



General Thoughts

Shoeing and/or incorrect trimming of unshod hooves combined with a lack of sufficient movement or unsuitable ground causes what is commonly known as "contracted hooves."

A contracted hoof is one whose form has been altered so that part or all of the hoof either does not expand on weight bearing or actually becomes more narrow on weight bearing.

This constricts the blood vessels, nerves, bones, cartilage, tendons and ligaments within the hoof. This leads to compression and/or inflammation of the front and/or lateral lamellar corium, the solar corium, and parts of the lateral cartilage. Contracted heels also cause painful compression of the bulbs of the heel.



After removing the shoes and proper trimming, these alterations may show themselves as pain. Sufficient blood flow returns to the hoof, the nerves regenerate and report the damage that is already in existence for a long time. The more the hoof deviates from the form of a normal, healthy hoof, the more painful it is. The horse walks stilted, carefully, or lame. **Trimming in such a way that you keep the horse as sound as possible while facilitating corrections is the hallmark of a skilled hoof care provider.**

Contracted hooves are a serious and complex problem. Reshaping contracted hooves into healthy, natural hooves can take weeks, months or years. The timeframe depends on the individual circumstances and the damage already in existence. In conventional circles contraction is usually not recognized until it has reached a very advanced stage.

Once it has turned into "Navicular Syndrome" - termed as a mysterious, degenerative disease - treatment is experimental. Usually the prognosis with such treatment is 50/50 at best and the usability of the horse is only for a limited time.

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