

# A. P. BALANCE

## A Practical Guide

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Have you ever shod a horse only to be told by some "self-styled expert" that the shoes you have taken great care over are too short? Or shod a horse thinking that you have made a job to be proud of, extending those nice upright heels of the shoe beyond the wall of the hoof, only to be questioned by some vet, could the shoes be longer?

Criticism of our work is always hurtful, especially when you are trying your best, listening to what the experts say. Unfortunately some of the experts sound very interesting but give little tangible advice to help us do the job they ask us to achieve. I too have found it difficult but I think I have come up with the answer. It involves no specific tools or gauges, although a pocket calculator comes in handy.

A few years ago there appeared in the Forge magazine, an article by Don Birdsall, in which he discussed hoof balance and he gave us a few measurements to illustrate what he was advocating. At about the same time I discovered Veterinary Notes for Horse Owners, in which Chris Colles also gave us a schematic diagram with measurements. Each put forward their plan, both articles told the same story, the importance of hoof balance. With the information I gleaned from them both, I developed my own interpretation "the one and an eighth theory".

If we take a measurement from the completed trimmed hoof, from the toe to the bulbs of the heel, divide this measurement by nine then multiply that figure by eight, (this is where the calculator comes in), we would arrive at the proclaimed ideal shoe length.

The shoe length being the whole, with an eighth of that distance being from where the shoe ends to the bulbs of the heel. Something new? Not really; armed with this formula we can look back through all the classic works on horseshoeing, check their diagrams and find, hey presto! They had the same ideal. One could say this formula has been tried and tested for a hundred years.

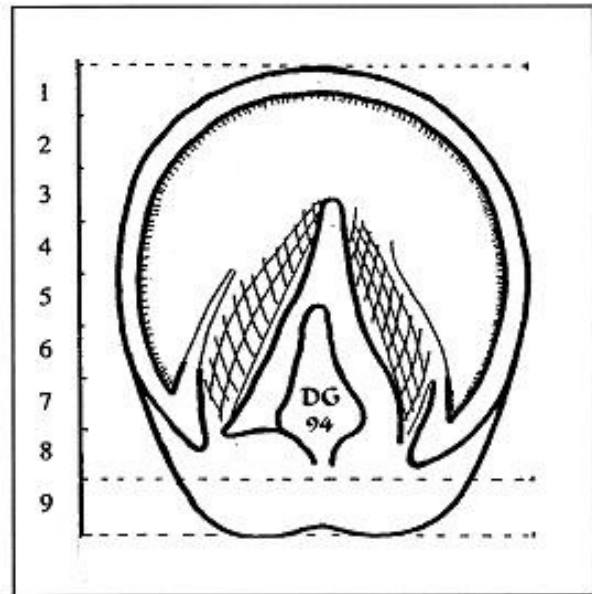


Fig. (1) 'The one and an eighth theory'

If we divide the length of the hoof into nine equal sections, we can use the length of eight of those sections to provide us with a guide to determine an ideal shoe length.

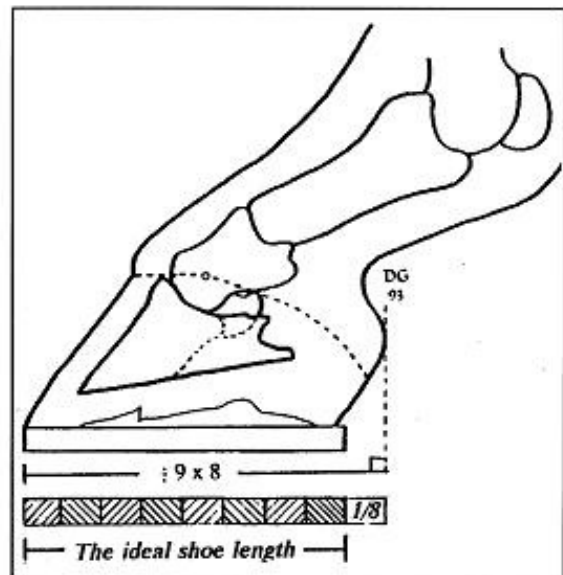


Fig. (2) 'The Ideal shoe length'

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Once I was familiar with the "one and an eighth theory" and, having always employed the motto "Simplify Simplify" (Thoreau), I discovered we all have a very handy measuring device, our finger. For the distance from where the shoe will end to the bulbs of the heel is just wide enough to stick my rather fat finger. Which can be useful knowledge for the horse owner, for when they can stick the proverbial two fingers in this distance, then its time for the shoe to come off? So how do your shoes measure up? Give it some thought and see where it leads you.

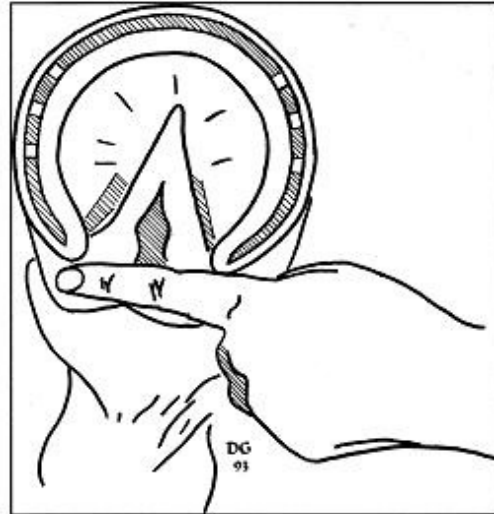


Fig. (3) Giving your work the 'One Fat Finger Test'.

Acknowledged references: (1) Hoof Balance, Definition and Measurement with Respect of Hoof Balance by Don Birdsall Issue No. 1 Forge 90. (2) Veterinary Notes for Horse Owners 1987 Revised edition, 20 Shoeing C M. Colles, BvetMed, PhD, MRCVS.

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