

# FJORD FARRIERY

By Russell Brenneman

All horses, regardless of size, breed, age, sex or colour, require regular hoof care in order to perform at their utmost potential both in sport and on a day to day basis. Many owners wonder why their horses need regular hoof care when horses have survived unaided in the wild for thousands of years. We forget that in the wild, horses with bad or compromised feet would likely be the weakest and would not have survived.



Here's an ideally shod Fjord foot showing good balance, appropriate angle, and heel support.

Although shoeing and trimming Fjords does not differ greatly from their other equine counterparts, I have a few observations from work with my own and other Fjords that may enhance your Fjords' way of going.

Some Fjords are prone to forging, especially when young and newly under saddle or in harness. They are trying to figure out where their feet should be, either with the new weight of a rider and tack, or cart and harness.

In this situation as much as possible, I like to keep a slightly rolled to squared toe

in front whether the horse is barefoot or shod. If the horse is shod, I like to set the hind shoes back slightly more than normal without dubbing the toe. This generally allows the front feet to get out of the way of the hind end without compromising the horse's movement and in some cases this method enhances it.

That being said, it's important to discuss your horse's way of going and use with your farrier so that he or she may use good judgment when shoeing your horse.

Another commonality I see among Fjords is obesity. In a worst case scenario obesity can lead to founder. Fjords, along with other 'easy keepers,' tend to do quite well on hay alone and generally I would recommend feeding grain only if your horse is working consistently.

Take a look at your Fjord. Are there slight 'pads' of fat on his rump, over the ribs, on the neck, or under the belly? If there is any fat accumulation in one or more of those areas, consider putting your Fjord on a diet for his own good. If your Fjord is carrying extra weight, he may be metabolically compromised (metabolic laminitis).

Signs of metabolic laminitis are usually seen first by your farrier. On an everyday basis, I see many horses that suffer from this. Although there is no real medical diagnosis for metabolic laminitis, because there are no black and white results and rotation is usually not seen on x-rays, occasionally elevated insulin levels can be seen in blood work.

The most obvious sign, however, that your Fjord is metabolically compromised, besides pads of fat, is pus pockets in the white line of the foot. These pus pockets are essentially the end result of mini laminitis attacks. If your Fjord just seems slightly off (not lame, but just off), and is carrying some extra weight, he is probably affected.

Solving this problem begins with diet. Remove as much sugar from his diet as possible and remember that consistent work is beneficial. Basically your horse should be treated as a diabetic. Patience is required as fat is easy to put on, but hard to get off, as fat pads are difficult to get rid of. However your horse will be better for it in the long run.

Regular hoof care is important for your equine counterpart's health and well being. Your farrier can play an important role in seeing early warning signs to serious health problems. Remember, shoeing isn't a hobby. Hire a professional. 🐾