***DISTANCE & PHYSICAL EXAMINATION of THE FOOT***

1. **Distance Examination**

* Make a visual inspection of all 4 feet as they are on the ground for:
* Large hoof wall defects.
* Hoof capsule distortions.
* Swellings proximal to the coronary band.
* Mismatched feet.
* Scars
* Characteristic stance
* Lamer limb has characteristically smaller (contracted) hoof, patient may paw shavings into a small mound and stand with heel on mound while pointing the toe downwards.

1. **Physical Examination**

* Foot and shoe examination

Pick up each foot in turn.

* Examine the shape of the foot and compare with opposite limb. Some mild asymmetry between feet is normal.
* Assess foot balance (a subjective evaluation of the 'point of force' or single impact point at which the foot transfers force on the ground)
* Observe the heels, look for evidence of contracture or collapse
* Look for obvious lesions     or penetrating objects.
* Examine the condition of the sole and the degree of concavity.
* Examine the frog
* Examine the width of the white line and check for any defects.
* Clean out any debris from the area using a hoof pick.
* Assess the sole and frog using hoof testers.
* Explore any tender sole areas with hoof knife
* Check size and type of shoe.
* Check condition of shoe and nails
* Check if any corrective shoeing has been used
* **Examination of the hoof wall, coronet, and lateral cartilages**
* Check for dryness, cracks, and evenness of wear.
* Check for ridges or uneven growth of hoof wall
* Palpate the coronary band for evidence of heat.
* Examine for any evidence of swelling or developing abscesses.
* Palpate the lateral cartilages for evidence of pain and ossification.
* Palpate the digital arteries for bounding pulse.
* **Remove shoe**
* Remove the shoe if considered necessary
* Ensure you have sufficient equipment to do this otherwise consider arranging for a farrier to attend the animal.
* Examine nails for evidence of looseness or infection and check the white line for abnormalities.
* Check that nails have not been placed inside the white line.
* **Clean foot**
* Cautiously pare the sole and frog using a hoof knife, preserving the thickness of the sole as much as possible.
* Look for any tracts, defects, sole quality or evidence of past trauma.
* Use hoof testers
* Start with hoof testers at one heel.
* Work methodically around hoof wall.
* Work methodically around sole and across frog.
* Squeeze lightly initially.
* Repeat last three points more firmly.
* If there is a reaction, then repeat from an alternative direction.
* Compression may   →   fluid expression from hoof defects and/or identify instability of fissures.
* Flexibility of the sole may give some indication of its thickness.
* Percuss hoof capsule and sole with a shoeing hammer.
* Investigate localized area of pain.
* Carefully explore any tracts or defects in the sole until pinpoint hemorrhage or exudation results.
* Defects in the white line should be explored from the side, adjacent to the wall, rather than the sole.
* **Check horse shoes**
* Are the shoes the right size?
* Are the nails used too large?
* Are the shoes in place or loose?
* Are they new or very worn?
* Is there any evidence of abnormal wear?
* Is the shoe pressing on the sole or frog?
* Does the shoe provide adequate heel coverage?
* Are the nails positioned excessively high or low in the hoof wall?
* Are the nails positioned caudal to the widest part of the hoof?