

1. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that a horse's hoof is one of the wonders of creation. Perfectly formed and finely adapted to its function, it is a critical factor in the longevity of a horse. This manual is intended to stress the significance of a well-maintained hoof and familiarize you with all its numerous functions.

In our daily work as farriers, we are asked no end of questions about hooves. Unfortunately, there is rarely time to answer them properly, to explain things in more detail or even give a little demonstration. This is one of the reasons that prompted us to summarize the most frequently asked questions and answer them systematically in the form of a reference manual. The result is one of the most comprehensive of equestrian reference books – and this is what you are now holding in your hand.

It is not an all-encompassing scientific study but simply highlights the most important basic facts about horses' hooves. You will find that some of the answers are self-explanatory, dispelling many nagging doubts and uncertainties and providing solutions to common problems. It is not easy to understand the actual importance of the hoof completely, due to its complex structure and interacting mechanisms and processes. Many of these take place simultaneously but can only be described one after the other. That is why you will find numerous cross-references to other chapters in the book, together with some repetition.

This manual is intended as a reference work for riders and horse-owners, and has been written in a language that is easily understood. We are happy to be able to pass on a small proportion of our own practical experience for the benefit of others.

Marcel Jurth is an officially accredited farrier. He was first trained at the University Veterinary Clinic of Zurich, Switzerland by Rudolf Bertolla with subsequent instruction in Giessen, Germany. Marcel's partner in business and private life is Kati Jurth, a professional hoof specialist. We have been a successful team for many years. Being absolutely devoted to horses, we strive to help them to the best of our ability in our daily work. To increase our knowledge and competency, we regularly take part in training courses, cooperate closely with veterinarians, compare notes with farrier colleagues and therapists and, of course, network closely with horse-trainers and horse-owners. Our work not only entails horseshoeing; we also treat bare hooves in accordance with the owner's wishes and the hoof structure, each request being carried out completely free of bias. There is practically always a solution!

We do not blindly pursue a dogma.

We devote ourselves to the best interests of the animal.



Most of the information in this book stems from our wealth of experience in day-to-day smithy work. We therefore describe the empirical methods that we know work well. Having treated the same horses for many years, sometimes through their whole lives, we have had ample opportunity to study the development of their hooves, to draw our own conclusions and above all to see the fruits of our work.

A large proportion of these conclusions have since been verified by scientific studies, as you can see from the references listed at the back of the book, thus making it a compendium of empirical knowledge, practical skills, observations, deliberations and academic documentation.

Farriers and hoof professionals treat various hooves and a host of different horses every day, stretching their stamina to the limit and sometimes even risking life and limb. They love their job, are devoted to horses and deserve your complete trust.

Unfortunately, in this internet day and age, farriers are often confronted with misleading factoids on the subject of hooves.

In the course of their professional lives, farriers get to know thousands of different horses and their hooves.

*It takes many years of fundamental training
to read a hoof properly, to draw the right conclusions
and to act correctly.*

Compared with other countries, German farriers enjoy an excellent comprehensive training, instilling in them the right attitude to animals.

Now let us delve into the fascinating world of horses' hooves...

Your hoof-handling Team

Marcel & Kati Jurth