



EquiKinder by **Lisa Rothe**

# The Farrier Prep Guide for Horse Owners



A complete guide to understanding, training, and supporting your horse for stress-free farrier visits.

# Introduction



Farrier prep builds safety and trust. With balance, patience, and understanding, we create calm, safe experiences for horses and humans alike.

Preparing your horse for the farrier is about more than just standing still—it's about trust, balance, and confidence. This Farrier Prep Guide for Horse Owners walks you through groundwork exercises, body awareness training, and communication strategies that create calmer, safer farrier visits. Whether you're working with a young horse, a nervous rescue, or a seasoned partner who struggles to stand, you'll learn proven horsemanship techniques to reduce stress, improve balance, and build lasting cooperation between horse, owner, and farrier.

# What's Inside

## WHY HORSES RESIST THE FARRIER ————— 03

Discover the common causes of farrier anxiety and how to rebuild calm cooperation.



## STEP-BY-STEP: PREPARING YOUR HORSE ————— 04

A structured groundwork routine for farrier preparation, from gentle touch to lifting with confidence and clarity.

## BALANCE & BODY AWARENESS ————— 06

Simple proprioception and balance exercises to improve coordination, posture, and relaxation on farrier day.

## SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES ————— 09

Learn how farriers and horse owners can communicate clearly and create a stress-free, trusting experience together.

## RED FLAGS IN FARRIERS – H.A.R.M. ————— 12

Understand the warning signs of rushing or rough handling and how to advocate for your horse with confidence.

## LET'S LEARN TOGETHER ————— 13

Stay connected for more free horsemanship guides, groundwork videos, and training support from EquiKinder by **Lisa Rothe**.

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# Why Horses Resist the Farrier

## 01

### **Safety & Vulnerability**

Lifting a leg takes away the horse's ability to flee. If they don't feel safe or trust the handler, instinct tells them to protect themselves.

## 04

### **Confusion**

Many horses simply don't understand what's being asked. Clear, consistent handling builds predictability and predictability builds calm.

## 03

### **Pain or Discomfort**

Resistance often comes from physical strain elsewhere in the body. The leg they refuse to lift usually isn't the sore one – it's the one bearing extra weight.

## 02

### **Balance**

Standing on three legs isn't natural – it's a learned skill. A horse that feels unsteady will become worried or defensive.



# Step-by-Step: Preparing Your Horse for the Farrier



*Watch*



## **Focus on Connection**

Before touching a hoof, focus on connection – approach & retreat. The horse needs to feel safe around you.

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## **Start with Touch, Not Control**

Begin by simply being around the legs rather than asking for them. The horse needs to know that touch doesn't always mean lift. This isn't about forcing stillness; it's about building acceptance.

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## **Teach “Shift Before You Lift”**

Square the stance, then ask for a micro weight shift to the opposite leg so the target hoof is light. Allow small adjustments – those fidgets are balance problem-solving.



## **Introduce the Ask (Pressure → Try → Release)**

Use a light cue (hand at fetlock or soft rope loop) and release on the idea of lifting – cocking the leg or a clear weight unload counts. Avoid snatching; set the foot down quietly and re-ask so the horse learns predictability.

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## **Build Balance & Body Awareness**

A horse that feels unbalanced will feel unsafe. Teaching balance is physical and emotional – when they can feel their feet, they can relax.



*Exercises  
below*

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## **Add Duration & Positions**

Lift low and close, adding seconds gradually; end each rep before the horse asks to quit. Begin to mimic farrier positions and light tool feel (tap/scrape), always returning the hoof softly to reinforce safety.

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## **Set Boundaries with Clarity, Not Force**

Kicking is a no-go! Boundaries keep everyone safe. Use calm, fair corrections to create clarity, not fear. If your horse kicks, reset firmly (back up or yield), then regroup and re-ask.

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## **Use Terrain to Support Balance**

Flat ground isn't always the easiest. Subtle slopes can actually help a horse feel stable. Sometimes the right footing or angle is the key that unlocks balance and relaxation.

# Balance & Body Awareness

## **The missing link in calm, confident farrier handling.**

Many horses struggle during farrier work not because they're naughty, but because they're unbalanced. Balance training helps the horse stay relaxed and steady when one leg is lifted, improving both safety and confidence. By developing body awareness before the farrier visit, you're helping your horse build the coordination and stability they need to stand calmly and feel safe doing so.





# Simple Exercises to Build Balance and Body Awareness

## **Balance Pad Stand**



Let one or two hooves rest on a soft pad or gym mat so the horse must adjust weight evenly. Builds micro-balance and stabilising muscle strength.

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## **Scattered Poles Navigation**



Set poles in uneven spacing (not in lines) and lead the horse through slowly. Pause often and allow them to look and plan foot placement before stepping.

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## **Surface Variety Walk**



Walk over mixed surfaces – sand, gravel, matting, grass – to stimulate proprioceptive feedback and teach calm adaptability to new footing.

