

# WHERE HAVE ALL THE FARRIERS GONE?



By **DAVID FARMILO**  
 (Accredited Master Farrier, Oakbank SA)  
 PH 0418 835 186 Email: david@davidfarmilo.com.au  
 www.horsefarrier.com.au

EI in the eastern states has been a steep learning curve for everyone in the horse industry, and many have suffered financial loss because of it. The bottom line is that very few horses died because of EI, the horses are still out there and they are still growing hoof at the same rate as they did before, and they still need trimming and shoeing at regular intervals. But where are the farriers?

During the lockdown, farriers could only visit one property per day. This was fine where the farriers had large numbers of horses to attend to on one property, but most farriers visit 6 or more properties per day, which made the financial situation for them untenable. During the lockdown, many part-time farriers and indeed many full time farriers found alternative work. Many farriers have a trade such as fitting and turning, or metalwork, or automotive skills. Many farriers went to work for the mining industries, and then found that the money was good, they could handle the time away from home, and so for whatever reasons they have given up their farriery practice.

Many part-time farriers decided that farriery was too much of a gamble if EI was on the cards, so they took up full time jobs in other trades or industries. This exodus has left many horse owners stranded without a farrier. So what is the answer? I believe the answer lies in some lateral thinking and the future education of more farriers. Many owners successfully trim and shoe their own horses, and many do a darn good job of it. Yet they would never have considered the possibility of doing it for a living. How many of you put in a 38 hour week in a job you don't like for a pay packet of around \$600 per week? Yet shoeing 6-8 horses per week will give you the same pay packet. Food for thought? Many horse owners work full time so that they can afford their horses, love being with horses, and this presents them with an ideal opportunity. Women in particular make very good farriers, as in general they

tend to communicate better with clients, are more empathetic with the horses, are often quieter and gentler in their actions, and are usually more critical of their work and have higher expectations of themselves. I mentor several women who are well on the way to becoming full time farriers. Being a farrier doesn't mean that you have to do 10 horses a day, it doesn't mean you have to work 14 hours per day. But it does mean you can choose how much you want to earn, and to limit your hours to that target. It does mean that you can fit in with school hours for those with children, and it does mean you can be flexible with school holidays. This is definitely food for thought.

Also, many horse owners are now learning to trim and even shoe their own horses for a variety of reasons. Farriers generally ridicule this and also get very hostile that owners are trimming horses after a minimum of education. However this is a lot of nonsense, as trainee farriers also start trimming horses with a minimum of education as it is the only way that they can gain practice.

Over the past decade, there have been very few young people prepared to consider farriery as a trade. The tide is turning again as many school children decide they don't want to go to Uni, they don't want to learn a trade, and they just want to leave school and earn a quick dollar today. Farriery is one of the very few trades that offer high income potential along with flexible work hours and the possibility of travel - a good farrier will always get work anywhere.

After teaching horse owners to trim and shoe over the past 10 years, I firmly believe that more horse owners should be learning to at least manage the hoof care for their own horses. This enables a far better understanding of the hoof and how the correctly balanced hoof affects the performance of the horse. It gets around the problem of calling the farrier if EI should strike again; it gets around the problem of calling out



the farrier for a pulled shoe plus it also saves money and adds another skill to the repertoire. The more people there are who know how to correctly balance a hoof will also increase the chances of correct methods of hoof care being handed on to future generations. Several decades after the advent of the automobile saw a huge

downturn in the standards of farriery because the correct methods had not been preserved for posterity. Finding a good farrier is difficult today- don't let it become an impossibility for the next generation.

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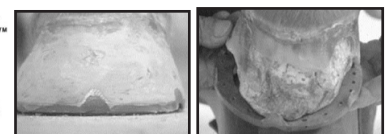
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**Contact: DJ Farmilo Pty Ltd**  
**Ph/Fax: 08 8388 4753 Mob: 0418 835 186**  
**Email: david@horsefarrier.com.au**  
**www.horsefarrier.com.au**

