

## **Hoof Management**

A horse is only as sound as his feet. Care and management of the feet will vary depending on the individual horse, his conformation, hoof structure, environment, climate, and use. Whether he needs to be shod or can be left barefoot will also hinge on these factors. Horse owners should try to keep a barefoot horse's feet tidy, with no rough edges to split or chip by having the farrier rasp away superficial cracks and keeping the edges smooth. Cracks and flares give infection an opening to enter the foot, including white line disease. It takes 12 months for a horse's hoof to completely grow out from top to bottom, so a schedule of 6-8 weeks between trims will keep your horse's feet healthy and eliminate costly future problems such as cracks and disease. Winter time slows hoof growth, therefore, you can extend your trims by one or two weeks, however, it's important to maintain a regular schedule of 6-8 weeks- when the hoof wall is just slightly longer than the sole of the hoof, or as soon as you see chips and cracks, it's time to call your farrier.