



HORSEMANSHIP

HEALTH & HEALING

with Mel Fleming & Tony Robinson

Soaking the Horse's Feet

One of the maintenance practices involved with foot care is soaking the feet. Feet can pick up a lot of bacterial or fungal infection from the ground. This alone can cause horses to feel uncomfortable in their feet but it becomes even more of an issue when it enters further into the horse's system from there. This infection can come from dirty muddy yards, cattle paddocks, muddy dams, farrier's tools etc.



Little Reebok having her feet soaked. She loves it and will stand there for 20 mins unattended with her feet in the tub.

With the constant concussion that horses have on their legs and feet they can incur a lot of bruising in the feet and soaking with warm water will help draw out the bruising and soften the sole, heels and coronet. Walls, soles, heels and coronets that are very dry and calloused trap toxicity rather than let it out.

On top of all this, the feet also bear the brunt of any other toxicity in the body whether it be lactic acid, uric acid or other toxins. The legs are like the drain pipes for the horse's system so a lot of the "rubbish" in the body becomes lodged in the muscles, ligaments, tendons and joints of the legs and trapped in the feet.

This tightens up the soft tissue, stiffens up the joints and builds up in the bulbs of the heels causing them to become very tender, thick and congested. This causes the horse to be short striding as they won't want to stretch the muscles and tendons and the contracted muscles and tendons will start to pull the horse's 'topline' out of shape.

Treating the feet with Energy Work and soaking the feet is like pulling the plug out to let all these toxins start shifting out of the body. That will be a great relief to your horse.

When soaking the horse's feet use water as warm as you and the horse can stand it unless the foot is already hot and inflamed in that case you should use cool water.

You can either soak in rubber or plastic containers (the big rubber feed buckets are ideal as they won't break if the horse walks on them) or you can use soaking boots.



Tony Robinson demonstrating soaking the feet, washing the legs down and massaging the coronet band and heels at the Ultimate Horsemanship Experience Course in New Zealand.



Soaking the feet in the Davis soaking boots.

The advantages of soaking boots are that you don't need to stay there with the horse while the feet are soaking and you can soak all four feet at once. However once your horse is used to it you can also soak all four feet at once in the tubs. With the soaking boots the water stays warmer for longer and you don't have to use as much product. The boots also are easier if you don't have the convenience of a concrete wash bay. After having scrubbed the hoof clean prior to soaking you don't really want your horse putting his foot down in the dirt if he takes it out of the bucket and then have to put the dirty foot back in to continue soaking. The disadvantage of the boots is that you can't massage the coronet band or the heels as easily.

Clean the hoof out well and then scrub the feet with shampoo and a scrubbing brush. As well as cleaning the foot you will be stimulating the circulation. Rinse the foot off and then you are ready to soak it.

Soaking with natural disinfectants will kill the bacteria in feet. You can use things like Tea Tree oil, Eucalyptus oil, or Thyme oil (you will only need a few drops of these in about 5 litres of water), Colloidal Silver (about 1 cup in 5 litres of water), Apple Cidar Vinegar (ACV) (about 1 cup in 5 litres of water). Thyme oil actually has one of the strongest antiseptic properties of all the oils. Colloidal Silver is one of the

most powerful antibacterial agents available and Apple Cidar Vinegar has very good anti bacterial, and anti fungal properties and acts as an astringent drawing bruising out of the tissue so it is actually the product that we use most frequently. If there is a lot of bruising like stone bruising you can also use a pretty strong solution of Epsom salts. You can add Lectric Soda washing crystals to the oil antiseptic solutions to add a drawing affect to those. There are a lot of options depending on the main purpose for which you are soaking. Each product does a bit different job so it is good to use a variety of products at different times.

If you are using buckets or tubs to soak the feet you want the water to at least cover the coronet band and the bulbs of the heels. Higher is better. So depending on the size tub you use this will take about 5 litres of water per tub.



The white waxy substance on the coronary band and at the heels is the 'rubbish' that has come out after soaking.

It is good to wash the legs down with a soft cloth like a chux while soaking the feet as you will be treating the legs as well by allowing the solution to run down the legs. Massaging the coronet and the heels will stimulate the circulation and increase the release of the toxins. If the horse has a lot of scaly stuff around the coronet band you can scrub this off. Ideally you would soak the feet for 15-20 minutes. For a performance horse doing a lot

of work, or horses with health or soundness problems it is good to soak the feet weekly or even more often to get started. After traveling where horses could have picked up bacteria or other infection and after shoeing or trimming, where the farrier tools have been used on other horses which could transfer bacteria, are good times for soaking the feet.

