



9 Common Complaints from horse owners about the way hoof care professionals do business

Here you will find a list of problems that may have your horse owner try to find a different hoof care provider:

"He's/she's unfriendly. Barely mumbles a word to me. Just sticks his/her head under the horse and gets to work."

"If my horse acts up for the slightest reason, he/she hits it with a rasp or anything he/she can get a hold of. I don't think he/she actually likes horses."

"His/her clothes are torn, his/her T-shirts have lewd slogans on them, and the dirt on him/her seems ground in. The interior of his/her car/truck looks and smells like a pit. His/her car/truck could stand a wash, too."

" My place is a mess when he/she is finished."

"He/she is never on time."

"He/she seldom returns my calls, or if he/she does, it's four or more days later. I can never get hold of him/her."

"My vet suggested a corrective change - and the trimmer refused point blank to make the adjustment."

"He/she stinks of alcohol when he/she arrives for an appointment." Or: "He/she just seems out of it. Looked to me like he/she was on drugs."

"He/she doesn't know much about hoof or leg problems; most of my questions leave him/her stumped."

Have a friendly attitude towards your clients. You are there to offer a service to them as well as the horse. With the average horse owner, his horses are his recreation. They give him pleasure, and no matter how good you are with the horse, if you aren't personable and able to exchange a few pleasantries with the owner, you may lose that customer (and the horse may loose you).

Don't be insensitive. Show some interest in the horse before you start the job. Give it a pat or scratch. You may or may not make friends with it, but you'll see the owner positively glow with pleasure and pride because you took an interest in the animal. When frustrated with a difficult horse, NEVER hit it with a rasp or tool or anything else for that matter. There is a difference between an ill-trained, ill-mannered horse and one that is just nervous. With the neophyte horse, your patience and understanding can really come into play here. Perhaps just trim two feet and come back another day. Or suggest to the owner that he familiarize the horse with having his feet picked up every day, and to call you when he is more calm. With the extremely difficult horse, you can suggest to the owner that he call another trimmer, since you do not wish to injure yourself. Or it could be a hock or stifle problem, or the horse could be just plain stiff. There are many reasons they act up. But remember: You cannot get compliance from a prey animal by exerting force.

Always have a clean personal appearance. Some suggestions: During hot weather (or if you get especially dirty), carry a clean shirt with you - it might make you more comfortable to change into it halfway through the day. Fix or replace your torn clothes. Be sensitive to the type of slogans on your T-shirts. Carry an economy-sized tub of handy-wipes



or a towel you can use to wash up after a job.

Horse owners do notice how your car/truck looks. One owner mentioned that when he hires a cabinet maker for a job, the first thing he checks out is the cleanliness and neatness of his rig. If the rig isn't orderly, he's not hired. Wash your rig at least twice a month. Sweep out the interior fairly often. Presenting a clean and well-organized setup contributes to a more professional image. Maintain clean working habits. Carry a broom. If you're working on mats or a hard surface, sweep up between trims or when the horse makes a mess. If you're working on gravel or grass and the owner's dogs haven't eaten the hoof trimmings, dispose of them before you leave.

Be on time and call the client if you're running more than 15 minutes late. Schedule your day light enough to take your time to discuss problems and handle the occasional emergency. Schedule the client's next appointment before you leave. That way, your clients won't need to reach you, and the horse will be on a regular schedule. During the busy season, regular clients will already be scheduled, and you won't feel obliged to work overtime to fit them in. You'll also have a better handle on your day.

Return all calls as promptly as you can - even if you don't want the job. Horse owners love to gossip about how they've been inconvenienced - think of your reputation at all times.

Be open to suggestions from the vet and horse owner. Owners need to feel a sense of trust. Most of them use a trimmer until he or she messes up. If you're not open to suggestions, they very likely won't tell you when something is wrong, and you won't learn, either.

Don't drink alcohol or take recreational drugs during a work day, even if the horse owner offers.

Read. Read. Read. It increases your confidence and credibility with the horse owner, and when you raise your rates, your client won't begrudge you the extra cost.

