

# How A Client Newsletter Can Improve Your Business

**A newsletter that you share with your clients can educate and compel them to be more involved in their horses' care**

By Dave Farley, APF-I, CF

**T**o be successful farriers, we must do more than provide footcare for our clients' horses. We must manage all aspects of our businesses. So to thoroughly operate our practices, we must be active in client management.

Client management is more than scheduling and showing up on time. It involves growing our businesses and attracting new clients. We must educate clients on our role as farriers and their responsibility in the footcare of their horses. The goal of client management is to remain the hoof-care expert for our clients.

But there is only so much time in the day to invest in individual clients. We need to service other clients and balance our work and personal lives. We need to utilize resources that can reinforce our lessons to clients. I have found sending a newsletter to be an excellent tool for educating and instructing clients while in between my visits.

## What Should The Newsletter Look Like?

A newsletter is a great tool not only for educating your client, but also for

marketing you and your business. It is useful whether your practice is built more on backyard horses or high-end performance horses. For example, you can use it to communicate with the owner to become more of a team player in the horse's care.

A newsletter doesn't have to follow an exact format. The key is first to understand the purpose in sending newsletters.

*The newsletter contributes to how you manage your business and not let the clients dictate how you should run it ...*

Once you establish what purpose you want to accomplish with it, then you can shape the newsletter to help you carry out that goal. By going through this effort, your newsletter will grow a reputation you want to build as a footcare expert who is invested in the clients' horses.

This could be an email newsletter, as long as your clients agree to receive emails and provide you with their email addresses, or something you print and mail. There are many inexpensive resources for printing newsletters on

quality paper stock if you don't have a printer at home, such as either a local print shop or online vendors Vistaprint and SmartPress.

If you are struggling on what content to put in your newsletter, there is a lot of quality material already out there in print and digital media. I believe most of these resources would let you reproduce this material just by crediting the source.

You can use outside resources to create specific content that you want to send to clients. Texas farrier Dave Edens recommends using the online resource Upworks for hiring freelancers to write material for you. He

has commissioned freelancers who are horse people to create articles on laminitis. He'll then edit these for his needs.

The purposes and goals for the newsletters will differ. In a general sense, I think educating clients is one of the best reasons to produce a newsletter. Don't get wrapped up thinking about what you have to include or that you should include advanced information. Instead this should be basic information — that's what many of our clients need. The importance and necessity of cleaning a foot and the benefits of bell boots.

The format can be any length, as long as it accomplished your goal. It could be a postcard in size and length if you are using it to introduce yourself. I started off with a single page newsletter that grew to a multiple-page newsletter.

The frequency you send the newsletters also relies on you and how much you want to grow your business. It depends on your purpose and goals. I send my

## FARRIER TAKEAWAYS

- ▶ A newsletter is an effective way of marketing your business and educating clients.
- ▶ A newsletter can be used to encourage better footcare practices by the owner in between appointments.
- ▶ Outside resources, such as hoof-care information sites, can supply information for your client newsletters.

newsletter twice a year to my established clients, but previously I was mailing four per year. Schedule these for what makes the most sense for your practice.

From my experience, I have found there is an immediate impact: clients feel pride and gratitude that they received it and they tend to share the information. As the clients share that copy for information within the newsletter, it begins to market your business. I encourage my clients to share the newsletter at the barn so that everyone involved with the horse's care has an opportunity to read the helpful information presented in it.

The newsletter contributes to how you manage your business and helps prevent clients from dictating how you should run it. Otherwise, if you don't establish your business' limitations and expectations, you will never have a good work-life balance.

### What To Include In Your Newsletter

There are many purposes for newsletters. I have a few suggestions for newsletters that can help your businesses.

**Sharing footcare information with clients.** In Figure 1, I show an example of a postcard-style newsletter. I might include a subject line of "It happens" and



Figure 1

then share a statement and a photograph of a pulled shoe. This would mention that there are many reasons why horses pull shoes. That subject line and picture are concise and hammer home a simple point — that there are dozens of reasons why that aren't related to inferior farrier work. The client will want to engage to learn more of those reasons. Always include a visual that will prompt the client to ask questions. On the back side, I would include my contact information.

It is the cost of the postcard (handwritten

or printed) and stamp (if you choose to mail it vs. hand-deliver. When you verbally tell a client something, they won't retain it all, but when you tell them in a newsletter, I find they will remember more and that they will have the reference to it later.

