

Picking Out a Horse's Hoof



Disclaimer

A series of booklets has been developed by the Clinical Skills Lab team (staff, recent graduates and students) from the School of Veterinary Sciences, University of Bristol, UK. Please note:

- Each booklet illustrates one way to perform a skill and it is acknowledged that there are often other approaches. Before using the booklets students should check with their university or college whether the approach illustrated is acceptable in their context or whether an alternative method should be used.
- The booklets are made available in good faith and may be subject to changes.
- In using these booklets you must adopt safe working procedures and take your own risk assessments, checked by your university, college etc. The University of Bristol will not be liable for any loss or damage resulting from failure to adhere to such practices.

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Year Group: BVSc1 +



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Equipment list:

Picking Out a Horse's Hoof

Equipment for this station:

- Hoof pick

Considerations for this station:

- There are useful equine skills lists and 'How to' videos on Blackboard that demonstrate this technique as well as other skills. These can be found in the Animal Management 1 section → eLearning and then navigate to the relevant documents & videos.
- Having done the practical, watched the video and when comfortable with the technique, it is helpful to continue to practise e.g. with a pony in the Live Anatomy Barn.
- N.B. It is convention to initially approach a horse on its left (near) side; never walk behind a horse.

Anyone working in the Clinical Skills Lab must read the 'CSL_I01 Induction' and agree to abide by the 'CSL_I00 House Rules' & 'CSL_I02 Lab Area Rules'

Please inform a member of staff if equipment is damaged or about to run out.



Clinical Skills: Picking Out a Horse's Hoof



1

The horse should be appropriately restrained e.g. by an assistant holding the lead rope.

To pick up a front foot:

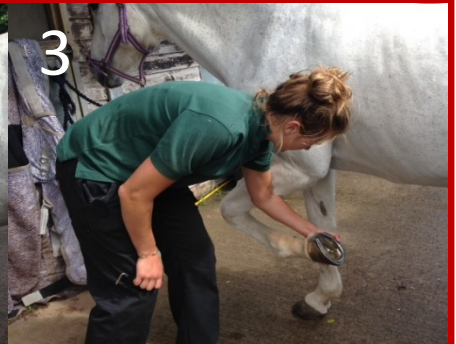
Ensure the horse is aware of your presence. Stand side on to the horse, facing caudally.

Run your hand over the shoulder and down the **caudal** aspect of the leg.



2

Continue down the leg with your hand cupped round the **palmar** aspect, over the tendons behind the cannon bone.



3

Some horses will know to pick up the foot with this action. If the horse does not pick up its foot, move your hand down towards the fetlock and place your hand on the dorsal aspect. Ask the horse to pick up its foot (e.g. say 'up' or 'pick up').

Leaning into the horse to shift weight off the limb may help.



4

To pick up a back foot:

Ensure the horse is aware of your presence. Stand side on to the horse, facing caudally.

Run your hand over the quadriceps and down the **cranial** aspect of the leg.



5

Continue down the leg with your hand over the **dorsal** aspect of the cannon bone.



6

Some horses will know to pick up the foot with this action. If the horse does not pick up its foot, move your hand down towards the fetlock and place your hand on the dorsal aspect. Ask the horse to pick up its foot (e.g. say 'up' or 'pick up').

Leaning into the horse to shift weight off the limb may help.



Clinical Skills: Picking Out a Horse's Hoof



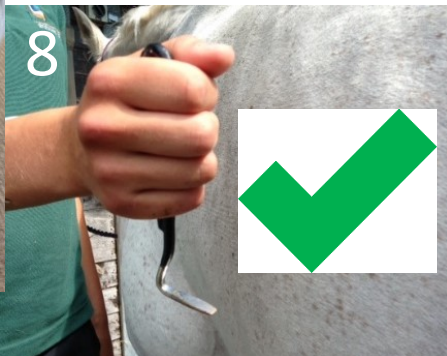
7

Hold the dorsal aspect of the hoof in the hand closest to the horse.

Hold the pick in the palm of your other hand with the hook part closest to your little finger.

N.B. Do not lean over the hoof too much in case the horse kicks out.

Correct hold:



8

Incorrect hold:



9

Pick from the heel towards to the toe. Remove all the dirt and faeces from the sole of the foot and clefts of the frog. Be gentle and careful to avoid causing damage to the sole of the foot.

The frog is particularly soft - never dig the pick into this area.

Sole of the hoof
anatomy:

Heel

Frog



10

Frog
cleft

Toe



11

Once the hoof is clear of dirt and faeces, return the foot to the ground gently. Lower the foot until the toe is close to or touching the ground and let go.

It is good practice to collect the hoof pickings into a bucket to keep the yard or stable clean and tidy.



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Resetting the station: Picking Out a Horse's Hoof

1. Place the hoof pick back in the grooming box

Station ready for the next person:



Please inform a member of staff if equipment is damaged or about to run out.



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I wish I'd known:

Picking Out a Horse's Hoof

- Do not kneel on the floor whilst picking out a horse's hoof as you would not be able to move away quickly enough should it be startled, move suddenly or attempt to kick.
- Always be careful as you move around horses – some may try to kick. Make sure to always stand in a safe place.
- Approach a horse from the near side (the horse's left); this is an equine convention and therefore horses are used to such an approach.
- The horse should be appropriately restrained while you are picking out the hooves e.g. ask an assistant to hold the lead rope.
- Wear suitable personal protective equipment (PPE) when working with horses e.g. safety boots and a hard hat.
- When moving around the horse to pick out the other feet, do not walk under the horse's neck when changing sides and never walk behind the horse – this is dangerous.