

## GETTING TO KNOW

# Thinus Rademan

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**Take us back to the day you chose to become a farrier and why?**

Since a young boy, I have always wanted to be a farrier and a blacksmith. At the time of choosing a career, I was offered a rugby contract as well as a singing contract, at that stage it was an easy choice for me, I wanted to be a farrier!

**Looking back would you have made the same career choice again given a second chance?**

Absolutely! They say hindsight is 20/20 vision, knowing what I know now, I would probably have taken the music contract, played a bit more rugby and shod horses. Putting all my eggs in one basket was probably not the wisest decision I had ever made.

**Could you highlight one treasured moment in your career?**

One of my all time favourites was when the King of Malaysia flew me in to shoe his team of Endurance horses. It was an experience of a lifetime!

**We posed him with some questions to enrich our basic hoof care knowledge, read what he had to say.**

**What is the first thing you look at when a horse is parked in front of you?**

Conformation, conformation, conformation! I normally assess for possible structural deviations of the entire horse.

We can't change conformation, but we can help support the structural deviations and conformational challenges to best keep the horse sound.



**Do you assess movement before forging a shoe & packing?**

Yes! Sound physiologic shoeing can only be achieved through thorough examination, knowledge of gaits and application of basic principles, such as hoof angles, hoof pastern axis and mediolateral balance.

An assessment needs to be made on the horse's gait, landing & striking mechanism, motion and control while traveling as well as the horses weight bearing surface before one can assist a horse through shoeing.

Most horses do not require special trimming or shoeing techniques, we need to recognize when changes in trimming or shoeing might be necessary to help with performance of the sound horse or as an alternate, possibly help restore the performance of the lame horse, making an assessment is a priority before forging shoes and stacking pads unnecessarily

**What is your general rule of thumb?**

I work by the principle 'LESS IS MORE'. The less artificial enhancements, the easier the horse will move.

**Quarter Cracks can be a headache, could you share your opinion on how they can occur, whether you can prevent them and how you could treat them?**

Quarter cracks typically originate in the coronary band and move distally. It is generally a hoof capsule defect and may cause complications, lameness and impairment to the horse's athleticism.

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There are many reasons that horses pop quarter cracks; dry hooves, repetitive concussion on hard surfaces, imbalanced hoof, conformation faults, fractures, keratoma's, under run heels, bumped up heels and sometimes one finds a tendency in some genetic lineages to be more prone to quarter cracks.

The first challenge is to ensure the horse's hoof is balanced. Once you have balanced the hoof, you can float the area below the affected tubule to remove all excess pressure preventing further eruption.

If the coronary band is compromised or damaged, the crack should be cut out along its length, this minimises pinching of the laminae and prevents perpetuation by overlapping edges. I then quarterise the area before stapling the tubule to hold the wall together and stabilising. If there is no bleeding, I will cover it with equiloxx to prevent a bacterial/fungal infection from entering the susceptible area. It is important not to cover the crack if there is bleeding as this could cause infection.

It is imperative to check that once you have nailed the shoe on that should the horse be dressed with leather pads, they do not push back up into the floated area. I believe prevention is always better than cure. Keep your hooves elastic, eliminate pressure points and keep your horses hooves balanced.

### What do you do for a horse that knocks its knee/knees?

Horses will knock a knee or knees as a result of being narrow chested, by presenting rotational and angulated deviations in the knee joint, sore feet and by medial aspect hoof distortion/flare. I normally work in collaboration with the trainer, they need to do complimentary training additional to the farrier's workmanship.

I would normally weight the medial branch of the shoe also called a side weight shoe. The most weight will then be on the inside of the shoe while the outside branch is very light. If forging a side weight shoe is too drastic for the horse, I sometimes add a small weight to the pad next to the medial branch of the shoe.

I also like to give a bit more lateral support should the horse lack enough width on the lateral side, or outside half, of the hoof. In such cases, I fit the shoe wider than the hoof on that side to regain symmetry and equalize medial/lateral support.

Another concept that helps reduce pivoting on break-over is to apply a square-toe shoe. Always attempt to forge lightweight shoes as weight increases the chance of deviant motion and exaggerated animation.

I personally don't like trimming the hoof shorter on the outside of the winging leg as it may interfere with the bone spacing further up the leg and result in structural damage or inflammation.

Most times if a horse has the support it needs, it won't hesitate to land solidly and travel past its knees without knocking itself.

### Can you change the movement of a horse that dishes?

I generally believe that as long as a horse hooves are balanced, it lands square and breaks over square, there isn't much you can do for its range of motion while travelling.

