



Figure 1 In search of harmony: the horse in his natural environment vrs. the forces of domestication

How exactly does the natural hoof care practitioner conduct his or her work in the holistic sense? For example, how is the horse brought holistically into harmony with his environment? How does this bring out the natural hoof within? And how does this enable the horse to “claim” his feet?

Figure 1 conceptualizes the holistic picture. Various forces such as diet, feeding behavior, and hoof care, converge in the horse’s daily life. Either directly or indirectly, they shape his feet. The role of the natural hoof care practitioner (and horse owner) is to scrutinize and sort through these influences and ascertain their effect, positive or detrimental, on the feet, and make adjustments accordingly to bring the hoof in tune with the wild horse model. Let’s look more closely at some of these from the standpoint of hoof failure, and what natural hoof care practitioners do to remedy their ill effects.

DIET

One of the most problematic areas of hoof management concerns the adverse effects of diet on the horse’s feet. A growing body of scientific evidence shows that diets rich in carbohydrates, green grass, and formulated feed supplements are acting as Supercoriatic (“laminitis”) trigger factors in hundreds of thousands of horses nationwide (U.S.) [See Bulletin #104]. The profound success that natural hoof care practitioners experience in preventing and healing this debilitating and life-threatening disease stems largely from their efforts to lobby horse owners to make changes in what they feed their horses.¹

FEEDING BEHAVIOR

Closely related to the effects of diet is *how* horses are fed. From observations of wild horses, we now know that the horse’s digestive system is designed

¹For specific natural feeding recommendations, see my book, *Founder: Prevention and Cure the Natural Way*, available from Star Ridge Publishing (www.star-ridge.com) or other retail book outlets nationwide. Also of interest is the wild horse diet: *Diet In The Equine Natural World*, Bulletin #201 in the SRP Natural Hoof Care Series.