

# What is a farrier?

by Keith Templeton

*Keith Templeton edits [The Farrier Guide for Education and Employment](#), a resource for farriers that features a worldwide directory of farrier schools as well as education and employment guides.*



Photo by [joeymc86](#)

## **What is a Farrier?**

A farrier is a specialist who cares for horse's feet and smiths horseshoes. The term "farrier" comes from the Latin word "ferrarius," which means "of iron" or "blacksmith." The etymology of the word explains why farriers are confused for blacksmiths, which they are not. Centuries ago, the village blacksmith would make items out of iron, including horseshoes, and because workers were not as specialized as they are today, the blacksmiths would also be the ones to apply those shoes to the horses.

Working with iron is a main part of a farrier's job as they bend or make horseshoes, but not the only part of the job. And this is where farriers are distinguished from blacksmiths. Where a blacksmith will work with iron and make horseshoes (among other things), farriers smith horseshoes as well as take care of horses' feet, functioning as both blacksmith and

veterinarian.



Photo by [7tenths](#)

### **Farrier as blacksmith**

Horseshoeing is a big part of the job. Since domesticated horses often need horseshoes because their hooves are not as hard as wild horses, farriers have to make or bend existing horseshoes to custom fit a horses' hooves. They will use either the cold shoe (bent when cold) or hot shoe (heated in a forge), methods of blacksmithing.

Horseshoeing involves removing the old shoes, trimming the hooves, measuring for the right fit and bending the shoes to custom fit the hoof, then applying them.



Photo by [Lily M-C](#)

### **Farrier as veterinarian**

Since most domesticated horses stay in the same confined spot for much of the day, they're tramping over their toilet, which causes their hooves to get dirty, potentially harming a horse's health. To prevent ill health, farriers clean the dirt from horses' feet, cut out any excess from the hoof wall, dead sole, and dead frog.



Photo by [Deb Schultz](#)

Using tools like rasps and nippers, farriers also trim hooves so that the hooves keep their proper shape and length, ensuring that the horse maintains good balance.

Since farriers work so closely with horses, they also observe them to watch out for any diseases or illnesses that are occurring in the horse. They keep an eye out to see if the horse is dealing with any potential lameness and take corrective action before the issue becomes a real problem.

Maintaining proper hoof health is essential to a horse's well-being. As specialists in equine hoof care, farriers play a vital role in a horse's life. Skilled farriers are in high demand because attentive horse owners know the important role they play in their horse's health and appreciate the work they do.