All horses must be trained to stand for the farrier. This is the owner's obligation. Horses should not be expected to hold their feet up for more than five minutes at a time. It is the farrier's obligation to do quality work in a timely manner to keep the horse from getting impatient.

Last week, we talked about getting horses to stand relatively still for the farrier while he or she is working. We had several great responses. Some of these responses included advice about working with older horses and remembering to be patient with horses experiencing arthritis or pain.

Several of you sent responses asking about how to train horses to stand for trimming and shoeing. Some of you also asked, “What is a reasonable amount of time to expect a horse to stand for shoeing and trimming?”

Training horses to stand for the farrier is best done when the horse is quite young. Dr. Robert Miller championed the cause of “imprint training” or training that is done almost immediately after the foal is born. To do this, it is best to separate the mother from the foal so that the mother can see the foal, but not touch the handler. This prevents the protective mother from mistaking the handler as a predator and attacking him or her. Dr. Miller recommends that the handler touch the foal all over and begin to mimic the intensive training the horse will do later on. For example, the handler might get the young foal used to the idea of a cinch under its belly long before it is ridden.

When the foal is young and not as powerful, it is the ideal time to start picking up the feet and going through the motions that a farrier will make. The handler may rub the feet, to mimic the motion of a rasp or tap on the feet to get the foal used to the tapping of the eventual hammer. Another important thing for a handler to do is to begin to place the young foal’s front feet between his/her legs and to rest the hind legs in their lap. This must be done consistently. A handler cannot do this type of imprint training once and hope that the foal will retain it until it is a full grown horse. Foals don’t typically need a lot of trimming when they are young but they do need a lot of handling. Imprint training must be done every day (sometimes multiple times a day) for at least 5 to 10 minutes. Farriers sincerely appreciate owners that have taken the time to prepare a young horse for the farrier.

If an owner fails to train the horse when it is young and impressionable, he or she has a big job ahead in order to train the full grown horse to stand for the farrier. Though imprint training is time consuming at first, it is much easier to “out-muscle” a foal. Once a horse is full grown, it is nearly 10 times stronger than people. Older horses that have not been trained are not a lost cause though. T
but it must be done.

"Horses are trained every time a person comes into contact with them" is a phrase that most horsemen understand. If a horse tries to pull away, the handler must not let the horse get away. The handler should do their best to hang on. When the horse has settled down (and stopped pulling away), the horse knows that the handler gave it back. Once the horse learns that the handler is in charge of putting the work harder than they have to. If it is difficult for a horse to pull a foot away or if the horse gets no result from such actions, they will stop trying.

To begin with, handlers should pick up the feet for a very short period of time (less than 5 seconds) and give the horse the handler can increase the amount of time that the foot is up. Eventually, the horse will have no problem holding the foot up without pulling it away, the handler can place the front feet between their legs for a short period of time. The horse to accept holding their feet between the handler's legs for longer periods of time.

Once a horse is comfortable standing still while the farrier is working, the farrier must remember to give the horse uncomfortable standing on one leg for a long time, most horses get uncomfortable standing on three legs after what they are doing that they forget the horse needs a break! The horse may remind the farrier by starting to kick the foot up as the horse that the farrier is mindful of its comfort. A horse is more likely to stand still for the farrier if it understands.

A beginning farrier may need to move around the horse and work on different feet if he or she cannot get an entire foot trimmed in 15 minutes or less. The eventual goal of the farrier should be to do a quality job trimming a foot in a short amount of time (no more than 10 minutes per foot) so that it should take no more than 2 hours. Ideally, a shoeing job should be done in one hour. The horse (and owner) appreciates this.

In order to speed up their time, farriers do not need to sacrifice quality. They should instead practice at becoming efficient and work to a checklist every time. For example, a farrier may start by trimming the frog, then the sole, then nipping the foot and then rasping the foot level. Whatever the order of tasks is, the farrier should strive to do the same each time. This makes the job more efficient and in turn, faster.

All horses must be trained to stand for trimming or shoeing. Ideally, the owner will do this when the horse is young, but if not, the owner needs to recognize that it is his or her responsibility to train the horse. Farriers have an expectation that horses should be trained to stand. Farriers reserve the right to say "no" when untrained horses make the work environment dangerous. Owners have an expectation that farriers will do what they can to make the horse comfortable while doing the job in a timely manner. When the farrier and owner work together to fulfill their obligations, the horse will stand much better and everyone will be happy.