



Hoof Health Score

Learn to discern: Basics of equine hoof health

This basic version of the Hoof Health Score is designed to introduce the many facets of hoof health to inquiring horse owners and riders, or anyone who wishes to look down at the amazing equine foot. Using this basic tool, you can start to see whether the hoof in question is on the healthy side, or is in need of some TLC.

NOTE: It's important to note that a horse can be pretty sound and have 'funky' looking feet, and the next horse can be exceptionally lame and have 'text book' looking feet. Many factors influence lamenesses other than the feet, but it's also fair to say a lot of lameness begins in the foundational foot. Hoof health and hoof care is very important throughout the life of the horse. Hoof health markers are many and this little 'test' helps you get hoof-acquainted.

⚠ **WARNING:** Looking at horses feet can be addictive. ⚠

This basic hoof health 'test' has 2 sections to gather observational information. A hands on portion and a picture analysis section. For the hands on portion, you need a hoof pick and a horse. For the second portion you need a camera or cell phone ready to use.

1) Sole TEST

CLEAN a front foot. Scrape the sole with a 'sharp' hoof pick (as opposed to the 'square blunt' ones) Feel the sole with your fingers after it is cleaned and brushed off. Is the texture and shape smooth and firm with a uniform 'bowl' shape (like the title picture) or is it more flat or rough or practically convex? Pay attention to any smell too. If it's stinky, it's problematic!

- Is it a smooth and solid dome shape that easily separates the dirt from the foot? (3 points)
- Is it chalky or flakey? Do bits or layers seem to come off with the hoof pick? (2 points)
- Is it greasy, gooey or sticky? Is it hard to get really clean even with a wire brush? Is there a foul odour? (1 point)



2) Frog TEST

Proceed with caution for this Frog Test if you already suspect ill health or thrush. Poking an unhealthy frog pad can cause pain and possible violent reactions. Be safe and be aware! (Thrush is of great concern and is in epidemic proportions in horses around the globe.

(Learn more at equinextion.com)

On a healthy foot you can press as hard as you possibly can on any part of the frog and get no reaction other than a slight indent on the frog, which quickly fills in when you stop pressing. Get a good 'feel' for the resiliency and texture of the frog you are testing. Press on several different areas on the frog.



- Does it feel solid yet resilient like a rubber stall mat? (3 points)
- Is it somewhat soft? Are you not comfortable pressing hard? Are there lots of layers to the frog with flaps or tears? (2 points)
- Are you scared that you will poke right into the tissue? (1 point)

3) Frog TEST response

As you were pressing on the frog with the hoof pick and observing responses, did your horse react to any pressure anywhere on the frog?



- Not at all - it felt like a rubber stall mat. You were impressed at the force you could use. (3 points)
- Did the horse seem to flinch a few times as if they felt it? (2 points)
- Pulled the hoof away? Did you see a crevice where the hoof pick can enter deeply? Is the frog pretty smelly? (1 point)

Now it's Picture Time!

Using touch and smell, along with sight is crucial to evaluating overall health. The next portion of the test will help to understand how the shape of the hoof provides even more clues as you learn to discern. You will be amazed at what you will see in a photo that you didn't spot with your eyes...so start your camera!! (For a complete PDF tutorial on picture taking check out www.equinextion.com)



