

A. P. BALANCE

Back to Basics

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A P Balance or anterior posterior balance refers to the relationship between hoof and limb, when observed from the side. Often described as the hoof pastern axis, some feel it should reflect the slope or angle of the shoulder. When I looked at A P Balance I found a lack of accurate material, some ideas vague, whilst some, although plausible I found totally unworkable. My aim was to get a better understanding of this relationship and the role farriery has to play in maintaining a status quo.

The First Steps

Foot trimming is where it starts, lowering the heels; usually to about the widest part of the frog, this is essential to provide a sound base. Then taking the hoof forward and rasping the anterior wall, to ensure that the hoof has an even form, from coronary band to ground surface. The initial first inch or so, is where the horn is more compact, it is this area that provides us with the clue to determine its natural slope. The hoof, which has been taken forward and restored to its natural form, has a better chance of remaining both sound and healthy. Whilst another which has not been correctly trimmed, but allowed to take on a concave appearance, will be abandoned to forces and pressures, which will alter and destroy its form further. Attention to trimming is important for both animals with or without shoes. Horses without shoes should not be forgotten; they are just as vulnerable and do suffer from long toes, which place excessive demands on both horny wall and laminal areas. Whilst high heels can cause concussion and subsequent bruising at the seat of corn. Both are due to an imbalance, which can be kept in check with good farriery.

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Observations and Conclusions

Most horses that I work with do require shoes, either because of the work they do, or they suffer from feet that are mechanically unable to sustain the horse's weight with comfort. These weak footed horses do benefit from a definite plan, like the one I have been advocating in previous issues of Forge 94. They may suffer from weak or damaged horn, but so far as farriery is concerned, they need a sound base of support. A simple 7/8" x 3/8" machine made shoe, with upright heels, that is well fitted can work wonders. Here the "one and an eighth" theory works very well. However for those horses with good feet, but who may loose the occasional shoe, I use another guide to provide a double check. I believe the shoe should always be longer than the distance between, the centres of, the pedal and fetlock joints. This distance can easily be measured with a pair of dividers, or callipers. Familiarising yourself with the location of the pedal and fetlock joints is essential to identify the horses needs, for it is those animals with long pasterns and short bases, who are most abused by inadequate farriery.

Of course there is more to A P Balance than the "one and an eighth" theory, or any other theory, which provides us with an ideal shoe length. A P Balance is a whole issue which encompasses many aspects, but to tackle them properly, we need logical ideas, based on observations, backed up with facts!

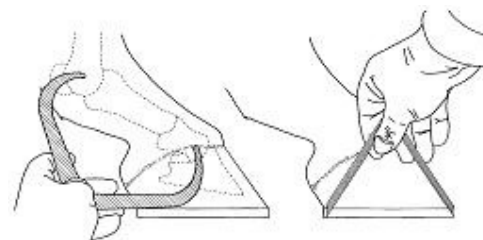


Fig. (1) Diagrammatic representation illustrating how callipers, or dividers may be used to compare the pastern length, with the shoe length. The longer the pastern and the shorter the shoe, the greater will be the compression to the heels.