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## Veterinarian or Farrier?

By Henry Heymering

In the early Dark Ages horseshoeing and veterinarians were essentially unknown. Joseph Gamgee (1871), a veterinary surgeon, horseshoer, and lecturer on horseshoeing reasons that the first horseshoer must have been a veterinary surgeon, as shoeing requires knowledge of anatomy, physiology and biomechanics that the veterinary surgeon would have, but a blacksmith would not.<sup>i</sup> From the earliest available records, horseshoes were made by the smith and sold to the horseshoer for use.<sup>ii</sup> From the time of Charlemagne (742-814) to about the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the horseshoer was known as *maréchal* (French), *maniscalchi* (Italian) or *marshal* (English) and had not only the veterinary care of the king's horses but was a superior military commander and one of the most exalted members of the court.<sup>iii</sup> Veterinarian and horseshoer were one and the same at this time. In 1495 *maniscalchi* were required to pass tests on both shoeing and medically treating horses.<sup>iv</sup>

The origin of the word farrier is from the French verb *ferrer* which means to band with iron. Although Blundeville (1566) is credited with introducing the term *ferrer* which quickly became *farrier*, William the Conqueror (c.1066) commissioned one of his noblemen to be Count of Ferrers and to superintend the art of farriery. The Ferrers family crest has six black horseshoes.<sup>v</sup> Oddly, Blundeville, himself neither a horseshoer nor a veterinarian, used *ferrer* to mean veterinarian, and used *smith* to mean horseshoer.<sup>vi</sup> Blundeville is the first written differentiation between horseshoer and veterinarian. Probably recognizing the inappropriately confusing use of *farrier*, Sir Thomas Browne introduced the term *veterinarian*.<sup>vii</sup> France continues to the present day using the term *maréchal* for the horseshoer.

One of the earliest Guilds in England was of horseshoers -- at first called the Marshals of the City of London founded in 1356, then became the Worshipful Company of Farriers in 1674.<sup>viii</sup> Although Blundeville muddied the waters, horseshoers themselves clearly adopted the term *farrier* by 1674. In 1749 a law was passed in London that no one could practice the "Trade, Art or Mystery of a Farrier" within seven miles of London unless they had served a seven year apprenticeship and were members of the Worshipful Company of Farriers.<sup>ix</sup> Unfortunately, others who treated animals medically but did not shoe them, following Blundeville, also called themselves farriers – thus the *cattle farriers*, *dog farriers*, etc.

Those horse doctors wanting to narrow and improve their profession shunned the title *farrier*, opting for *veterinarian* instead. In 1790, the year before the London Veterinary College was founded, Granville Penn wrote letters to *The Gentleman's Magazine* under the pen name of Philippos and said: "This [veterinary] art requires to be entirely re-cast, or built anew; not upon a basis of farriery .... The very name of farriery must be, not mildly exorcised and cleansed, according to Lord Bacon's lenity to the name of magic, but altogether expunged."<sup>x</sup> However, many horse doctors continued to call themselves *farrier* until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>xi</sup>

So in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries veterinarians were trying to divorce themselves from the name of *farrier* while horseshoers were embracing the term; and uneducated lay persons continued to use the title as evidenced by such popular works as *Every Man His Own Farrier* by various authors between 1783 and 1895.<sup>xii</sup>

Confused? It gets worse. Horseshoers ran the early veterinary schools. In 1761 the first veterinary school in western civilization was founded in Lyon, France. Bourgelat was the founder of the school and hired Chabert, the best horseshoer in Paris, to lecture on horseshoeing. Bourgelat died in 1779, and Chabert, the horseshoer, succeeded Bourgelat as the director of the veterinary school.<sup>xiii</sup> The veterinary students at Lyon were required to forge a shoe to pass their exams.<sup>xiv</sup> The course outline for the London Veterinary School was intended to be a 3 year program, with a large portion of the entire 3<sup>rd</sup> year devoted to the shoeing of horses,<sup>xv</sup> however the course was quickly shortened in length with no shoeing required.<sup>xvi</sup> After the death of Sainbel, the first head of the London school, James Clark, Farrier to the King of Scotland, who was both a veterinarian and horseshoer, was asked to take over the London veterinary school, but declined because he hoped to head a veterinary school in Scotland.<sup>xvii</sup> Coleman then became head of the London veterinary school. Smith describes Coleman as "an unqualified and untrained man who had never attended a sick animal in his life."<sup>xviii</sup> Gamgee remarks, "since Professor Coleman ruthlessly destroyed the empirical knowledge of the old master farriers, and substituted for it a tissue of fantastic and often cruel notions, we have been prey to endless speculative theories."<sup>xix</sup>

