

4H And Pony Club Activities

Over

the years there have been many opportunities to speak and demonstrate horseshoeing for 4H, Pony Club and various other horse related meetings. This should be viewed as a privilege by weathered/experienced farriers that take this opportunity. It gives the public a chance to understand the basics of our trade, which has been around for years, but not always clearly understood. It's also a chance to clear up some of the misunderstandings that occur from time to time. The kids will surprise you with the depth of their questions and reminds us of the enthusiasm of youth.

An example of a standard enquiry is

"What hoof dressing should I use?" Once it is defined that they are referring to the bottom of the hoof, the reply that unless they are treating for thrush, NOTHING should be applied, which brings looks of "Man, this guy doesn't know anything." Before they think they are listening to someone off the Ark, you then remind them of something they learned in school. Oil and water do not mix, therefore painting the bottom of the hoof with an oily substance simply clogs the pores and prevents any natural moisture - e.g. water, dew, rain, snow, etc. from getting into the hoof. Then adding that it is acceptable to paint the coronet band to encourage growth, the kids relax, figuring that maybe the guy does know a little, in spite of his age.

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young people you never know what they will become in the future, maybe a veterinarian, a trainer or breeder of great horses or even a farrier. This thought should inspire us to take these opportunities very serious and so the preparation before one of these meetings is extensive and should never be taken lightly. The main motivation should be to inform the public regarding the fundamentals of our trade. A person cannot have a working knowledge of this trade or any other trade unless they have actually done it for an extended period of time.

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leaders of these organizations should be recognized for their dedication, realizing that without their willingness to volunteer, these clubs would not exist. Some simple guidelines for selecting a speaker for a shoeing clinic are these; 1) There are many good shoers out there, but they are not all comfortable explaining what they do, so select a farrier that is comfortable explaining his trade to a crowd. It may not be your own farrier. The cynical adage about "Those who can, do, and those who can't, teach" has it's comical side but the truth lies somewhere in between. 2) The farrier should be versed in the forge, understand Traditional and Natural Balance settings, as well as know the anatomy of the hoof, leg and dynamics of movement. 3) It also helps if he/she has shown and worked with horses extensively. While not an absolute, the general consensus is that the farrier should have at least 10-15 years full time experience. By this time they will have encountered 75-80% of the problems out there and been kicked, bitten and squeezed enough to know something.

The main point is to help the up and coming generation understand good horse shoeing, with the primary motive of educating and informing the horsemen and women of the future. These clubs deserve support from the many professionals that service their industry.

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