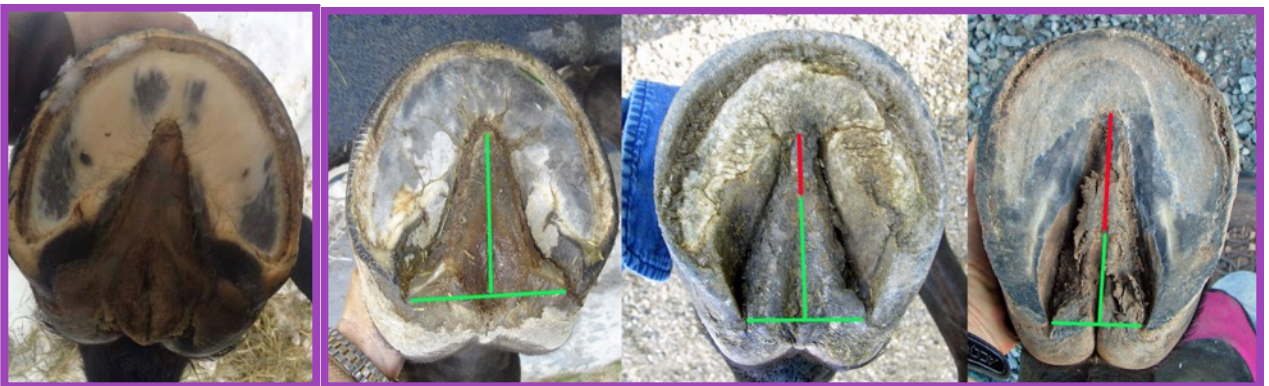
Photo ONE

Using a smart phone or a 'real' camera... start with a shot of the (clean) bottom of the foot. It's very important to make sure your camera is at the same angle as the sole. If the camera is tipped closer to the heels or the toe, the image will be distorted and your measurements will be off.

4) The Frog Measurements

Measure the proportions of the frog in relation to width vs length. First measure the widest part of the frog, between the heels. Then take this measurement, turn it at right angles and see how it relates to the length of the frog.

- a) Is the frog as long as it is wide, or wider than long? (3 points)
- b) Closer to 1 1/2 times longer than it is wide? (2 points)
- c) More like 2 or more times longer than it is wide? (1point)



5) Where are the Bars?

OK Take a close look at the bars. The bars are the stabilizers for the boneless back of the foot. They can do many things so really look to find them and look at their shape, strength and position.

Find the midpoint of the frog ... the halfway mark between the point of the frog and the widest part of the frog. Find where the bars end in relation to the half way mark of the frog.

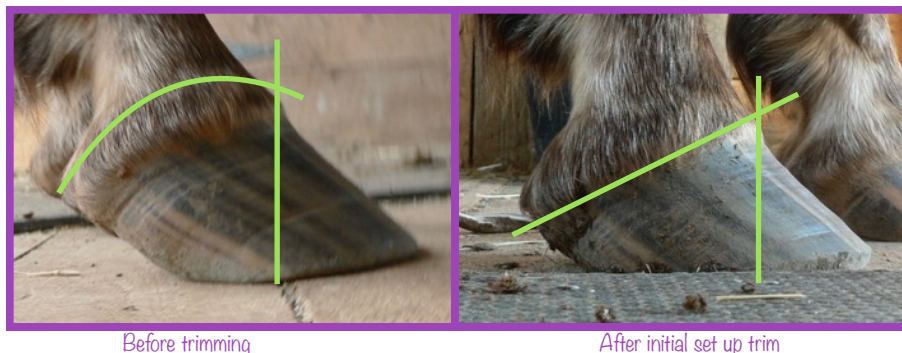


- Are they well defined and end either at or behind the midpoint of the frog? (3 points)
- Are they about as long as the frog (2 points)
- Do the bars spread past/ wrap around the tip of the frog OR seem hard to find and have no clear edges at all? (1 point)

Photo TWO... get your camera/phone close to ground level and stay perpendicular to the foot. This is a tricky shot to get as the angle of the camera and how close you are to the foot can distort your view. Make sure that your picture matches your view of the foot when you have your eyes near the ground.

Looking at your photo, draw a line from the front of the hairline over the toe to the back of the hairline over the heel.

NOTE: your readings could be different before and after a trim. A balanced trim can change a lot for the horse in the way of comfort. The pictures below are of the same foot before and after the initial trim. The equine foot is so highly adaptable - for better or worse! Growth is not the enemy, as long as the foot is balanced from the start!



