

JEFF NEWNHAM FARRIERY SERVICES

Everyone has their own way of doing things, and it is important that both farrier and owner respect this in each other, provided it is not to the detriment of the horse. Owners and farriers often get new ideas from colleagues, friends or the internet, and I am always happy to listen to their thoughts and observations. Furthering knowledge is important for all of us, but there may be good reasons why some techniques are not suitable or appropriate for their particular horse.

Overall, there are two opposing problems faced by farriers : some owners expect far more than it is possible to give ie. To create a totally sound horse with perfect feet from very poor raw material, but on the other hand they don't realise how much we know and can do for them. It's common for an owner to call their vet to discuss lameness or foot problems prior to calling their farrier but when it comes to feet, very few vets have as much experience or specialist knowledge as we do. We are being employed for our expertise but many horse owners fail to take advantage of this resource.. This is where the horse owner could really help, by bringing together their vet and farrier to work more closely and communicate with each other would result in a more multidisciplinary approach to lameness evaluation and treatment for their horse.

Horses' feet grow slowly and changes are gradual, which means that the relationship between an owner and farrier needs to be a long term one if improvements are to be made. Loyalty works both ways – if you expect your farrier to provide an excellent service then the owner's part of the deal must be to ensure that at the very least their horse receives regular attention from the farrier.

Understanding the needs of the client should be the farrier's first concern, but this is hard to do when all the information one gets is a hastily scribbled note on the tack room door! Owners should try to set aside the time and be there to discuss any concerns wherever possible, or at least not be too surprised when things are not done exactly as they expected.

They also need to be prepared to pay for any extra time their horse takes up, for whatever reason; this may be due to discussing a horse's particular problems or perhaps because it is a young or difficult horse which requires extra time from the farrier. Farriers charge on a 'piece work' basis and are generally pretty busy people, It is , therefore, unfair to expect to be charged the same for a horse that takes twice as long as another? Most professions invoice based on time and the degree of skill or difficulty rather than just at a flat rate. Farriers, in general do not have ancillary sales Therefore any interruption to their "piece rate" is of great annoyance as it directly affects their income. An interruption could be a nervous horse that requires a more cautious approach, horses not ready for the farrier i.e unclean or muddy all these things interrupt the smooth working day. One growing interruption is the increase in road traffic leading to more time spent in behind the wheel than under the horse. This leads to the situation where it is more and more important for the farrier to organise his work and routes and for the horse owner to be as flexible as possible to work with the farrier in this or face the inevitable higher visit charges. The very physical nature of a farriers work often results in a short working life and it is often the case that by the time one has the experience the horse owner is seeking one is shoeing fewer horses. Farriers do tend to take criticism personally, which often leads to in a quandary on how to engage their farrier in conversation or discussion without the farrier feeling challenged or undervalued.. It's a strange job in that it is on the cusp of being both a science and an art. It is very scientifically based, but farriers are generally proud of their work in a similar way to an artist. I don't know a single farrier who goes out each morning thinking he will do as poor a job as he can get away with – quite the opposite.

Jeffrey