

# Forget horseshoes, barefoot trim good for horses' hooves

*Equine Spirit Sanctuary hosts free hoof care, trimming clinic with local farrier*

By Ruth Bourgeois

One of the missions of Equine Spirit Sanctuary is to teach people about all aspects of horse care while promoting responsible ownership.

All of our equines are barefoot. Often we are asked why our horses do not wear shoes. The main reason is that it is healthier for the horse.

That is a concept that many people do not understand or believe; everyone knows horses need shoes. That simply is not true.

But what is true is that all horses need consistent, correct hoof care.

The equine hoof is not a rigid, solid block. It is a living organ, naturally designed to be

flexible and shock absorbing.

The hoof contains bones and a large amount of blood supply for the horse. The tough outer wall and the sole protect internal structures from damage.

A barefoot horse's hoof is better able to flex with every step the horse takes, allowing for good blood circulation while providing the best shock absorption possible for the horse's leg joints.

When a steel shoe is nailed onto a horse's foot, there is no "give" when the foot hits the ground. While steel shoes are commonly accepted, better options are available that are more comfortable and healthier for the horse.

Hoof protection today is considerably more advanced than it was decades ago.



Courtesy photo

**Mark Eden, local barefoot trimmer, assists with the care of Equine Spirit Sanctuary horses.**

Numerous boots, pads and plastic shoes can offer protection when necessary. The

biggest advantage is that these materials allow the foot to flex naturally with movement.

which then promotes soundness through the connecting tissues, tendons and ligaments, and internal structures.

For a sound, healthy horse that has no lameness issues, going barefoot is ideal. A proper barefoot trim enables the horse to be comfortable on the surface of the environment that he lives in. If you take a barefoot horse from a soft pasture out to rocky mountains for a trail ride, it's easy to put a pair of boots on for the ride. Aside from being a healthier option, it also saves a lot of money in the long run.

Trimming a barefoot horse requires a different set of skills than trimming a foot that will have a steel shoe attached. It's not that difficult to learn, and many horse owners are quite capable of trimming their own

horse or keeping their horse's feet in good shape in between a full trim from a barefoot trimmer.

ESS has hosted clinics teaching hoof care and trimming. Mark Eden, local barefoot trimmer, assists with the care of our horses.

Eden will be at ESS every Saturday morning from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. starting June 30 through July, working on horses. Anyone interested in learning more about barefoot trimming and hoof care or how to do the barefoot trim is invited to come out. There is no charge and you can do some hands-on learning, under Mark's guidance. Go to [equinespiritsanctuary.org](http://equinespiritsanctuary.org) or [facebook.com/equinespiritsanctuary](https://www.facebook.com/equinespiritsanctuary) for more information or call (575) 758-1212.