

## HORSESHOES TOTALLY INDEFENSIBLE

"All really new ideas" said Alfred North Whitehead, "have a certain aspect of foolishness when they are first proposed." Similarly, an old medical adage warns, "Today's nonsense is tomorrow's common sense." I hope that Dr. Steve Hicks (JEVS, p 98, March 2004) will live long enough to witness tomorrow and experience a tinge of regret that he did not see it coming. The number of barefoot horses is going to increase, because this enlightened equestrian movement is not going to fade away. A veterinarian should be unsurprised to learn that, if horses are not imprisoned for 23 hours out of 24, and if their feet are not permanently clamped in irons, a large number of serious, common, and previously intractable problems can be solved. A veterinarian committed to the welfare of the horse should surely welcome such good news.

In attacking my support for what he regards as a piece of nonsense, Dr. Hicks fails to recognize that, in acting as a witness to the validity of Dr. Strasser's research, I am merely a messenger. Dr. Hicks does not wish to hear the message. Instead, like a cross-examining counsel faced with defending a totally indefensible case, he chooses to try and destroy my credibility as a witness. But even if he succeeds, this is not going to stop the sound of the unfettered foot becoming more and more insistent. The barefoot movement has already gathered enough momentum to ensure that it will keep advancing, thanks to one courageous veterinarian in Germany and a host of determined owners worldwide. The very fact that Strasser's methods are successful in rehabilitating horses with navicular syndrome and laminitis, two notoriously recalcitrant problems hitherto, proves their principles.

Nevertheless, I am aware that many veterinarians, even a majority, currently share Dr. Hicks' opinion that today's horses cannot work without shoes. But an opinion that something cannot be done carries no weight when the evidence shows that it has already been done. Dr. Hicks can discover this for himself by visiting [www.thehorseshoof.com](http://www.thehorseshoof.com) and many other websites. To those who are not like the man who said, "Don't bother me with facts, my mind's already made up," I say ... please read the facts. For several years, barefoot horses have been working impressively well in disciplines such as 100-mile endurance races. This is a fact and as plain as a red nose on a bishop.

James Lovelock considered that it took about 40 years for a big scientific idea to become accepted. Dr. Strasser has been developing her ideas on the horse's foot for the past 20 years. Thanks to the publication of her first two books,<sup>1,2</sup> six years ago, a substantial body of perceptive horse owners have already enfranchised their horse's hooves and improved their management. It may take another 30 years for the majority of horse owners to follow suit, so the present generation of veterinarians will not be sidelined immediately on the subject of hoof care. But their continuing education should not be delayed. A veterinarian

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saying a barefoot horse cannot work is like an engineer saying a bumblebee cannot fly.

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## References

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