

Focus on Jamie Jackson

Interview by Andy Beck (NHP - Natural Horse Planet)

Propos recueillis par Andy Beck (PCN - Planète du Cheval au Naturel) / Traduit par Catherine Taks

Jamie Jackson is one of the pioneers of the barefoot movement. In 1992 his first book, *The Natural Horse – Lessons from the wild for domestic horse care*, was published, and since that time he has gone on to become one of the founders of the AANHCP (American Association of Natural Hoof Care Practitioners) and to write several more. Although the AANHCP is a massive commitment that takes up a good deal of his time Jamie was kind enough to find time to answer a few of our questions.

Jamie Jackson est l'un des pionniers du mouvement " pieds-nus ". Son premier livre *The Natural Horse – Lessons from the wild for domestic horse care*, est sorti en 1992, et depuis il est devenu l'un des fondateurs de l'AANHCP (American Association of Natural Hoof Care Practitioners) et l'auteur de nombreux autres ouvrages. Bien que l'AANHCP soit une entreprise énorme qui lui prend une bonne partie de son temps, Jamie a eu la gentillesse de se libérer pour répondre à quelques-unes de nos questions.

NHP : There has been a lot of talk regarding the registration of 'hoof-care practitioners' – should it be compulsory and, if so, on what criteria ? Here in New Zealand there is no formal requirement at all – so a total novice can advertise and within days be hammering away on live flesh – which is scary. A couple of months ago I started expanding my own barefoot hoof-trimming work under pressure from friends, as a result I've had an opportunity to look at what goes on under this type of minimal legislative regulation. What has surprised me is that even where a hoof-care practitioner has had formal training the most basic faults are often allowed to critically impact on soundness. Both collapsed and contracted feet being very common – often on the same horse, resulting in a grossly mismatched pair of feet, plus all the other soundness problems you could expect as a result. I have no idea of what the commercial cost of this might be – but my guess is that it is considerable – plus, of course, the ethical consideration – both in terms of quality of life and duration. As the barefoot movement continues to gain momentum my guess is that the number of people involved in trimming their own horses will also increase steadily. I'm normally all for democratisation of skills – but in this case I'm not at all certain. So how do we get this right?

JJ : Of course, my response to your question would be to look at what we are doing with the AANHCP - providing systemized training with evidence of competency (i.e., certification) through critical examination by our Field Instructors and clinicians. I think this is a major step in the right direction.

As you state, the field is comprised of many hoof care " disciplines ", and these fall today into two camps : shoers and barefoot trimmers, both professional and amateur. Within these camps are many " sub-camps " - meaning, there's all kinds of trimming and shoeing methods out there. How is one to distinguish the appropriateness of one method from the next ? In fact, horse owners are often confused by the seemingly myriad ways their horses feet " ought to be cared for " according to their advocates. Somehow, they have to come to a conclusion - go shod or barefoot, and if barefoot then which of the many " camps " of barefoot trimmers are they to go with ? It's, by all accounts, a very daunting task.

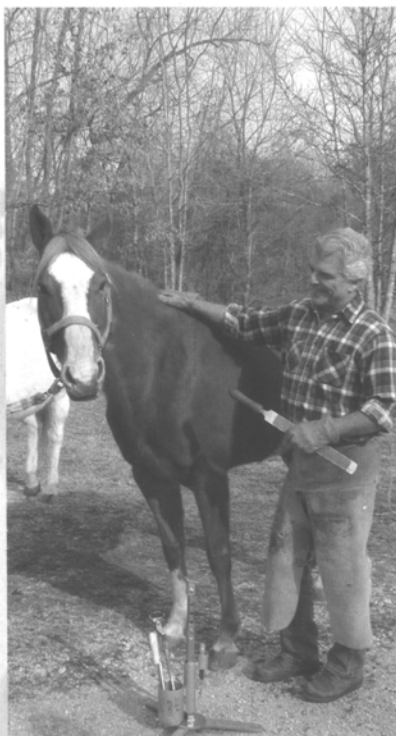
PCN : Il y a eu de nombreuses discussions autour de l'agrément officiel des " professionnels de soins aux sabots " - est-ce que cela devrait être obligatoire et si oui, sur quels critères ?

Ici, en Nouvelle-Zélande, il n'existe aucune exigence officielle – ce qui fait qu'un complet débutant peut vanter ses services et se mettre quelques jours plus tard à travailler sur un pied vivant – ce qui est inquiétant. Il y a quelques mois, pressé par des amis, j'ai commencé à élargir mes activités de parage pour pieds-nus ; j'ai eu ainsi l'occasion d'observer ce qui se passe avec ce genre de réglementation minime. Ce

qui m'a étonné, c'est de voir que même quand un professionnel de soins aux sabots avait suivi une formation officielle, il faisait encore des fautes des plus élémentaires et que ces erreurs avaient d'énormes répercussions sur la santé du cheval. Les pieds affaiblis et les pieds contractés étant monnaie courante – souvent sur un même cheval, ce qui donne une disparité extrême entre les pieds, sans parler de tous les problèmes de santé qui en résultent. Je n'ai aucune idée de ce que cela peut entraîner comme frais – mais je pense que ça doit être considérable – plus, bien sûr, l'aspect éthique – à la fois sur le plan de la qualité de vie et de la longévité. Comme le mouvement " pieds-nus " continue de s'amplifier, je suppose qu'il va y avoir de plus en plus de personnes qui vont se mettre à parer leurs propres chevaux. Je suis partisan de la démocratisation du savoir – mais dans ce cas, je me pose des questions. Alors, que faire ?

