

# Applied Equine Podiatry

## *A treatment alternative to the traditional farrier practice.*

Until the recent advent of the Holistic health movement, many forms of alternative treatments have been considered frivolous attempts to compensate for the limitations being observed in the contemporary realm of Veterinary medicine and Western medicine as a whole.

Enter Applied Equine Podiatry, now being viewed by many as an alternative to the traditional farrier sciences. Though not fully recognized within the contemporary Veterinary medical realm, the term Equine Podiatry has been used in conjunction with the traditional farrier practice for many years by many different people, most often referring to corrective and therapeutic shoeing.

Webster's definition of Podiatry is the professional study, care, and treatment of the feet, nowhere are shoes mentioned.

What better title for the care and treatment of the horse's feet in a more holistic and natural manner, without the use of the horse shoe, than Applied Equine Podiatry.

Applied Equine Podiatry has in recent years started to come into focus and has begun to define itself as a science and art all to itself and should not be confused with the traditional farrier practice or Equine Podiatry in any way, says Farrier and Applied Equine Podiatrist KC La Pierre, founder of the International Institute of Equine Podiatry, Inc. "Applied Equine Podiatry is a viable form of alternative treatment that can and does offer encouraging results", says La Pierre.

For over six years La Pierre, a former professional farrier of more than 24 years has been practicing Applied Equine Podiatry and treating horses using Shoeless methods. The results have been impressive, with an 80% success rate in the treatment of the lame horse, according to La Pierre.

Applied Equine Podiatry, as it is taught at the International Institute of Equine Podiatry, Inc. encompasses the philosophy that the horse has its own innate ability to heal itself. Improper hoof conformation and DHS (Deformed Hoof Syndrome) interfere with this ability.

Applied Equine Podiatry works to achieve and maintain equilibrium within the equine foot and achieve structural balance in the whole horse. This is achieved by developing proper structure and function in the foot by balancing to the internal structures and not the limb. Proper Applied Equine Podiatry technique affectively helps the horse to better deal with the shock of impact that may otherwise cause soft tissue damage and lead to muscle imbalance and bone changes, this while better utilizing the energies created by the stride. Applied Equine Podiatry further helps the horse regulate its circulatory, nervous and muscular systems and their interdependency on one another. With a strong understanding of how nature intended the foot to work, Applied Equine Podiatry can re-establish equilibrium and return proper biomechanical and neurological function to the distorted or diseased hoof, returning many a lame horse to soundness, both physically and mentally. Not by design, but by nature, the traditional horse shoe cannot work to aid in this rehabilitation. It is more often a cause of imbalance and the horse shoe must be removed to correct the altered mechanics of the hoof. Applied Equine Podiatry also offers the horse person a wonderful diagnostic tool. By visually recording hoof structure and mapping any changes that occur, the observer has the ability to pinpoint changes that indicate abnormalities and or problems that may be occurring elsewhere in the horse. When used in conjunction with other complimentary treatments such as Chiropractic, Massage, Acupuncture, Acupressure and Contemporary Veterinary medicine, Applied Equine Podiatry can help to establish a solid foundation that may otherwise be absent. Applied Equine Podiatry as taught by KC La Pierre, RJF, MEP, PhD is based in part on the Suspension Theory of Hoof Dynamics" that La Pierre introduced in March of 2001.

The Suspension Theory simply stated: It is the resistance that the hoof wall, bars and lateral cartilages provide and the counter resistance (Elasticity) of the frog along with the ability of the hoof wall to distort under stress that allows the kinetic energy created by impact to be converted to elasticity (Flexion). This in unison with the resistance created by the attempted rapid transfer of blood from under the Navicular bursa via the

digital cushion to the lateral cartilages (Hemodynamics; Bowker, 99) that helps to isolate the Navicular bursa and bone from the kinetic energy created at impact. (La Pierre) By following theory and through applied method, Applied Equine Podiatry works to distribute the kinetic energies created during impact to effectively maintain or improve structural integrity and promote proper functions, thus achieving peak performance. La Pierre's theory requires that a horse's hoof land flat or slightly to its caudal aspect and feels it is the responsibility of the Applied Equine Podiatrist to achieve proper foot fall through the application of a proper trim. The method of trimming that is used at the International Institute of Equine Podiatry, Inc. and proposed by La Pierre to be used in Applied Equine Podiatry is the HPT Method™. (HPT stands for High Performance Trim.)

The HPT is a detail oriented trim that required a trained eye capable of seeing the proper structure within an otherwise deformed capsule. One side benefit of the HPT Method™ is the ease in which it can be taught and learned. How to apply the method is easily retained in a short period of time, as a result, many horse owners can learn how to maintain or even apply the HPT themselves in a relatively short time. It is important however that the horse owner understand that the lame horse be treated by a Degreed Applied Equine Podiatrist that has completed the appropriate studies, says La Pierre. Strong knowledge of anatomy, physiology and pathology are needed to utilize Applied Equine Podiatry properly and to full advantage. Some important principles that Applied Equine Podiatry follow are; Never should living tissue be invaded. Always work toward returning proper function to the hoof, but not at the expense of the comfort of the horse. Time a valuable tool which should be taken full advantage of, inducing trauma to increase circulation should never be entertained. Removal of hoof material should be kept to a minimum and limited to placing the hoof's working systems safely back into equilibrium. There are few absolutes in Applied Equine Podiatry, overall structural integrity is observed and used as a guide in the application of any trim. This method accommodates the many different structures observed in the unlimited number of hoof types encountered. Angles as absolutes are avoided. The only absolute that is used is that of the live sole plane, which lay perpendicular to the internal structures and can be referenced for placing all components into equilibrium with reference to one another, thus supporting theory.

Does this mean that only the fully trained DAEP can apply a proper trim or use Applied Equine Podiatry to aid the horse? As stated earlier, no, it would be ridiculous to think so, says La Pierre. There are many capable farriers and natural hoof care specialists currently applying a variety of trims, many called natural trims. Most follow, though not proclaimed, the principles and philosophies of Applied Equine Podiatry. Most base the model for their trim on the feral horse, while the HPT does not, says La Pierre. The HPT came about in response to the development of the Suspension Theory of Hoof Dynamics and the desire to correct hoof deformities in the domestic horse. Applied Equine Podiatry offers the most logical and natural vehicle for the delivery of the HPT Method™. There are many capable, concerned horse owners out there that can and do practice Applied Equine Podiatry and the HPT Method™ to the benefit of their horses, says La Pierre. Additional benefits to the application of Applied Equine Podiatry and the HPT Method™ are the relief of symptoms associated with DHS (Deformed Hoof Syndrome) and an increase in biomechanical balance and neurological performance. When used in conjunction with other alternative and traditional healing arts, the concept of "Whole Horse Health" grows stronger.

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