

Confidential Interview #6

Q Okay, just for the purposes of the recording, I want to make sure that, caller , you understand that our conference call is being recorded and that that's agreeable to you.

A Yes.

Q Could you begin by describing for me where your knowledge of the soring problem comes from?

A My knowledge comes from the sales barn and these are horses that basically they didn't make it in the show ring, so they're exporting them out of the Tennessee area and they're selling them as trail horses.

I absolutely see it first hand. One major one is on the hind limbs, you always see – I call it the chain scars. A lot of them that come through the barns I was working at, you could see the scars on the back fetlocks and on the coronary bands from the chains and then on the front a lot of the horses that we shod had irritated coronary bands and some pretty bad feet. I mean, real sore footed that shouldn't have been on those horses.

Q Let me ask you first about the back feet because when most people think of the use of action devices they think of them being used on the fore legs, rather than the hind legs, as I understand what you told me you've seen evidence of action devices being used on the hind legs as well?

A Yes, they put chains, the chains they put on the back to try to get these horses moving, in fact, I'm looking at one of my Tennessee walkers right now and his back legs, especially from the fetlock down are just scarred up, he's got permanent scars from that.

Q And do those – I'm trying to figure out how best to ask you this. If you could sort of describe the areas on the hind legs where you've seen those scars, that would be helpful. Are they on the anterior portion of the rear leg or in the sort of equivalent to the pocket of the fore leg?

A Yeah, basically this is basically where I see them the most, is right about the heel bulbs which would be the posterior, I would call it, a posterior cardinal area of the hooves and it's usually right there, back there by the heel bulbs. That tender part of that foot where those chains go up against.

Q And many people are familiar with what scars might look like on the fore leg of the horse, is what you've seen similar to those kinds of scars.

A Yeah, they're very similar, but it's amazing how many that you see on the hind limbs and nobody addresses that.

Q Can you estimate by percentage of the number of horses that you see in connection with sales or auctions, how many horses show these kinds of symptoms?

A I'd say, around about 5% to 10%, about 5% to 10%.

Now another thing on the rear that we've seen, is the sheared heels. I can't tell you how many horses I've dealt with with sheared heels on the back end.

Q Can you explain what a sheared heel is? And I presume that's a product of how the hoof is trimmed before the horse is shod?

A Exactly, and the reason they're doing that is they're trying to overcome a conformational problem or they're trying to enhance the movement and conformation of movement of that horse through trimming techniques that are actually detrimental to the joints and hoof pattern and alignment of the horse.

Q Could you describe a little bit about how these trimming techniques are detrimental. What kind of consequences does it have for the horse?

A Well, you get a lateral medial imbalance of the lower leg and we know that those are hinge joints, so any time that you put a lateral medial imbalance you're going to start remodeling those joints and you're also increasing the chance of getting arthritis later on in the joint. Number two is because the heels are sheared, center {inaudible} of the frog becomes real deep because it's torn and we usually end up with some pretty serious thrush in there to the point of where I've actually had to work with the vet and we had to remove the frogs, then pack the feet with sugar dye and try and get them to grow back.

Q And again, is it possible for you to give an estimate of how frequently you see this in terms of the percentages of horses that you've seen that exhibit these kinds of problems?

A When I worked at the sales barn, I would say at least 25% if not more of those horses coming in had sheared heels on the hind end, at least 25% because I used to be covered in thrush medicine all the time, digging these heels up.

Q Let's turn then to the problems that you've seen on the fore legs

A Well, a lot of the horses when they come in, and we're talking at least 50% of them, the bars were bruised, the soles were bruised and I'm not talking just a little stone bruise, I'm talking serious deep bruising and atrophy of the frogs and the hooves, you could tell something was done because if you shod a horse properly, it's supposed to enhance that foot and it's supposed to help the horse, not destroy the foot but you see a lot of it, like I've seen a lot of the bars were really bruised up and you could see the bruising usually forward of the frog is where we saw a lot of the bruising.

Q Now you said, pressure put on those, is this related to the soring technique that's commonly called pressuring shoeing?

A Yeah, I would say so because there's no other way to do that to a horse.

Q And it's the pressure from that object, whatever it may be, that is causing the bruising to the bars and the soles and causing the atrophy of the frog?

A Yeah, exactly. Yes.

A Exactly, it's automatic. When you see an oblong shaped front foot on a walker, it's guaranteed that they had a shoeing package on because most walkers have a nice short, wide, stout foot.

Q Alright. With respect to the abnormal characteristics of the bars and the sole of the foot and the atrophy of the frog, based on your experience, in terms of percentages of horses that you've seen, how frequently does that occur?

A I'd say over half of them that are coming out of the – not half – a little less than half of them that are coming out of auctions and are being sold around here, you'll see that on there, I'd say just under half of them but they all have, every one of them have the oblong misshapen foot, every one that come out of the show rings.

Q And these oblong misshapen feet are the feet you were referring to earlier that are characteristic of horses wearing a built up padded stack?

A Exactly.

Q As a farrier, have you ever been asked by one of your customers or clients to use a shoeing technique that you would believe resulted in soring?

A No, but it's trying to get these walkers to artificially animate their gait through shoeing and trimming so they can sell them as saddle horses, pleasure horses.

Where they basically want you to trim a horse out of balance to achieve a certain gait and also too, using shoes which if you use over a long period of time are going to have a detrimental affect to the horse.

A Yeah, the long caulks, heavy shoes also too taking a flat trail or pleasure horse shoe and drilling holes in the toe end and filling it full of lead so when a potential buyer comes out, they can't tell that the horse has a weighted toe shoe, stuff like that.

Q And that's to get the horse to snap its fore leg [over talk]

A Yeah, exactly.

Q This has been very helpful and if there is anything else concerning your knowledge and experience bearing on the issues of soring that I haven't asked you about, I'd appreciate it if you could tell me now.

A Well, my big one is, not the soring in the ring but a horse that's had a stack on its foot, me as a farrier, it takes, I mean, a very long time, sometimes it's six months to a year to try to get that foot back normal, if we get it back normal. And it takes a very long time to get that horses foot back and also too because of the horses with the animated gaits, a lot of these owners are buying these horses and they expect the farrier to make that horse move that way, And it's like they want a shortcut and they're willing to put weighted toe shoes and heel caulks and everything else on this to make that shortcut to get that animated gait.

Q Well, caller, thank you very much for this very informative and very detailed information. I understand that your perspective and the source of your information

Q Okay, well, caller, you've said that you're a farrier, are you comfortable telling me either what state you're based in or what part of the country you're based in?

A I'm in California.

Q And how long have you been working as a farrier in connection with Walking Horses?

A With Walking Horses, oh man, most of my life. So I'd say, at least 20 years.

Yeah, exactly, I'm not the guy that sores them; I'm the guy that has to fix all these problems after all this is done to them.