

Holistic Hoof Care with Sossity and Mario Gargiulo

by Dutch Henry

Like so many folks now practicing and promoting the barefoot healthy horse, Sossity first decided she needed to find a new way to help her own horse: Faith, a 4 year old Arab/Trakehner mare who had lameness issues. She decided to broaden her scope, and suddenly natural hoofcare found her. It made perfect sense. But it also confused her. She asked herself, “how could veterinarians and farriers and the ‘barefoot crowd’ each hold such opposite views?” The more she examined the situation, the more confused she became.

A friend recommended she buy Pete Ramey’s book. She did. She became immediately enthralled, joining every Yahoo group she could find on barefoot horse care, bought books and DVDs from folks like Gene Ovnicsek, KC La Pierre, and Jaime Jackson. She traveled to hear Pete Ramey speak. Ultimately, she enrolled in the AANHCP training program, and traveled to several states to mentor. “I applied to the American Hoof Association in 2008 and was approved as a certified trimmer. That was a huge accomplishment, and I was, at the time of approval, one of less than 20 in the nation to achieve the honor,” Sossity said.



Sossity trims.

Sossity is one of the founding members of Pacific Hoof Care Practitioners (PHCP), whose mission it is to provide a supportive network and educational foundation for hoof care professionals and horse owners based on a holistic and progressive approach.

She is instrumental in introducing barefoot horse health to the world of upper level competition horses. Sossity’s work with world class dressage trainer Shannon Peters and Shannon’s husband Steffen—and his Olympic horse Ravel—was recently written about in *Dressage Today* magazine, by author Kelly Sanchez.

Ravel, now retired, was one of the most successful horses in American Dressage, ridden by Steffen Peters in the 2008 and 2012 Olympics, the 2010 World Equestrian Games, only the 2nd U.S. combination to win the World Cup, and the sole



World-famous Ravel (right), in Easyboot Glove hoof boots, ridden by owner Akiko Yamazaki at her Woodside, California, farm.

American to sweep the Aachen, Germany CDI, both in 2009. His record includes many Grand Prix victories. He enjoys his working retirement in the dressage arena and on the trails with his owner Akiko Yamazaki.

When Steffen’s 2 time Olympic horse Ravel developed a quarter crack 2 months before the London games, they turned to Sossity and her husband Mario for help. Sossity had just begun to work with Shannon a few months before. Things went so well with Ravel that today there are 15 barefoot horses from Training Level to Grand Prix in Shannon’s and Steffen’s training barn in San Diego, California.

Sossity takes the Holistic approach to hoof and horse health. “The hoof is a SYMPTOM. The most perfect trim in the world can only do so much if your horse is eating a diet that does not respect and support his physiology, or if his tack is causing chronic pain and resulting compensation, if his lifestyle does not reflect his needs as a creature of movement and a social herd life, or if what he is being asked to do as his job does not respect him biomechanically or even psychologically.” Sossity believes and teaches.

In addition to Shannon’s horses and those of some of her training clients in San Diego, Sossity also trims all of Akiko Yamazaki’s horses (including the Olympic horse Ravel). Akiko has competing FEI level horses, as well as retired competition horses. Sossity also works on horses that do trails, riding lessons, therapy horses, fox hunting, reined cow work, gaited breeds, and more.

A lot of Sossity’s trimming business has been through word of mouth, but she also tries to get the word out through her work with the PHCP, her website, the “Wild Hearts Hoof Care” Facebook page, as a blog contributor, and a

Photo courtesy Akiko Yamazaki

monthly newsletter where she showcases a client or case study each month, talks about clinics she’s attended or are being held, and reports on interesting studies that have come out. “I blog about basically anything relating to holistic horse health. My husband and I also have 3 horses of our own that we ride and love, and try to show by example how successful this approach to horse care really can be,” said Sossity.



Photo courtesy Sossity Gargiulo

“Wild Hearts” is a team consisting of Sossity and her husband Mario, and together they form a trimming partnership.

Sossity’s husband Mario was introduced to the concepts of the barefoot trim at the same time as Sossity, and says that they came easily to him because he came from outside the horse world... no traditional mindset to overcome! However, he didn’t take up trimming professionally for the first couple of years. “He came along at first to make sure I was safe, but the more he listened to me talking to clients, and the more he saw the positive changes in the feet, the more he became interested in trimming himself,” says Sossity. Starting out with tasks such as pulling shoes, boot adjustments and rolling the hooves, he quickly moved on to full trims. He graduated the PHCP training program in 2010, and was approved by the AHA in 2012. Sossity points out that Wild Hearts is a true trimming partnership, and feels very grateful to have Mario’s help and support.

Her hard work to promote holistic health and care for horses, along with her efforts to teach the competitive world that barefoot is best, deserves recognition. Thank you Sossity for all you do! Visit her website at www.wildheartshoofcare.com 🐾

About the author: Dutch Henry is a freelance writer and a novelist who resides in Virginia with his wife, Robin, of 36 years, horse, dogs, cats and chickens. You can reach Dutch at dutchhenry@hughes.net. He would love to hear from you. Join his blog at, <http://dutchhenry.blogspot.com>. His novel “We’ll Have the Summer” is available on Amazon and Dutch’s website www.dutchhenryauthor.com.