JJ : Je vais bien sûr vous répondre de jeter un coup d'œil à ce que nous sommes en train de faire à l'AANHCP – nous fournissons une formation structurée en modules et en stages évalués en contrôle continu par nos instructeurs et nos cliniciens et entérinée par un diplôme. Je pense que c'est un pas énorme

dans la bonne direction. Comme vous l'expliquez, le secteur est composé de nombreuses " disciplines " de soins aux sabots, et à l'heure actuelle celles-ci se répartissent en deux camps : ceux qui ferment et les pareurs pour pieds-nus, à la fois professionnels et amateurs. Au sein de ces camps on trouve de nombreuses sub-divisions – c'est à dire qu'il existe toutes sortes de méthodes de ferrage et de parage. Comment déterminer si une méthode est plus adaptée qu'une autre ?





▶ Horse owners, in the end, have to sift and sort until they find what seems "right" for them personally. Many arrive at the door of the AANHCP simply because "going natural" makes sense to them. They also often compare one "camp" with "another" to reach their decision. The AANHCP "wild horse" model seems logical to many, and so they solicit our CP's and student practitioners off of our public website (www.aanhcp.org). Many also come to us because their horses are lame and other methods of care have failed them.

Now, whether or not our certification program will - or should - lead one day to, let's say, state licensing of practitioners, will probably depend on acceptance of our methods by the larger horse-using community, including vets. If the latter perceive its therapeutic value to be valid - and I think this is a good possibility - then there is a good chance that a kind of "grass roots" movement, comprised of horse owners, practitioners, vets, advocates, etc., will evolve to petition for government regulation (examination and licensing) of our practitioners. This possibility is certainly becoming contemplated by the AANHCP leadership. I'm not sure what other hoof care camps are thinking regarding their own goals or possible outcomes with respect to government registration.

NHP: As someone that has been at the forefront of the barefoot movement in many ways do you think the change you have seen/are seeing is rapid enough?

JJ: I often laugh at that question, especially among impatient newcomers to the barefoot

movement - since this is my 24th year of advocating for "natural horse/hof care"! From the beginning (1982), I knew this was going to be a slow roller. Neither the publishing industry nor the horse-using community was ready for the "message" back then. In fact, it wasn't until the advent of the Internet that word about natural care really began to spread outward. Thinking back, I started my first book, *The Natural Horse*, on a typewriter, and finished it on a computer! It wasn't until 1992 (TNH published) that I could announce to the world that barefoot horses could move over gravel rock in perfect comfort - and that wild horses proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that it was not a delusion or hoax. But even the book wasn't enough. It took the internet - and horses in trouble with horse owners who care - to stir the fires of change.

I think things like this just have to evolve at their own pace. Within the embrace of the AANHCP, we have learned to take a more measured approach to change. Natural hoof care, for example, requires a much broader and deeper understanding of the horse than just his feet to know how to do the job right. Hence, the advocate must also study the entire animal's natural "Way" to gain a larger, more holistic picture of what all is involved. This takes effort...and time. And patience! But with such patience effort, comes the reward of a healthier animal with sound hooves of steel. I don't think we can or should legislate what is happening into place, or force it upon others. The individual needs to claim it for his or her-

self. Our natural model for domestic equines is a good one, powerful, practical, and rooted in truth. It works, and it is not a hoax. Because of this, I think it is as inevitable as it is spiritual to many of us. Many farriers and vets have discovered this by listening to us, observing, and experimenting. They have willingly embraced what we are doing. It isn't a threat to them. It's simply a higher form of humane care for another living being, and they are glad to serve. The "model", as I call it, is more than a "practice" for many of us. It is a calling...

NHP: How do you view the ethics of the situation? And should more action be taken on an international basis to challenge the use of metal shoes?

JJ: I believe that the decision to use the metallic shoe or to "go barefoot" should rest with the horse owner. And, again, I think this should follow from the individual having a clear understanding of what's involved - pro and con - before they decide. There are many natural care advocates and competent practitioners working the field now, and they are doing an excellent job of explaining the "whys" and "wherefores" of going natural. As soon as horse owners "get it", they remove the shoes. Most never look back.

The AANHCP will be stepping up its public Outreach efforts beginning in early 2007. We will have trained clinicians in place across the U.S. (and abroad) to help spread the word, and provide interested horse owners with the kind of information they need to make informed decisions about natural hoof care, boarding, and riding practices. On another front, we are also in the planning stages of going before the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) with our message next year - and our rep will be an AAEP veterinary surgeon who was also trained in our program! He will be fully supported by a contingent of our most senior and experienced CP's (certified practitioners). This is happening because it is clear to this vet and us that the "natural trim" has both therapeutic and "preventive" value as a methodology. Again, this isn't something that the horse-using community should ignore or resist - but embrace - and we intend to get the word out.

I do believe the metallic horseshoe is doomed. As I have always said, and as many farriers have confided to me over the years, the arrival of a "super boot" will render shoeing completely unnecessary. Several companies are now trying to create such a boot. It's just a matter of time before they succeed. And when it happens, the AANHCP will be right there to help promote it and make sure the horse-using community has the opportunity to use it. Shoeing won't be "outlawed" - it will simply fade away like many antiquities. My advice to horseshoe manufacturers is to "cross over" themselves now - and invest in the inevitable booting culture of the future.