After you finish soaking you might find that the horse has a white greasy or waxy substance around the coronet band. This is just the rubbish coming out so rub this off with an old towel and dry the foot. It is important to apply a good quality oil or hoof dressing to the foot after soaking. This will seal the foot, keep the coronet, the bulbs of the heel and the frogs soft and pliable and can continue to act as an antibacterial and drawing agent for the foot. Massage it well into the whole foot the wall, the sole, the frog and especially the bulbs of the heels and the coronet band. Good products to use are olive oil, mustard seed oil, coconut oil, emu oil, a mix of vitamin E and Co Enzyme Q10 cream, or the Savvy Touch Hoof Paste.



Shannon Davies massaging the Savvy Touch Hoof Paste into the foot after soaking.

If you know how to treat your horse with the energy work then while the feet are soaking is a great time to do a treatment as the effectiveness of your treatment will be intensified. It will also help your horse to stand still as you will be there with them while they are getting used to having their feet soaked.

To get your horse used to having his feet soaked you can start by just washing the legs down with a cloth and a bucket of your solution and once they realize the soothing effect they will start to accept it. If your horse is worried about the bucket it will be safer to hold the horse rather than tie them up at first.

To get your horse used to the boots let them smell them and then rub them over with the boots and then put them on while the horse is untied and lead the horse around to be sure that he is confident with them before tying him up. If the horse is very unconfident I would just do this one foot at a time until you could lead the horse confidently around with all boots on.

Following are some pictures showing different signs that indicate the feet aren't healthy and some of the results and parts of the processes of healing after soaking the feet and energy treatments.



(above) These cracks in the wall are most likely due to the body not having the right nutrition. They provide the perfect environment for infections to enter and live. Improving the diet, soaking the feet and treatment with energy work will all be needed to improve this foot.



(above) The redness that you can see in the heels is bruising in the foot trying to come out.



(above) A white line around the coronary band or dry flaky hoof wall around the coronary band all indicate 'rubbish' being expelled from the body. This horse has very small feet for his size and contracted under run heels due to the congestion in his feet. After just one week of soaking the feet and energy work it was remarkable just how much this horse's feet opened up and improved. Looking at this horse's diet would also be recommended to see if there was something he was eating that was causing his body to have so much toxicity in it.



(bottom left) Here is the same foot as above after some Energy work and soaking sessions. These sores are just a result of the body letting go of a lot more rubbish.



(above) The same foot again viewed from underneath. Right where the bulbs of the heels meet the frog you can see a lot of bruising and the frog doesn't look healthy as it will be releasing a lot of toxicity.



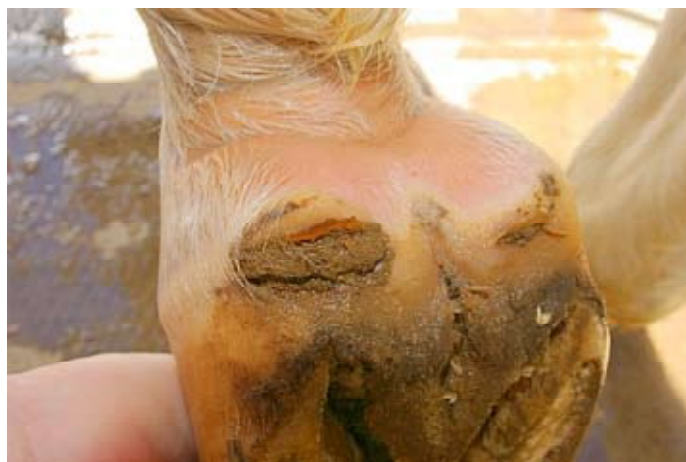
(above) Another example of where 'rubbish' is shifting out from the body through the coronary band indicated by the dark, dirty band around the hoof wall.



(above) The rings at the top of this hoof are not a sign of a healthy foot or stomach.



(above) Here is the same foot after treatments. The wall is looking smoother and healthier so things are improving. The separation that has occurred in the wall is where the toxins are being released through the foot.



(above) This horse had some lameness issues and after soaking this was the result.



(above) The same hoof as above and taken at the same time. The separation can clearly be seen where the rubbish is coming out. All the little black dots that you can see through out the sole are the pit holes where the bacteria has entered into the foot.



(above) More rubbish coming out after treatments and soaking. It is all better off coming out than staying in the body. These sores were just treated with a mixture of Vitamin E cream and Co Enzyme Q10 cream.

**It is amazing what the feet harbour and we wonder why horse have behavioural and performance problems.
That is something to soak on!**

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