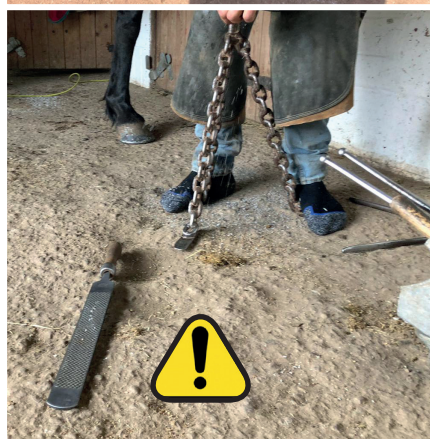


# Reducing injuries to farriers

By Jane Patching



*How safe are farriers when working at equine premises? Location, access to the yard, the availability of a suitable working area, not to mention the behaviour of individual equines and their owners are just some of the daily hazards they face! Injuries that occur may be the result of hazardous situations, which often go without assessment before work is undertaken. Communication and observation between the horse owner and the farrier are key to suitably assessing the risks and subsequently reducing injuries.*

## Identifying hazards

Hazards are situations with the potential to cause injury or damage. When looking at hazards consider the following points:

1. What can you actually see?
2. What harm could this cause?

This may sound extremely obvious, but take a few moments before completing a task to consider the following:

- What am I about to do?
- Think about the task and how you intend to tackle it.
- What could I do wrong from here?
- What effect may this have on other people? (Because



of something you do or don't do or because of something somebody else does or doesn't do.)

- What if something happened by chance?
- Think about the consequences if things were to go wrong.
- Could you or somebody else get hurt?
- How badly might you be injured?
- Could machinery or equipment be damaged?

Lone workers, or those employing less than five employees, do not have to write risk assessments down; however, they have to show they have considered the risks and implemented control measures where necessary. Considering the above points is a good starting point for creating a risk assessment.

A risk assessment doesn't need to be an onerous, time-consuming, lengthy document. A dynamic/on-the-spot risk assessment is just as effective. As long as the individual has considered all the risks for the particular tasks, this can help them to work safely and reduce potential injury. Individuals can find the best method to suit them or there are many templates available to assist if required.

### Owner responsibility

Discuss with the owner prior to visiting the yard and establish what facilities are available in terms of a suitable level working area, preferably covered.

Some background on the individual horse would be extremely beneficial – are they well handled? Has the owner taught them to pick their feet up? Do they fidget? Do they kick or bite etc? Have they ever been shod or barefoot only?

This knowledge is vital to help when assessing the environment for risks.

Who will be there to assist if required? The yard owner, the horse owner, a friend of the horse owner. Is the farrier expected to catch a horse, trim or shoe and then return it to a field, whilst lone working, just what would happen if you were injured? How would you call for help? What if you can't?

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- Site visits and full health, safety & environmental audits.
- Recommendations for improvement.
- Risk assessments.
- Fire risk assessments.
- COSHH Assessments.
- Health and safety training.
- Event risk assessment and guidance.



***'Complacency can play a part in increased injuries...when a task becomes second nature, mistakes can happen'***

It's okay to say NO. Why should a farrier put themselves in a position of danger? Who decides to let that happen? It is understandable that welfare of the horse and also finance requirements can sometimes be top of the list when taking on a client, but pause there and think for a moment. The repercussions of working in an unsafe situation could be far more damaging and a serious injury could cause long-term health and financial issues if an individual cannot work.

### Education

Education is one of the key factors here. With many apprentice farriers in training there is an opportunity to ensure they are aware of how to risk assess a situation properly and by educating apprentice farriers to assess risks and be confident to speak up if something is not safe is one way to help reduce injuries. Most apprentices are young workers, these individuals should be risk assessed themselves. They may not be physically capable of some of the tasks expected and lack of experience could cause them to miss something and potentially end up in danger.

At the other end of the scale, complacency can also play a part in increased injuries. Sometimes when a task has become second nature, mistakes can happen where people rush or take shortcuts.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 explains the duty of care held by employers: 'It is an employer's duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees and other people who may be affected by their business'. Therefore, where apprentices or other employees are taken on, there is a duty of care to assess the risks and ensure the relevant control measures are in place.

It is not just about farrier education though, there is a clear requirement for owner education and for them to understand the risks faced by farriers and how they can assist in reducing these. Now, this isn't necessarily down to the farrier themselves, but clear communication with the owner regarding the safety expectations and appropriate handling and training of the horse should be had and potential issues documented.

### Reportable Injuries and RIDDOR

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (known as RIDDOR) means certain types of injuries, depending on their severity, must be reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Reporting of RIDDOR incidents is the responsibility of employers, self-employed and people in control of work premises, depending on the situation.

### Types of reportable injuries

- Death arising from a work-related injury.

Specified injuries include:

- Fractures (except fingers and toes).
- Amputations.
- Permanent loss of sight or reduction of site.
- Crush injuries leading to organ damage.
- Serious burns covering more than 10% of the body.



- Scalpings.
- Unconsciousness caused by head injury or asphyxia.
- Any other injury from working in an enclosed space resulting in an illness requiring resuscitation or hospitalisation for more than 24 hours.
- Over seven-day injuries – where an employee or self-employed person is unable to work for more than seven days as a result of their injury.
- Work-related accidents involving members of the public or people not at work must be reported if the person is injured and requires hospital treatment.

\*\* Full information on RIDDOR and the reporting process can be found at [www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/reportable-incidents.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/reportable-incidents.htm)

### Where to go from here?

Of course, working with live animals will always carry a risk of an unforeseen event resulting in an accident, but many accidents can be prevented by clear communication between the farrier and the client regarding the expectations of suitable shoeing areas and horse training and behaviour.

Farriers play a vital role in the management of horses' health and welfare and it is important that they are not viewed in any other capacity than any other professional: for example, vets and physiotherapists, have specific requirements before carrying out the treatment of horses.

In all other industry and employment levels, health and safety is a key priority and changes are made where necessary to ensure individuals remain healthy and safe during their working day. This should be no different for farriers...remember it is okay to say no! Spend some time ensuring you are happy with the work environment offered, the assistance from the horse owner / yard owner and comfortable you have been made aware of any potential behavioural issues posed by the horse.

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