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## **Baited Stretch Reach**



Use a treat or target to encourage soft, controlled stretches forward and sideways at chest or knee level. Promotes flexibility, core engagement, and calm focus.

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## **Tail-Dock Rock**



Gently rock the dock side to side while watching for even weight shifts. Reward relaxation, soft breathing, and quiet standing.

# More Simple Exercises to Build Balance and Body Awareness

## **One-Step Yields**



Ask for one deliberate step from the hindquarters or forehand, then stop. Focus on slow, thoughtful movement and soft rebalancing between steps.

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## **Conscious Pole Walk**



Walk over a single pole with intention. Step one hoof at a time – forward, pause, backward. Use your energy and timing to promote balance, not speed.

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## **Dynamic Balance Shifts**



Ask the horse to gently lift the head and neck to free the forehand. With energy engaged, invite slow, rhythmic transitions backward and forward. This teaches the horse to carry weight evenly through the hind end and stay soft through balance changes.

## **Shift Before You Lift**

Before picking up a hoof, square your horse's stance and ask them to gently shift weight to the opposite or diagonal leg. This habit lightens the leg you plan to lift, making it easier and safer for both horse and handler.

# Farrier Day: Shared Responsibility

**Creating calm,  
cooperative farrier  
visits through shared  
responsibility.**

Successful farrier visits rely on teamwork. The farrier brings skill and precision; the owner brings preparation, calm leadership, and advocacy. Together, they create a safe, positive experience that supports the horse's confidence and wellbeing, and keeps the humans safe.





# When each person owns their part, the horse feels safe enough to do theirs.

## The Owner's Role

Be your horse's calm, consistent partner.  
Preparation and presence are your strengths.

- **Be the anchor.** Your horse mirrors your energy – stay grounded and steady.
- **Advocate.** You are your horse's voice. Speak up if something feels wrong.
- **Hold space.** Not every hoof will go perfectly – patience is progress.
- **Stay present.** Don't hand over the lead; stay connected and supportive.
- **Step in early.** Calmly reposition or reset if your horse feels unsure.
- **Reflect & prepare.** Note what worked and what didn't, and practice between visits.

JUST  
breathe

Before and after each hoof is lifted, take one slow, steady exhale. This keeps your nervous system calm and helps your horse mirror that release.

## The Farrier's Role

Bring skill, awareness, and communication to every visit.

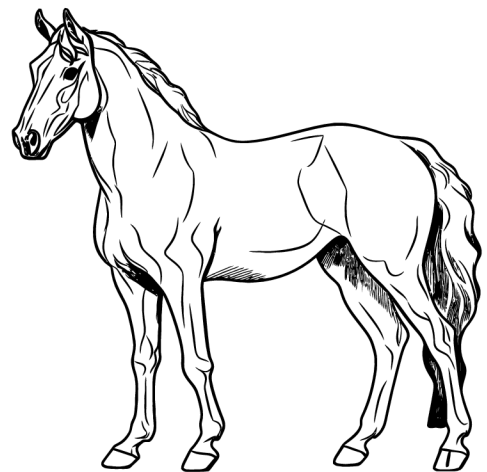
- **Patience.** Give the horse time to adjust; rushing creates tension.
- **Awareness.** Notice shifting weight or worry before it escalates.
- **Skill.** Every trim affects comfort and long-term soundness.
- **Adaptability.** Meet each horse where they are today.
- **Communication.** Explain, listen, and work as a team with the owner/handler.

# After the Trim: Reflection Notes

Use this page to jot down what you noticed with each leg – how your horse felt, what went well, and what needs more prep for next time.

FRONT RIGHT	HIND RIGHT
FRONT LEFT	HIND LEFT

- How calm, balanced, and confident did my horse feel today?
- How grounded and clear was I in my own body and communication?
- How well did my horse, the farrier, and I work together?
- What helped most in the lead-up and what was missing?
- What's one focus I'll work on before the next visit?



**Circle the leg that showed the most resistance.**

Look to the opposite or diagonal leg for signs of imbalance or pain.

# Red Flags in Farriers: HARM

## H

### Haste

Rushing the trim or handling process.

*"Let's slow down a bit so he can stay relaxed."*

## A

### Avoidance

Ignoring signs of fear, fatigue, or pain.

*"He's getting tense. Can we pause for a second?"*

## R

### Roughness

Using fear, force, or punishment.

*"Please stop. Let's take a break."*

## M

### Misalignment

Working against the owner and horse, not with them.

*"Let's reset and work together here."*

Advocacy isn't defiance – it's leadership. You're responsible for your horse's safety, not anyone's ego. If a farrier uses fear or won't listen, you can end the session. Drawing that line isn't rude – it's how we raise the standard for better horsemanship.

**Practice saying:** *"This isn't working for my horse. We'll stop here, thank you."*




# Let's keep learning together



Follow along for more real-life training stories, downloadable tools, and gentle guidance for horses and humans alike.

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