plus professionals and horse owners that attended the clinic. This included farriers, trimmers, veterinarians, message therapists and horse owners. Star's shoes were pulled and I was given trimming instructions on how to rehabilitate his hooves. Star was diagnosed with thrush, atrophied frog and heel bulbs, contracted heels, high heels, thinned soled—very little concavity, thin wall, separation between wall and white line, thin barely visible bars, and toe flare. Star was sensitive to thumb pressure on the frog and back of the hoof. He had weak lateral cartilage and digital cushion from lack of heel first landing over a long period of time because he was landing toe first every time he took a step in order to keep pressure off the back of his hoof. This seemed like the answer to why he was tripping, stumbling and falling because Star was in pain with every step. All of this contributed to his bad attitude and behavior.

It was surmised that his body ailments would dissipate after we started growing a healthier hoof. He was placed in hoof boots with pads and he instantly seemed much more comfortable in his gaits. I also met a local Natural Hoof Care provider and she agreed to help me along through our transition to a healthier hoof. With all of this support and knowledge, I was ready to take responsibility for my horse's hoof care and well-being.

Conclusion-

A few months into the new trimming process (and barefoot) Star became playful in the pasture because his body ailments were disappearing. He was also becoming easier to get along with and more trusting. It took us about a year to grow a new well connected hoof wall and grow a healthier sole and frog. In order to get a well connected hoof wall, I trimmed more frequently than I had ever done in the past, every two to four weeks, instead of every six to eight. The back of the hoof was getting stronger and Star was no longer tripping and stumbling. Star's hooves had also grown a size larger due to being barefoot and receiving better circulation, which stimulates healthy growth. By wearing the hoof boots for comfort, I was able to ride Star as much as I wanted through the healing stages. The number one prescription to help through the rehabilitation process was movement.

I hope this story encourages those that may be having soundness or health issues with their horses to reach out to alternative ideas, practices and theories in Natural Hoof and Health Care and to respect the healing powers of nature!

Many, many thanks to Pete and Ivy Ramey for their time and dedication in educating horse owners like myself on Natural Hoof and Health Care.

Precision Hoof Pick

After I came home from the initial Natural Hoof Care clinic with Pete and Ivy Ramey, I realized that I needed something to measure Star's hoof growth. I wanted to be confident in giving him the most accurate trim possible and I also wanted to keep a measurement log of his rehabilitation progress. I came up with the idea of the Precision Hoof Pick, a hoof care tool used for measuring and evaluating hoof structure and growth.

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