

Donkey Foot Care – Notes for Farriers

The normal donkey foot

- * Hoof pastern axis is broken forward compared to the horse (between 5° and 10° more).
- * Hoof walls are more upright compared to the horse.
- * The frog is smaller and set further back compared to the horse frog.
- * The sole has a “U” shape with a flare to the heels compared to the rounder shape of a horse's hoof.
- * The wall is a consistent thickness around the hoof, compared to the horse's hoof where the thickness tapers.
- * White line should be ~1mm wide.
- * If any wider may indicate white line disease or laminitis.
- * Sole grows nearly as much as the walls.
- * Heels grow faster relative to toe growth.
- * Adapted to dry climates, they have a higher water content and are more “elastic” than horse hooves.

Trimming the normal foot

Trim every 6 – 10 weeks as required.

Due to size or arthritic changes, they may resent lifting of limbs– you may have to go down to their level and handle their hooves as low to the ground as possible.

Tools

Your normal farrier kit +
Half round nippers
Loop knife
Short bladed knife
Coarse rasp



Sole

Remove any loose or unhealthy material.

Trim frog to a tidy “V” shape.

Pare sole so that it is concave and gives slightly with firm thumb pressure.

Wall

Avoid excessive rasping of the outer layers; however they can be bevelled with a rasp to prevent splitting.

The point of the frog or mid-point of the sole should be approx 6mm (¼ in) above the wall so that the walls are weight bearing – not the sole.

Trimming the overgrown foot

The overgrown foot may rock back onto the heels resulting in a “Turkish slipper” appearance.

Flexor tendons and joints may be under more stress. The pedal bone usually stays in the same place relative to the coronary band, X-rays can confirm this and overgrown horn can then be removed.

Hoof tissue to be removed

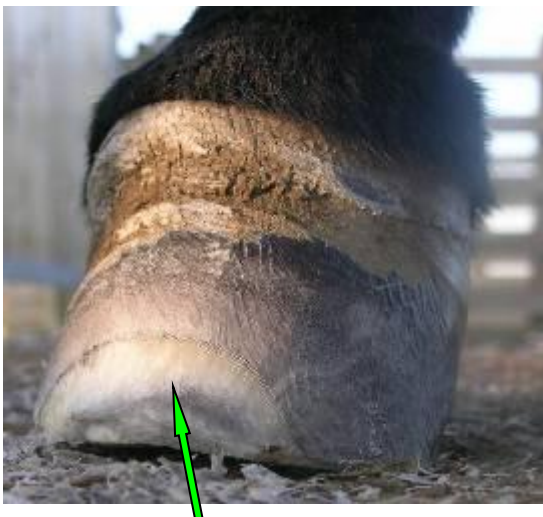


Clean, trim and shape frog and sole first. Trim hoof wall starting at the heels.

When shaping the hoof bear in mind the position of the pedal bone.



A finger's width of horn at the top of the coronary band can be used as a guide for the angle of the front surface of the hoof wall.



Outer hoof wall rasped back



Rasped hoof wall

Untouched hoof wall

All the above images are of the same donkey foot.

Seedy Toe – Notes for Farriers

The affected horn has a grey crumbly texture with lesions varying in severity from minor slits in the hoof wall to extensive cavities with separation of the wall from the white line. Seedy toe lesions are rarely painful unless there is extensive hoof instability, but the widened white line may allow entry of organisms and subsequent abscess formation.

In severe cases the farrier should work with a veterinarian.



All necrotic and discoloured material should be removed to expose clean, healthy horn.

It is possible to resect high up the hoof wall (more so than in the horse), to remove all the affected material. Exposure is necessary to provide an aerobic environment which inhibits bacterial and fungal colonisation.

If extensive resection is necessary X-rays should be taken first to check for any laminitic changes that might affect the stability of P3.



“Sugardine” is a cheap and effective dressing with a fungicidal and antibacterial action, and promotes the drying and hardening of the exposed hoof. It may need to be applied for a couple of days after resection to harden the remaining hoof. Apply to the affected hoof and keep in place with a thick cotton wool pad, cohesive-type bandage & silage bag patches to waterproof the bandage.



(“Sugardine” is made by mixing Povidine (Iodine) antiseptic solution with granulated sugar to a crumbly texture.)

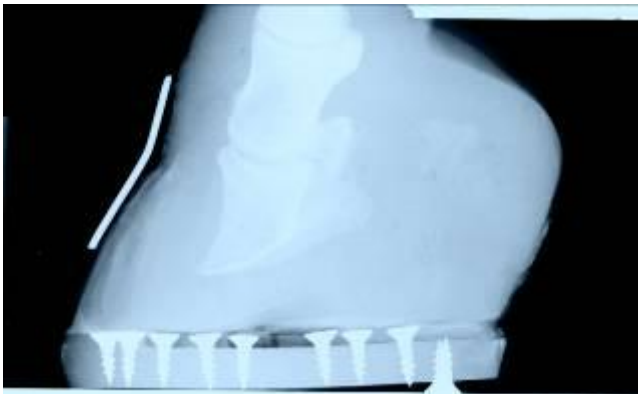
The Laminitic Foot –Notes for Farriers

Trim every 6 – 10 weeks as required. Consider more frequent farriery if hoof growth accelerates post laminitis.



In some laminitic donkeys the sole may be too thin to trim. Use the thumb pressure test to feel the difference between old bruising and live blood supply, if in doubt, radiographs will help to determine the position and any changes to P3.

Frog supports & Heart-bar shoes are not appropriate for use on laminitic donkeys. They transfer weight to the point of the frog which is around 2cm behind the fulcrum of the P3. Pad the entire sole and foot with thick cotton wool and bandage.



In some cases of chronic laminitis, particularly where the soles are very thin, plastic shoes may be indicated to move weight bearing from the sole back to the walls. In these cases we advise consultation with a veterinary surgeon and the use of diagnostic X-rays as plastic shoes may not be appropriate for some severely laminitic / foundered donkeys (see pictures below).

