

A. P. BALANCE

A Second Glance

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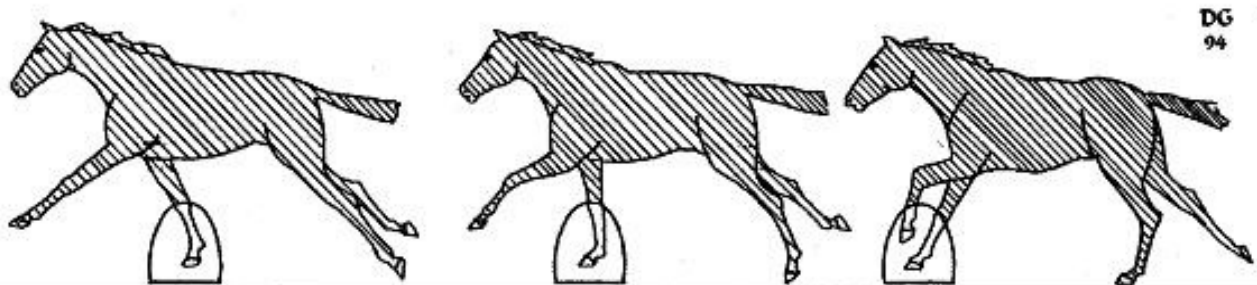
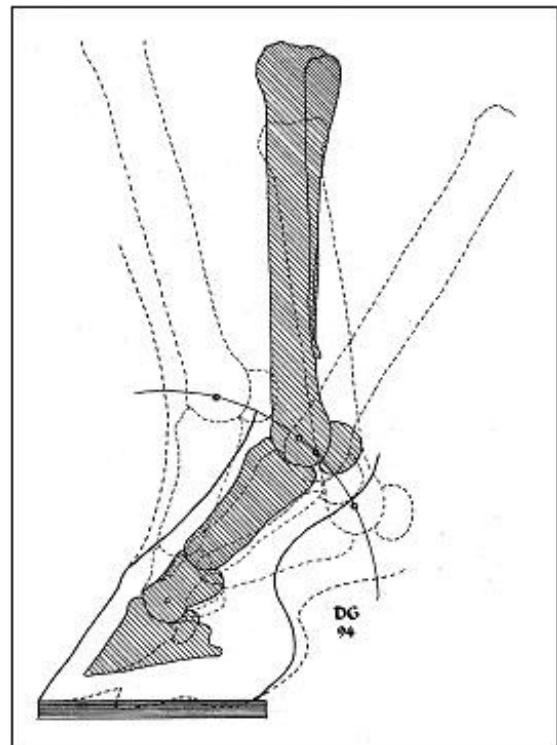
Balancing the Facts

There are many farriers quietly going about their business, producing enough length to their shoes, with great credit to them. But, there are those who are very quick to dismiss the many theories on A P Balance. I have heard it said on many occasions "If you leave just a sixteenth of an inch protruding, you'll lose that shoe". However, I know from my own work; having shod by the guidelines outlined in the previous issue of Forge 94, the arguments just don't add up. My clients don't lose any more shoes than any other farriers; in fact they say the reverse. It may even be that shoes applied by a farrier familiar with the "one and an eighth" theory, are less likely to be lost simply because they create a more stable base of support. Even if a case could be made, that shoes fitted by this guide, carried a slightly higher risk of being "ripped off", I'm sure the owners would gladly take that risk. After all, what a small price to pay. The chance of a lost shoe, compared with the probability of an unsound horse. As unlike the shoe, for many, the horse is not a disposable item. Anyway do those who shoe tight and short, never lose shoes? I think not; after all, the shoe that can't be pulled off has not yet been put on. Ask any farmer after ploughing; the fields are full of them!

Fig. (1) and Fig. (2) Illustrations, demonstrating the stance phases of the limb, as the body passes over the hoof.

The Balancing Act

The arguments in favour of the "one and an eighth" theory may be difficult to prove, but not too difficult to appreciate. Firstly we need to focus our attention on the range of movements as the bodymass passes over the foot capsule, visualising the load during landing and the stress during breakover. Clearly one of our objectives as farriers is to try and achieve as close as possible, a state of equilibrium within the hoof.



After looking at a random number of fresh morbid specimens, the hoofs of which had been trimmed. I found the pedal joint is situated midway between the toe and the bulbs of the heel. If this central point is crucial to the balance of the hoof, then the more shoe we have to the rear of this point the better, although the practicalities of open heeled shoes dictate that we need a limit to their length. This is where I have found the "one and an eighth" theory invaluable. However, extra length in the form of an eggbar shoe can and does provide, when essential, a much sounder foundation for better hoof balance. So briefly, the closer the heels of the shoe, in relation to the pedal joint, the greater the load to the posterior of the hoof.

The "one and an eighth" theory does not provide all the answers, but it does provide an objective or benchmark, a basis of communication between farrier, owner and vet. It is not a rule but a guide, take it at face value and it will improve understanding and rationalise our craft. So let my fat finger rule be your guide.

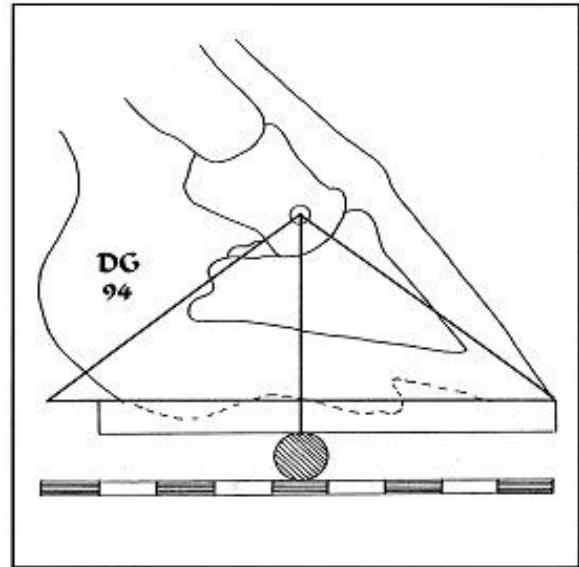


Fig. (3) A diagrammatic definition of hoof balance, the hoof being divided into nine equal units, the ideal shoe length being eight of those units

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