Sometimes some things should be left alone, straightening what shouldn't be straightened could create latent problems which may become more serious than the one you are trying to solve.





### Is it possible to change a horses stride?

Yes. Depending on your desired outcome you can drop an angle to get more depth or raise an angle to decrease the length. It's always vital to stay within the parameters of the horse's conformation, excessive manipulation can cause injury to tendons, bone and ligaments. A quick tell that a horse has strained is when a horse presents with windgalls, this is when there is an over secretion of synovial fluid to create a protective, lubricative shield around the irritated or inflamed joint.

### What causes boxed hooves, is there a way to prevent them and how do you shoe this type of hoof?

The boxed or club foot is defined as a hoof angle greater than 60 degrees. The clubbed foot is caused by a flexural deformity of the distal interphalangeal joint (coffin joint). Other causing factors include nutritional issues, genetic inheritance, position in the uterus or injury.

A clubbed/box hoof can be either congenital (they are born with it) or acquired through external factors. Most cases present one foot that is worse than the other.

Cases can present as mild or quite severe. A foal with coffin joint flexural deformity that is left untreated or treated unsuccessfully/incorrectly often results in the permanent formation of the club foot.

In young foals, younger than 8 weeks, medical intervention may include oxytetracycline to relax the tendons on the back of the leg, splinting, and corrective trimming with toe extensions.

When these medical therapies do not work, severe cases are suggested towards surgical therapies such as cutting the accessory ligament (inferior check ligament) of the deep digital flexor tendon to allow manual manipulation of the joint and hoof capsule as well as allow the soft tissue structures to lengthen and assume a more normal orientation.



Horses with more mild cases may be managed throughout their life with attentive trimming and shoeing.

The best advice I can offer before manipulating the club foot is to first get the hoof X-rayed/radiographed to ensure the alignments between the hoof wall and the pedal bone match up. Shoe according to the pedal bone angle and not the hoof wall. It is not recommended to manipulate the hoof angles to soothe your eye, it is important to keep support under the bone structure rather than break the horses natural lines. Sometimes as a farrier, we need to realise that in some cases, there is not much we can change when bones are involved.

### Should a horse develop an abscess, what are the symptoms and how do you treat it?

An abscess presents when bacteria gets trapped inside the hoof after a foreign object damages the hoof.

They may also be caused by a nail that was driven inside the white line. Other factors that may cause an abscess are poor hoof quality where the hoof capsule is weak and presents bacterial entry zones. Wet, dirty stables also soften the hoof possibly allowing bacteria to enter through spaces within the white line. Long flared toes, distorted hoof capsules and under-run heels also weaken the white line and increase the risk of bacterial entry.

The hoof capsule can't present swelling. When an abscess presents, pressure builds and causes sudden pain and in most cases, severe lameness, symptoms can be so severe that it may appear that the horse has an internal bone fracture.



There are normally no signs of swelling or visible wounds, unless the abscess has caused a severe infection which may cause swelling and inflammation that pushes up the horse's leg.

It normally takes around 7 days to develop and show its presence.

The best diagnostic tools are to check for heat in the hoof wall, a digital pulse and swelling/softness in the heel bulb and coronary band. The use of a hoof tester tool cannot protocol is to drain the abscess and prevent further infection. It is inhumane to wait for the abscess to rupture on its own due to the level of pain associated with it. Seek veterinary attention or ask a farrier to lance or drain the duct.

In some cases, a drainage track does not exist in very handy to know where to pare out the sole.

The best treatment present, X-Rays/radiographs can then be used to identify where the pocket is located.

Some cases may need pain relievers, however I have observed that the pain is normally immediately relieved after draining the pus pocket.

Additional treatment to assist softening the hoof capsule to allow for a drainage duct to present itself:

I like to poultice the hoof with warm bran, Epsom salts and water OR what we term as sugar-dine (Iodine & sugar mixed) applied under the sole as a poultice. Alternatively you can grate a potato and mix Iodine into the grated potato, apply under the sole as a poultice. All these need to be kept on the hoof by means of a medical boot, medical plate or bandages, depending on the location of the suspected abscess.

It is of utmost importance not to have penicillin injected until the abscess has opened & drained. Any medication should be administered under veterinary supervision/instruction.

### Anything you think we should know?

Yes, your horse's hoof health is directly related to good gut health. If you notice temperature rings, slow hoof growth and compromised structural integrity of the hoof, take a closer look at your horse's ability to absorb nutrients freely through a healthy GI system and that the food offered has all the required nutrients your horse needs.

Remember no hoof, no horse!!

- *Thinus Rademan*



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