**Appreciation of business.** Saying "thank you" goes a long way with clients. Acknowledge your clients' business with this newsletter type.

**Share your accomplishments.** Include the efforts you are making in improving yourself and your practice. This investment in yourself is a direct correlation to the quality of hoof care that their horses receive. I received my letter from the

## CREATE A MORE EFFECTIVE NEWSLETTER

From years of creating the newsletters for clients, I have found a few tips helpful for making a more successful newsletter.

- ◆ **Include an exciting subject line.** You want to grab the client's attention so they read your newsletter rather than letting it pile up on their desk or their email inbox.
- ◆ **Keep it personal.** Offer something that your clients will be interested in. Make the newsletter seem collected specifically for them and their horses.
- ◆ **Don't exhaust the client.** Your goal shouldn't be to write a book. Even with a multiple-page newsletter, be specific and concise. Simple is best.
- ◆ **Use images.** People love visuals. And images can do a great job of not overwhelming the client with a lot of text. If they are not your images, credit the source.

## LEARN MORE ONLINE

Learn more on effective client communications:

- ◆ *How to screen prospective foot-care clients.*
- ◆ *Listen to a podcast interview with Dave Farley.*

Access this content by visiting [AmericanFarriers.com/1118](http://AmericanFarriers.com/1118)



American Farrier's Association (AFA) alerting me that I was a 30-year member. I was proud and let my clients know by taking a picture of the letter and pins and included it in my newsletter. They may not have known or cared what the AFA is, but now they know more and know that I have been a longtime member. I would also share information on the clinics and conferences I am about to attend or have attended and how what I will learn/have learned will benefit their horses. Let clients know you are always improving.

**Share your clients' accomplishments.** Did one of your clients do well at a horse show? Share it in the newsletter. I find that clients appreciate it when farriers are aware of their achievements with their horses.

**Train your clients.** If you want your clients to follow certain behaviors, you can convince them through your newsletter. A dry-erase board at barns is common today, but that wasn't always the case. These are essential tools to keep everyone alert to the horses' needs, including when the farrier is going to visit. This helps organize and remind clients of your visits. Every horse is on the same 4-week schedule. Otherwise I couldn't have a successful practice and free time. I want the barn manager to take a picture of the board and send it to me so I can synchronize it with my schedule and records. This helps me to plan if they, for instance, added a horse.

You don't have to be direct. Years ago, I wanted my clients to adopt dry erase boards. Using the purpose of "sharing my clients' accomplishments," I congratulated one of my barns for installing a dry erase board and explained its value for my work. After I sent this newsletter, many of the barns I worked for took the hint and installed boards.

**Dictate your business practices.** A newsletter can inform clients of the way you conduct your business and changes that will affect them. Back in 2005, I had a few clients who didn't want to pay with credit cards, so I posted pictures of the back of my truck with the credit card logos (Figure 2). This reaffirmed the point that I want to do business with my clients, but I won't accept checks and that I request payment before the horse is shod. I now send a welcome letter



Figure 2

to clients, letting them know about my expectations of them, and what they can expect from our practice.

**Introduction to a new client.** I just don't accept new clients. I want to sit and have a cup of coffee so that we can learn about each other. We may realize that we aren't a good fit for each other's needs. I give them this newsletter as my introduction prior to our discussion. This helps establish expectations and limits misunderstandings. I will have two face-to-face meetings with prospective clients.

**Perform a survey.** You can gain information from your clients that can improve your service. For example, ask them how they prefer to be contacted. Update this information so that you can better communicate with clients.

**Include products.** If there is a new shoe that you are using, it may create curiosity among some clients. Including

this in a newsletter can start a dialogue with clients and you then can explain your reasoning on why you would want (or doesn't want) to use that product with their horses. This solidifies your position as their expert.

There are other useful purposes for a client newsletter. Don't be discouraged if you struggle making your first one — that is the hardest one to do. Once you complete that, you will have a template to improve on for future newsletters. Your customers will love these and your practice will benefit from them.  $\Omega$



*Dave Farley is a farrier based in Coshocton, Ohio, and Wellington, Fla. He is a member of the International Horseshoeing Hall Of Fame and past president of the American Association of Professional Farriers.*