A Healthy Horse Starts From The Ground Up

MICHELLE KUNJAPPU Lancaster Farming Staff

ROCKSPRING (Centre Co.) — There is a lot riding on a horse's hooves.

Tom Siegenthaler, Centre Hall, a farrier, knows what a healthy, well-shod hoof should look like.

At Ag Progress Days in August, Siegenthaler demonstrated the process he goes through to shoe a horse.

To begin, he stands the horse on blacktop to see the balance of the horse's hoof, which has the responsibility of supporting equally the leg column and keeping the animal in balance.

In addition, Siegenthaler eyes the animal's hooves from behind, making sure the hooves are of equal height.

"My job as a horseshoer is to come in every four to six weeks and readjust a horse's balance," he said. He checks the shoes' wear to ascertain exactly how the horse should be shod.

Siegenthaler places a rasp down the middle of the horse's foot to check symmetry, his goal for the hoof.

With the rasp he removes the "flares," or extra hoof along the edges, then checks for a straight profile of the outer hoof wall by laying the rasp alongside the outside of the hoof.

"Ninety percent of horses are lame in the front end keep horses on a regular shoeing basis," he said.

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Siegenthaler uses a hot shoeing technique, where he puts a heated shoe on the bottom of the hoof. The technique does not hurt the horse but seals the fibers of the foot and allows the farrier to see how the shoe fits.

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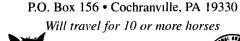
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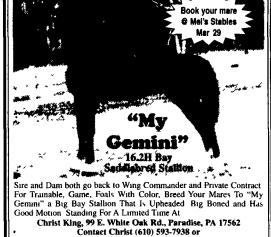
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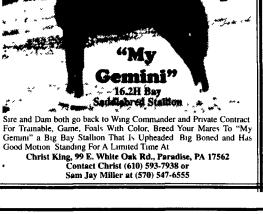
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Tom Siegenthaler, Centre Hall, shared his horseshoeing expertise at last summer's Ag Progress Days. Photos by Michelle Kunjappu





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