



PROFESSIONAL EQUINE HOOF CARE TRAINING PROGRAM

THE GATEWAY CLINIC

The Gateway Clinic is where the journey toward certification starts. Participants receive five days of intense training that forms a firm foundation for a successful career in hoof care.

Participants receive extensive hands-on, supervised trimming instruction. However, the Gateway Clinic is a hoof care clinic, not just a trimming clinic. Hoof health is determined by many factors. Trimming is one important element. But hoof health and shape are also significantly influenced by management practices, and environmental and lifestyle factors. Deficiencies in these areas can undermine the efforts of even the most highly skilled trimmer. It is imperative that hoof care providers understand this basic premise and, importantly, know that problems caused by such factors cannot be fixed by trimming. Instead, the root cause of the problem must be addressed first. Then, proper trimming can facilitate healing. Consequently, Gateway Clinic participants receive extensive practical and theoretical information about how management practices, and environmental and lifestyle factors affect hoof health.

Hoof health and shape conversely can affect general health, biomechanics, and well-being. The relationships between hoof, body, and mind are reciprocal and inseparable. Factors that affect one, either directly or indirectly, affect the others. This is another important premise that permeates every aspect of the Gateway Clinic.

FIELD INSTRUCTION

Only for Those Who Have Attended a Gateway Clinic

Field Instruction is an important part of our training program. Three days of field instruction are required to qualify for a Final Assessment and certification. Field instruction is designed to translate the information in the Gateway Clinic to working with live horses and to introduce and reinforce procedures for effective and safe horse handling.

Our field instructors have extensive real-life hoof care experience and are highly skilled. Some have trimmed tens of thousands of hooves and have run successful hoof care businesses for years.

Field instruction begins with a discussion about the student's level of experience with horses and hoof care, horse handling and trimming skills, areas where the student feels he/she needs help, and any other topic that

might guide and improve the learning experience for the student. The field instructor will also advise the student regarding proper attire, tools, the plan for the day, and the history of the horses that will be trimmed.

During Field Instruction, the field instructor can demonstrate aspects of trimming and horse handling, otherwise, his/her attention should be consistently directed toward the student. The field instructor and student should not be working independently on different horses at any time during the day.

The Primary Goals of FI Are:

1. To teach safe and effective horse handling practices. The field instructor must be satisfied that the student understands and can implement effective and safe horse-handling practices before moving on to anything else. LH strongly and firmly advocates gentle and tactful horse handling. It is the only path that leads to a horse's willing cooperation. Anything else is unacceptable. Force and harsh treatment are indications of a lack of knowledge or skill to influence a horse in a gentle, respectful manner. Working with a calm, cooperative horse has multiple benefits: the horse is likely to be even more pleasant to trim over time; it lessens wear and tear on the trimmer's body; and it gives horse owners confidence in the trimmer's competence.
2. To teach the safe and effective use of tools and, when appropriate, make the student aware of tools they are not familiar with.
3. To help the student translate what they learned at the Gateway Clinic to live horses. It is imperative that the field instructor emphasizes the importance of unwaveringly following the trimming principles learned in the Gateway Clinic, regardless of the shape of a horse's hooves, and demonstrates how to do it when appropriate.
4. To emphasize that there are many factors that affect hoof form and health. How the hoof is trimmed is one. But environmental factors, and management and use (like riding, handling, and training) practices also greatly impact hoof health and shape. A competent hoof care professional recognizes when such factors are negatively affecting hoof health and shape and does not try to fix the problem by straying from the trimming principles learned in the Gateway Clinic. This often just causes more harm. Address the cause of the problem first. Then, a proper trim can facilitate healing.
5. To help the student quickly locate important hoof landmarks and interpret the relationships among them, especially in distorted hooves. This is crucial to a proper trim and it becomes easier with experience with a variety of hooves. To get the broadest experience, we recommend that students spend a day with three different field instructors who work in areas with different environmental conditions. We also recommend that students allow time between each field instruction to practice and refine techniques learned in each session.

A Secondary Goal of FI Is:

Field instruction is also an opportunity for students to ask for tips about starting and running a successful hoof care business and learn the field instructor's approach to scheduling clients, bookkeeping, tracking mileage, communicating with clients, and promoting their business.

FINAL ASSESSMENT

After satisfactorily completing the field instruction requirement, a Final Assessment can be scheduled. The Final Assessment is a one-day, “on-site” evaluation. Ann Corso, MHCP, the Director of our Barefoot Initiative (or a qualified alternate when appropriate) will evaluate your work with five horses that have been in your care for at least three trim cycles and watch you trim each one. Ann will ask about the factors affecting each horse’s hoof health and suggest improvements to trimming and horse care if appropriate.

CERTIFICATION

Students who pass the Final Assessment receive a Certificate of Accomplishment stating that they have successfully completed the Liberated Horsemanship training program for hoof care professionals. Graduates receive the designation Certified Hoof Care Professional (CHCP) and are listed on the Liberated Horsemanship website as a service to help promote their hoof care business. There is no associated fee.
