

Power Tool Trimming Clinic

by Pia Christensen

One of the keys to using an angle grinder to trim hooves is to think about pouring water from a pitcher, according to advice from clinician/trimmer Phil Morarre at a July clinic in Guthrie, Oklahoma.

“It’s like filling a glass from a pitcher. You can’t watch the pitcher or it will overflow. You watch the glass.” Phil was using the analogy to explain that it’s best to watch the hoof that is being trimmed, rather than watching the grinder, to get the most precision with the tool.

The clinic, held at Horse Feathers Equine Rescue, included discussions of anatomy, hoof structure and horse care that is beneficial to barefoot horses, as well as hands-on experience using an angle grinder to trim feet.



Phil demonstrated the art of power tool trimming during a recent clinic in Oklahoma.

Cheri White Owl, founder and president of the rescue, organized the clinic. This is the second time she has arranged for Phil to visit Oklahoma and teach people how to care for their horses’ feet.

The morning of the first day of the clinic, participants passed around the parts of a horse’s foot and learned how each part fits together and its function in the foot, as Phil explained the concept of trimming a foot so the coffin bone is ground parallel.

In the afternoon, Phil demonstrated his trimming techniques on a horse, including some of the more subtle nuances of using a grinder. He showed the best ways to position a horse with its foot on a hoof stand, how to hold the grinder for shaping the various parts and angles of the foot, as well as discussing ways



Phil discussed how to best position both the horse and the tools.

foot—whether it’s a long toe, a crack, heel height or something else.

On the second day, attendees got hands-on experience by trimming horses they had brought and trimming some of the rescue’s horses.

After Phil demonstrated by trimming one participant’s horse, he worked with another participant to trim, as the others watched. The group shifted around the horse as each foot was done, with some people kneeling and others craning their necks to get the best view.

For this hands-on portion, Phil trimmed the first foot of each horse, with a clinic attendee close by his side, as he explained what he was doing and why. For the horse’s second and third feet, Phil trimmed half of the foot, and the attendee was

charged with matching the trim on the other half of the foot, as Phil looked on. Then the attendee was expected to do the complete trim on the last hoof as Phil offered direction and encouragement as needed. *(continued on page 27)*

to stay safe when trimming.

Some of Phil’s trimming tips included:

- When you’re using a fresh flap disk on the grinder, start with the back feet so the grit that comes off the disk will fly away from the horse.
- Be sure to use a grinder with a paddle switch, so it automatically stops if you drop or lose control of the grinder.
- Start with whatever is bothering you about a



Phil teaches how to trim hooves using an angle grinder with a flap disk.

(Power Tool, cont. from page 26)

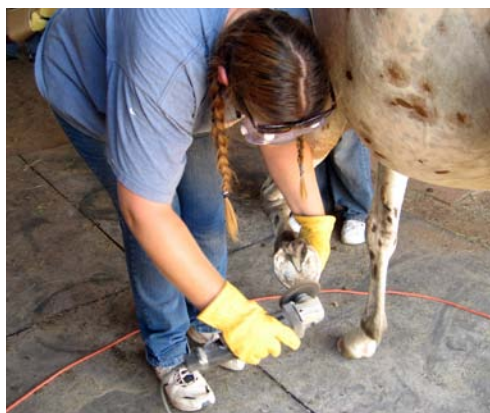
With the day's temperature climbing to 100 degrees, the action soon moved into the shade of the barn at Horse Feathers, where horses were brought in and stationed at each end of the barn and in the middle. Horses waiting their turn milled about outside the barn, no doubt curious about all the activity.



Trimming participants were able to practice their new skills with Phil right at their side.

Phil circulated among the participants as they trimmed, offering pointers and explaining what special issues he could see with each foot. When Richard Zewe, a trimmer from Santa Fe, Texas, worked on rescue horse Becket, Phil discussed how to address the flares on his feet.

When they weren't trimming feet, attendees watched others trim and cheered each other on.



Owners getting the hang of things!



While the participants were hot and weary by the end of the day, it was apparent they had all learned important lessons that they would take home to their horses.

Zewe, who attended the clinic with wife Carolyn, had been using traditional tools to trim horses for about a year and a half in the Houston area. He was trained by a natural trimmer who was Strasser-certified but has since adopted a style more closely resembling that of Pete Ramey.

All photos courtesy Pia Christensen

After the clinic, Zewe said he started turning to the grinder to trim clients' horses when circumstances allowed for it.

"I like the control you get with it," Zewe said. "You seem to have much more control as to how much hoof wall you want to remove when using the grinder, and the finished hoof just looks cleaner when done."

"I'm glad that some of the participants were able to build their confidence in picking up the grinder and building on their



Attendees said they gained a lot of new confidence in using the grinder.

knowledge," White Owl said. "Focusing on education by having clinics such as these, to help horse owners or prospective owners, become versed in better equine care is one of our missions here at Horse Feathers."

Linda Cole, who drove about 250 miles from Eskridge, Kansas, to attend the clinic, said she appreciated the opportunity to watch multiple horses being trimmed.

"After having watched for as long as I did, it really was very easy for me to pick up a hoof and trim it," Cole said. Cole had only used a rasp and nippers before attending the clinic. "But, since I have a very temperamental back, and am trying to preserve what little function it has left, I have found that using the grinder is so much easier."



A participant hard at work on their horse's hoof.



Pia Christensen is an Oklahoma-based journalist and partner to 3-year-old Ernie, a rescue horse from Horse Feathers. She started trimming Ernie's feet after attending a Phil Morarre clinic in 2009. Learn more about Phil Morarre at www.softtouchnaturalhorsecare.com