

## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A NATURAL TRIMMER

### What to Expect from a Natural Trimmer

by Kenny Williams

With the natural hoof care movement growing by leaps and bounds, many horse guardians are seeking out barefoot trimmers. But just as in all professions, there



are the good, bad and ugly. Far too many people latch onto the first practitioner they find without having an idea of what to expect from this person. Remember, you are the client as well as your horse's protector. It's important to make an informed decision in picking this member of your horse's care team.

#### **A qualified trimmer:**

- Is an educator as well as a trimmer. Professional hoof care practitioners realize it's important that the guardian understand the basics of how the hoof works, what common ailments might appear and why, and especially the transition process. It's valuable to conduct an initial consultation to go over the horse's current status and the treatment plan.

You should always feel welcome to ask questions. If the trimmer has an issue with this, concern is warranted. Remember, this is a partnership with the goal of a healthy, balanced horse.

- Realizes they don't know it all and is always a student of the horse. A big ego has no place in natural hoof care as there is not one answer for every horse's needs. Successful trimmers always seek out new information, being open to other methods even if it's different from the training they

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have had. Getting locked into one specific modality will result in a closed mind. Besides, there are no better hoof care teachers than the horses themselves.

- Has a basic working knowledge of the “whole horse”. Although you shouldn’t expect your trimmer to be an expert in all facets of horse care, they must be aware of the aspects that affect not only the hoof but overall health of the horse. These should include but are not limited to:
  - Nutrition. They should understand that without a proper diet, no horse can grow a healthy hoof. Can your trimmer spot potential diet issues and point you to resources to learn or get advice? Do they understand the dangers of too much starch, sugar or protein? Can they read the hoof health to determine if that horse is getting the proper nutrients to grow healthy hooves? Are they knowledgeable enough to link chronic laminitis to diet issues and metabolic imbalances?
  - Environment and movement. All hoof practitioners should understand the importance of proper environment and movement in relation to hoof health. They should be able to spot detrimental facility practices and offer suggestions for change.
  - Body soreness and imbalance. Is your trimmer aware of potential muscle or joint pain in the horses they work on? Do they understand that body soreness can affect hoof wear? Although they may not be able to pinpoint the specific problem, they should be able to discuss their concerns and point you to someone in your area who specializes in body work.



**Tip** A good trimmer recognizes pain issues and works within the horse’s comfort level.

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- Possesses great stall-side manner and utilizes gentle horsemanship techniques. There is no excuse for rough handling or physical punishment during a trimming session. Although it's not the practitioner's job to train your horse, it's not acceptable to lose one's temper and retaliate in a way that equines just don't understand.

Inappropriate handling is detrimental to your horse's wellbeing and will cause more issues in the future. There is a big difference between being assertive and aggressive. If you're not comfortable with how your equine partner is treated during the trimming session, find another trimmer.



**Tip** Listen to your horse by observing her behavior around the trimmer. If she gets nervous or anxious upon his arrival, this is a red flag.

- Looks at each horse and hoof individually. The goal for a trim is not necessarily four perfectly shaped hooves, but soundness. There are no universal exact measurements that dictate balance. Ultimately, the horse is the final judge. If you find your trimmer is forcing a certain shape or angles that result in soreness after every trim, it's time to look elsewhere.
- Is respectful of your time and strives to stay on a schedule as much as possible. Certainly, when working with horses always being on time is impossible as there are just too many variables. However, proper scheduling is important and if there's going to be a long delay or need to reschedule, your trimmer should let you know. On the same token, it's your responsibility to have your horse ready for the trimming session when the practitioner arrives.

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### Where to begin your search for a natural trimmer

Although there are numerous programs out there teaching barefoot trimming, just because someone is certified or taught that method, does not guarantee they are qualified or the right trimmer for you. There are some wonderful practitioners who have learned from various people and through hands-on experience that are highly qualified. References from people who have having great results are extremely valuable.

One new group, the American Hoof Association, [americanhoofassociation.org](http://americanhoofassociation.org), has much promise in promoting qualified trimmers. This group is not aligned with any specific trimming method, but rather qualifies trimmers through a peer-reviewed acceptance process.

Just as you should research and feel comfortable with your own health care professionals, the same care should be used when picking a trimmer. Ultimately, the key is listening to your equine partner and your intuition.

***Kenny Williams** is a natural hoof care provider and educator who has been trimming for a decade and utilizes natural horsemanship, essential oils, and energy work to help hasten healing. Kenny has the ability to explain a natural hoof to everyday people while having a great eye for what the hoof is telling him. He is now offering hoof care consultations, private trimming instruction and tutoring. He is also the co-creator of Equi-Spirit Toys & Tools™. His herd of six have been his best teachers and he's happy to pass that knowledge around. If Your Horse Could Talk, LLC [www.naturalhorsetalk.com](http://www.naturalhorsetalk.com)*