From the 1500s to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the horseshoer, as well as the unschooled animal doctor who did not shoe horses was known as *farrier*; and the animal doctor who had a diploma (from a course as short as 2 weeks, or even mail order<sup>xx</sup>) was known as the *veterinarian*. Until the early 1900s horseshoers were as likely to recommend medicines as veterinarians were to recommend horseshoes.<sup>xxixxxii</sup> In addition to horseshoers and veterinarians, lawyers (Hierocles), scholars (Vegetius, Blundeville), gentleman riders (Freeman), surveyors (Fitzherbert), and others have made influential writings on laminitis and its treatment by shoeing, surgery, and medication.

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<sup>i</sup> Gamgee J. *Horse-Shoeing and Lameness*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1871 p. 12-3

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<sup>ii</sup> Sparkes IG. Old Horseshoes, Princes Risborough, Aylesbury, Bucks: Shire Publications, 1976,

p. 9

<sup>iii</sup> Fleming G. Horse-Shoes and Horse-Shoeing: Their History, Origin, Uses, and Abuses. London:

Chapman and Hall, 1869, p. 372-6

<sup>iv</sup> Serra A. Ferrari e Vetturini a Roma, Rome: Istituto di Studi Romani, 1981 p. 92

<sup>v</sup> Dollar JAW. Horseshoeing, New York: Wm. R.Jenkins, 1898, p. 11

<sup>vi</sup> Smith F. The Early History of Veterinary Literature. London: J.A. Allen, 1976, Vol. I, p. 170-5

<sup>vii</sup> Heymering H. On the Horse's Foot, Shoes and Shoeing. Cascade, MD: St. Eloy Publishing,

1990, p. 343

<sup>viii</sup> Prince LB. The Farrier and His Craft, London: J.A. Allen, 1980 p.1

<sup>ix</sup> Prince LB. The Farrier and His Craft, London: J.A. Allen, 1980 p.18

<sup>x</sup> Pugh LP. From Farriery to Veterinary Medicine 1785-1795, Cambridge; W. Heffer & Sons.,

1962, p. 167-8

<sup>xi</sup> Heymering H. On the Horse's Foot, Shoes and Shoeing. Cascade, MD: St. Eloy Publishing,

1990, p. 110

<sup>xii</sup> Heymering H. On the Horse's Foot, Shoes and Shoeing. Cascade, MD: St. Eloy Publishing,

1990, p. 255

<sup>xiii</sup> Gamgee J. Horse-Shoeing and Lameness, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1871 p.20-9

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<sup>xiv</sup> Gamgee J. Horse-Shoeing and Lameness, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1871 p.23

<sup>xv</sup> Pugh LP. From Farriery to Veterinary Medicine 1785-1795, Cambridge; W. Heffer & Sons.,

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<sup>xvi</sup> Gamgee J. Horse-Shoeing and Lameness, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1871 p.23

<sup>xvii</sup> Smith F. The Early History of Veterinary Literature. London: J.A. Allen, 1976, Vol. I, p.114-20

<sup>xviii</sup> Smith F. The Early History of Veterinary Literature. London: J.A. Allen, 1976, Vol. II, p.203

<sup>xix</sup> Gamgee J. Horse-Shoeing and Lameness, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1871 p.30

<sup>xx</sup> Smithcors JF. The Veterinarian in America 1625-1975. Santa Barbara: American Veterinary

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<sup>xxi</sup> Richardson MT. The Practical Horseshoer, New York: M. T. Richardson, 1904, p. 211

<sup>xxii</sup> Churchill FG. Practical and Scientific Horseshoeing, Kansas City, MO; Franklin Hudson

Publishing, 1912, p. 100