

The Editor,
"Your Horse" Magazine
UK

I have been sent a copy of an article about Dr Strasser from your latest issue.

I applaud the journalist in question for "going to the source" to get the information. But, with respect, I believe she may have fallen for the trap of presenting her interview subject in a way that more accurately reflects the Strasser-bashing propaganda of the time rather than the woman herself.

As both a professional writer and a horse-owner heavily involved in the so-called Barefoot Movement in Australia, I am well aware that it is a relatively simple matter for a journalist to portray Dr Strasser in an unflattering light. She is a plain-spoken person with strong views that are not exactly "flavour of the month" in some circles. But to my mind it is also a cowardly thing to do, considering she has almost single-handedly pioneered sweeping changes to equine health and welfare across the world. This change has not been without some negative repercussions. But on the whole it has been an overwhelmingly positive thing.

Things that make the article appear a somewhat biased piece of work to me are:-

- (1) Title of the article and the way it is formatted.
- (2) The box on Page 1 is at odds with the information presented in the body of the article - ie., the Strasser Method is NOT just about a certain way of trimming, it is about a return to a way of husbandry that is more compatible to the needs of the equine species.
- (3) The writer failed to follow through on subjects that would have painted a more rounded picture of Dr Strasser - eg., the fact that many of the horses at her clinic have been adopted by her.
- (4) The writer apparently made no attempt to follow through on the fate of horses that have been through Dr Strasser's clinic and are now, as Dr Strasser states, leading happy working lives.
- (5) Failure to explore Dr Strasser's philosophies in an in-depth way. We might not all entirely agree with these, but thoughtful interviewing would have revealed that they are intelligent, perceptive and reflect a lifetime of personal and professional experience.
- (6) The references to abscessing and soreness are out of context. Research would have revealed that ALL trimming methods can be associated with these things - as can shoeing. Admittedly the writer might have had to do some digging to get this information: proponents of other trimming methods are not always as forthright on the subject as Dr Strasser.
- (7) The subject of bleeding - the writer's question on this matter makes it clear that this is a hot issue with Dr Strasser's critics. (It is, in fact, one of the most misunderstood aspects of her work.) Yet the writer failed to give this issue the space it required for proper explanation. In what percentage of cases does

bleeding occur? If it does occur, why does Dr Strasser not give pain relief?

I do understand the subject matter and the way it is handled must of necessity be limited in a magazine article of this kind. But if the aim was, as the opening paragraphs suggest, to discover the truth behind the controversy, then the article should have followed through in more depth. For a knowledgeable barefoot horse-owner it creates more questions than it answers.

The writer of this article will certainly win the "Most Popular" vote in the barefoot horse world where, at present, setting Dr Strasser up as a messiah for the sole purpose of crucifying her is a power-game for many with their own agendas to push in the world of barefoot politics. But for someone like me who has spent many days with Dr Strasser here in Australia, watching her at work and talking to her about her philosophies, this article comes nowhere near to a true representation of the woman I know; the woman who helped me, and many others, return our lame horses to full health and soundness - WITHOUT pain and prolonged suffering.

Sincerely,

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Sir,

"You can always recognize pioneers by the number of daggers in their back."

Over the last 20 years, Dr.Hiltrud Strasser has developed and tested a method of hoof care that, unlike shoeing, is compatible with the needs of both horse and man. Her research and educational program has generated major advances, worldwide, in the welfare of the horse. She is the first veterinarian since Bracy Clark, in the early 19th century, to question the wisdom of shoeing. She deserves our thanks. Shoeing is medieval technology developed in the 10th century. It is long overdue for review. Here is an opportunity for 'Your Horse' to support a significant scientific advance.

In the history of scientific revolutions, pioneers have repeatedly been accused of 'heresy.' Such pioneers are no longer burnt at the stake but they are still subjected to cruel and unusual punishment for their contributions to knowledge. I

hope that 'Your Horse' will soon provide a more balanced review of Strasser's ground-breaking research than that given in the May issue by Julie Brown.

Strasser and her certified hoofcare professionals should be thanked and supported. They should not, for example, be victimized with dubious evidence based on 'over the hedge' observations from an anonymous correspondent who, clearly, knew nothing about the Strasser method. It is sad that the RSPCA should have been persuaded by farriers, who have a conflict of interest, to fund prosecutions of the very people who are doing so much to help the horse.

Researchers and equine practitioners who still support the shoeing approach to the treatment and prevention of navicular disease and laminitis will admit that their results leave much to be desired. Strasser has shown that the shoe is, in fact, a common cause of these problems and that removal of the shoe, hydration of the hoof, and movement gives better results. Many a horse with these diseases that have failed to respond to therapeutic shoeing and immobility can be restored to health with her approach. That such devastating diseases respond, speaks volumes for the validity of her method. Strasser does not claim 100% success. But her method should not be condemned because every horse in the late stages of laminitis cannot be saved.

Sincerely,

Robert Cook