

# Book Takes A Wide-Ranging Look At Paths To A Healthier Equine Foot

## *Care And Rehabilitation of the Equine Foot*

By Pete Ramey

Review By Randy Luikhart

This was a very interesting read. I found Pete Ramey's open and honest assessment of how the hoof-care industry is faring enlightening. Although he is the author of this book, the list of co-authors is like a tour through the minds of some of the most reputable researchers in the industry.

This is not just a book on rehabilitation of the foot, but also one containing information that any hoof-care professional can use in his or her daily work.

### Robert Bowker Input

Dr. Robert Bowker's papers provide the reader with easily understood narrative both in lay and anatomical terms. The Michigan State University researcher's good-foot, bad-foot discussion explains the differences and how they contribute to sound and unsound horses.

The role of circulatory and micro vessels aiding in hydraulic dampening of destructive vibrational frequencies is eloquently described. Macro- and micro-structural irregularities between the good foot and bad foot are defined and explained in terms everyone can understand. Bowker makes a convincing case (and rightfully so) for hoof-care professionals to be more conservative in excessive removal of weight-bearing structures of the hoof.

In further chapters, Bowker explores the science behind hoof growth. He believes the foot grows down and gets larger in thickness and girth as it descends to the sole region. Some of the slides showing the discrete cells he is

describing in the text could have been labeled better. This problem made reading and comprehending the text more difficult.

He does a great job of describing the various innervations of the hoof and how each plays a role in assessing the stimuli for the hoofs environment, whether pain, temperature or locomotion.

A very intense segment on the chemicals discrete to these nerves and various mechano/receptors is all necessary information for clearly comprehending the complexity of hoof function. A description on assessing blood flow with Doppler ultrasound and the mechanics of this process was extremely interesting.

### EMS Review

If you have any desire to learn about Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS), Dr. Eleanor Kellon presents information defining the differing pathways of possible EMS and their differing treatment protocols.

This is a must-read for any person dealing with these horses in their practice. Her easily understood narrative expands on to the hoof's nutritional and normal mineral requirements, as well as their individual roles in hoof structure. She includes a guide to ensure the animal is receiving enough minerals.

### Pasture Facts

Kathryn Watts presents a very convincing argument on the new and improved pasture grasses now being planted and how the non-structured carbohydrates (NSCs) vary among them. NSCs have long been known to have a major role in laminitis and EMS, so management of these simple sugars is crucial for healthy horses.

Kellon then makes a strong case for better hay analysis so that we actually



know what is being fed to our horses, following with a chapter on balancing the diet. There is no doubt this information is often overlooked by the average horse owner. Its importance is obvious, but not often easily understood.

### More Than Just Feet

One of the nice things about this book is that it flows. Dr. Kerry Ridgeway follows the metabolic and nutritional papers with a paper on the gastrointestinal tract, ulcers, colitis and the treatment of these common GI problems. This is a very informative and clearly presented section, describing in great detail the disorders and the treatment. Treatment costs and effectiveness are clear so readers get a selection of possibilities for treatment at a cost they can deal with; a very practical approach.

Dr. Debra Taylor does a great job describing the EMS patient and its problem feet. She spends time explaining the differences in treatment protocol of the syndrome and the feet, as well as the biochemical basis for some of these differences.

Her very clear and adamant stance for proper radiographic marking to properly gather information on the current status, prognostication and treatment is worth the read.

Another excellent chapter is on the use of venograms in information gathering and the importance this information may give you in the clinical management of these often-difficult cases.

Taylor's stance is the more information you gather, the better. More data will help you in your evaluation if

you get a recurrence or setback of the patient's recovery.

I have long loved reading the writing of Dr. Hilary Clayton and her contribution to this book is no exception. She takes the time to break down the weight-bearing phase, foot function during locomotion, forces, range of motion of the distal limb joints during load and propulsion and the resulting swing phase from that weight bearing. Clayton's papers are always informative and written so that even I can understand it.

### **Ramey's Thoughts**

Pete Ramey has the task of tying all the previously presented information together and supporting his protocol for foot management. He does a stellar job in his description of "what he is seeing" in a foot and walks you through his visualization process so you may experience the same visualization.

He also breaks trimming procedures down into chapters so that he may properly explain each and every component of management of the foot from his perspective. Once you understand his principles of trimming the sole, wall and frog, he ties variables into the process, so that you can visualize and understand the goals he is expecting to reach through using these procedures.

This is a long read (446 pages) and often times a tough one, but it is a read that everyone should finish. Ramey's wonderful, clear writing style is evident in a statement like "Most domestic horses are living in the human equivalent of a pie factory." These whimsical passages were enough to keep me reading.

Among hoof professionals, no two people think alike and there are areas that Ramey talks about that will raise discussion. That is not bad. Disagreement is not bad. Drawing a line in the sand is.

Ramey has taken a huge step forward in "throwing" out lots of tidbits to discuss and backed some of his positions with science. These technical and sensible discussions will hopefully make us all think about our normal practices of hoof care.

No doubt if Mr. Ramey and I were sitting around a table discussing methodologies of dealing with various hoof conformations we deal with daily, each of us would have pictures of our

successes and failures. Our discussions would be lively and on many points we would agree. One of the early themes that Ramey spoke of in the introduction was the necessity for us all to think about what we are doing to feet, before we do it. I would recommend adding this book to your library and reference material. Not that this book has all the answers, but it does make you think and that is its purpose.

Finally, "The laminae were simply never intended to suspend the horse's weight without help from the sole, bars and frog. Good horseshoeing and good trimming practices incorporates the functional congruity of the hoof."

Mr. Ramey, I couldn't agree more.

*Care And Rehabilitation of the Equine Foot* is available for \$176 and can be ordered through the author's website at [HoofRehab.com](http://HoofRehab.com). 