Before trimming

After initial set up trim

6) Hairline Connection Observations

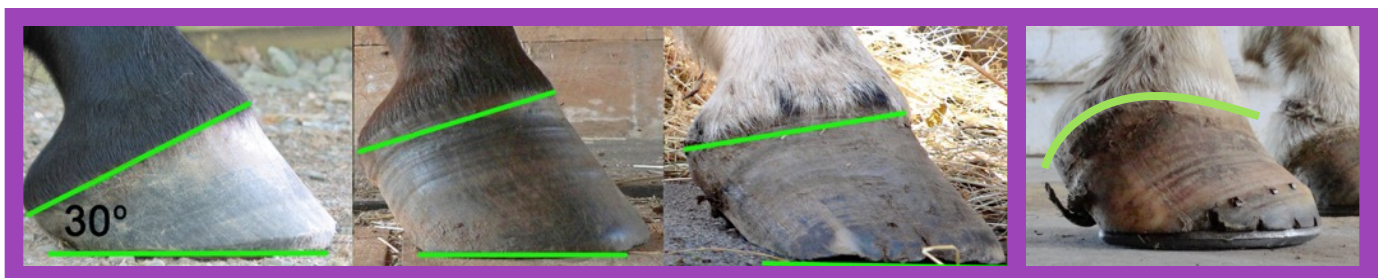
If your horse has a lot of hair/feathers, use a sock or wrap to get the hair out of the way. Depending on the season the hair can cover the connection line that you want to see, so make sure you've moved enough away to get a clear view of the entire line where hair meets hoof.

- Is the hairline more or less a straight line, matching the line you drew? (3 points)
- Is it slightly arched above the line? (2 points)
- Is it strongly arched, or not straight with wavy ups and downs? (1 point)



7) Hairline angle estimate and observations

Now take a look at the hairline angle in relation to the ground. This is where the protractor comes in handy. You can also download a transparent protractor app to use with your photos. This angle has little to do with heel or wall height.



- Is the hairline angle approximately thirty degrees to the ground? (3 points)
- Closer to twenty degrees? (2 points)
- Less than twenty degrees, or lower in the front of the foot versus the back? Or is there an excessive curve to the hairline? (1 point)

8) Proportional Observations

In a healthy foot shape you can observe balance by dividing the foot into thirds, with one third representing the 'toe'. Draw a vertical line from the front most point of the hairline to the ground. How much of the hoof that is touching the ground is in front of this line?



- a) One third or a tiny bit more? (3 points)
- b) Less than one third? (2 points)
- c) Closer to one half or more? (1 point)

The White line Connection Bonus question



a) a tight sealed white line (2 points)

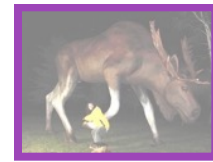
b) separated, stretched, dirt holding white line (0 points)

The above are pages from the Make the Connection Triminology 101 Book available at www.equinextion.com





What's your Hoof Health Score ?



NOTE: For accurate scores, test each front foot to get a reading for both front feet. Hind feet can also be measured, although they have a different shape, health parameters are similar.

If you scored a 24 - You have seen the markers of a happy, healthy, and likely good-moving horse, properly engaged and landing correctly in all gaits.

19-23 – Your horse may be falling a tad short of its optimum stride and performance. A few enhancements can help you top up your score in no time.

14 -18 – Your horse is most likely not comfortable and not able to handle harder or rocky terrain. You may be told he needs shoes. He may be landing flat or visibly toe first (or possibly an exaggerated heel to toe 'snap' landing). He is not living up to his full potential, possibly exhibiting a short, choppy, or uneven stride.

9-13 – Your horse's hoof health is compromised. His gait may often be not-quite-right or worse he may be visibly lame. He is not comfortable walking and may have episodes of laminitis or show some metabolic symptoms.

8 – Your horse has obvious behaviour or training issues or seems 'shut down'. He may have laminitis, suffer from chronic abscessing, and stumble or trip at times. He may even refuse to move. He is an excellent candidate for founder.

Do you want to improve your hoof health score? Do you want to improve the future quality of life for your horse? Do you want to improve your ability to discern and learn more about healthy horses? Of course you do... join us at the new EQ.

Make the Connection!!

Visit www.equinextion.com for more information.



