

Sarah Braithwaite, co-author of [Feet First: Barefoot Performance and Hoof Rehabilitation](#) has been riding barefoot horses for the last 15 years. Once a busy Hoof Trimmer she has enabled hundreds of horses to go successfully barefoot and always enjoys the challenge of buying herself a new shod horse and turning it into a capable barefoot horse.

Sarah's horses have competed in riding club events and with Endurance GB. She also loves drag hunting and long distance riding. A barefoot and nutrition nut, lately Sarah is adding straightness training to her obsessions but all her horses are barefoot, and live on a surfaced track system with access to carefully rotated cells of healthy pasture. They all eat a high fibre, forage based diet with 'forage focused'™ minerals balanced to the forage eaten.

Find out what Sarah finds are the advantages and disadvantages to riding horses barefoot.



Barefoot adventures, dressage, hundred mile hooves and riding across Wales with friends.

Barefoot Horse Advantages

- Your horse's hoof quality is likely to improve especially if you combine the stimulus of barefoot with a 'forage focused'™ hoof supplement.

- You will have fantastic traction on all road surfaces.
- Your horse's paces may improve, particularly if the hoof is shorter in the toe and medial/lateral balance addressed.
- Your horse is likely to be more forward going particularly on soft surfaces.
- If your horse usually trips or stumbles frequently, this is likely to disappear.
- Your horse will grow hoof faster due to improved stimulation. Many barefoot horses will replace their whole hoof capsule in under 6 months.
- A barefoot horse's diet is a high fibre, low sugar and starch diet which is healthy for all horses.
- Your horse will benefit from improved shock absorption because the back of the hoof, digital cushion and lateral cartilages, will now be more engaged and put to work.
- You will not find you are unable to compete or ride due to a lost shoe.
- Your horse is likely to suffer fewer injuries or less serious injuries to the lower leg and hoof.
- You will have immediate information on the health of your horse's hooves as any low level laminitis and sensitivity will be noticeable straight away as poorer barefoot performance.
- You will never miss a competition because of shoe loss.
- Your horse's hooves are able to become healthier through the improvement of stimulus to the internal structures of the hoof.

[Find out about the disadvantages and advantages of riding barefoot horses. Click To Tweet](#)

Barefoot Horse Disadvantages

- Your horse may have to wear hoof boots for rocky ground.
- Your horse cannot wear studs although this is usually only a problem for the owner or certain ground conditions.
- Your horse's hooves will have to be developed with the right amount of exercise on surfaces which challenge the hoof enough but not too much.
- Your horse's hooves will have to be 'fed' to get the best performance.
- You may have to change the diet you and your horse are currently used to. Feeding a high fibre, low sugar and starch diet, with 'forage focused'[™] minerals and vitamins is often crucial for achieving the best performance from a barefoot horse.
- Barefoot horse hooves still need regular trimming!
- Your horse may suffer from an abscess in the first 6 months because he has increased circulation in his hooves.
- Your horse may feel his feet. He may take the odd short step on uneven ground but this is normal.

- It may take time to develop barefoot horse hooves which really work, this takes time, patience, commitment and attention to detail.
- You will have to become a better horse person and listen to your horse and how he is responding to the feeling in his feet.
- Shoes are sometimes an easier option for those who cannot control diet and environment. Some barefoot horses require lots of management and a different environment from one suited to shod horses.

If you are interested in reading about Barefoot Performance and Hoof Rehabilitation then [Sarah's book sold through Amazon](#) will give you lots of pointers and help.

Sarah can also help you with advice on managing your barefoot horses and the very best diet to help you achieve a barefoot rock cruncher, [contact her](#) if you need help or support.

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Intelligent Horse Nutrition