Farrier Guide & Employment Report

Why Become A Farrier?

Why choose the Arkansas Horseshoeing School?

http://arkansashorseshoeingschool.com/
Phone: 479-858-1011
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Since you visited the website we assume you’re thinking of becoming a farrier. That’s great!
Farriers experience many rewards from their work. They get to work outdoors, often in beautiful
surroundings. They work with magnificent animals, and have the satisfaction of helping them
perform at their best or of helping to resolve difficult problems. There is nothing to compare
with the feeling of playing an indispensable role in maintaining the health and maximum athletic
potential of a horse.

Farriers also experience the benefits—and the challenges—of being independent businessmen.
They can set their own hours and work when and where they want to. Of course, they also have
to manage all aspects of their business, from advertising to book keeping and taxes. Being your
own boss is both exhilarating and frustrating! You get to take credit for your successes but also
responsibility for your errors.

The death of American manufacturing and farming jobs

As little as 30 short years ago, manufacturing jobs were much more plentiful than they are today
and jobs in farming have fallen to very low levels. Our American economy has changed and the
biggest job growth sectors have also changed.

To illustrate the point let’s look at a couple of startling numbers. First of all, in 1940 the
percentage of people employed in good paying manufacturing jobs was close to 40%. When we
compare that to 2010, we see that three quarters of those jobs are gone; only 9% of Americans
work in manufacturing today. The chart below shows trends in broad categories of jobs over the
last seventy years.

![Chart showing trends in manufacturing jobs over time.]
In 1790, the U.S. was an agrarian economy with almost everyone (90%) working in farming. Today it's around 2.6% of the population. Machinery and factory farming have all but eradicated the majority of farm jobs. But, you probably don't need anyone to tell you that--it's been happening for many years.

So, with the old industries of manufacturing and farming "dying," where are the new jobs? Do they pay well? Can you make a living wage? Let's have a look for ourselves at the options and what experts say about future trends in jobs.

**What job choices does someone have in this new economy?**

So how can a person find a better job--one that pays better and has a prospect for the future.

One of the most respected, authoritative sources for employment facts is the 2011 edition of the Bureau of Labor Statistics *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (See [http://www.bls.gov/oco/oco2003.htm#industry](http://www.bls.gov/oco/oco2003.htm#industry) for more details). It tracks trends in employment and predicts growth or decline both in broad industries and in specific job types, as well as providing a wealth of detail on many jobs.

The charts below make projections about what the future may bring. The first shows job growth in broad categories. Health care, technical, and educational jobs are expected to show the greatest growth on the number of jobs over the ten year period.
The next two tables show anticipated job growth in two different ways – those with the fastest percentage growth and those with the greatest growth in total number of jobs. We're going to concentrate on the jobs in this Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data that don't require a college degree or long term training on the job–jobs that someone could be working in within six months from the time they decided to start training for their new job–either in a school or on the job. They’re highlighted in yellow in the tables.

From what we've seen so far, it's easy to see healthcare providers will be in high demand. If you go to the section within Healthcare, and look for the jobs which fit our criteria, "Healthcare Support Occupations," you'll find they pay a mean annual income of $26,710. And working with the sick and elderly is not easy work and certainly not for everyone. The tables also show the median annual wages for each job category.
It’s clear that without a degree, the jobs that BLS predicts will be most readily available pay roughly $16,000 to $28,000 per year. Wages for truck drivers are the highest we saw in these tables and driving a truck often demands long periods away from home.

What about a college degree?

As you can see in the BLS tables, wages are generally quite a bit higher for jobs that require a degree. And for some people going to college is absolutely the right decision. It's a big commitment of time and energy but it's within reach of many people. Loans are available and there's also a lot of aid in the form of grants which don't have to be repaid.

Attending college is of course more of a challenge for someone who's got a family to support or a lot of financial commitments--even with financial aid. Still, if you have your heart set on a particular job that requires a degree, we think that you'll probably be happy down the road that you took the two or four (or more) years required to get the job you've always dreamed of having.

But if you're pretty sure you don't want to go to college at this point in your life but you want solid opportunities, we think considering a job as a farrier makes good sense, especially if you like working with horses, working outdoors, and working for yourself.

What about working as a farrier?

Unfortunately, the BLS doesn’t maintain any statistics on the number of farriers because in terms of numbers it’s kind of a niche career—not many people employed. However, we can look at the increase of the number of horses, since most horses will receive professional hoof care on a regular basis. Recent statistics indicate that there are more than 9 million horses in the US today, with total horse-related expenditures of more than $100 billion. Anecdotally, we have been told there are shortages of well trained and experienced farriers in many areas of the country.

We’ll go into more detail later about wages and outlook for farriers. We did some research on our own and we strongly encourage you to do the same. We suggest that you try to pin down the geographic location you think you’d like to work in. Don’t just think “Texas.” Decide if you’ll work in a predominately rural area or in an urban area. Then begin talking to people. Here are some suggestions: boarding stable owners, trainers, veterinarians, practicing farriers, and horse owners. You can locate these people by the yellow pages, online ads, word of mouth, or classified ads. We’ll explain later in this report why it’s important to pin down where you will be working when anticipating the wages you could make.
Let’s take a minute and look more closely at a farrier’s work life.

**What the work's like?**

The vast majority of farriers are self-employed and they generally place a lot of value on being free to make their own decisions about their lives and businesses. A farrier can make choices about where, when and how he or she works, with more options opening up as they gain experience and skill over time. (We’re going to use “he” rather than “he or she” for your ease of reading but stress many women are successful farriers.) Being your own boss means you’ll never get transferred out of state or have to work so much overtime it damages your family life. You get to set your own hours, and work as much or as little as you want.

Working for yourself also means you'll be able to reap the benefits of time and effort you put into your business. Most people have witnessed employment situations in which the hardest working, smartest people weren't the ones who got the raises and promotions. Not so when you're your own boss. If you work hard, striving to do the best job possible and continuing to learn over time, you'll gain the rewards. On the other hand, you do have to be very self-motivated and a hard worker to make it as a self-employed farrier.

Running a business requires other skills – record-keeping, purchasing decisions, advertising, scheduling appointments, communicating with owners, trainers, and veterinarians, being prompt and dependable. All of this requires time, skill, and dedication. While working with horses should always be your primary focus and motivation, a successful farrier also has to be good at these other tasks.

We also want you to understand that being a farrier is very physically demanding. We’re not talking about needing to be exceptionally strong—many women are becoming farriers and doing an excellent job—they’re able to handle the physical demands. But it’s like any repetitive and demanding physical labor—it's going to take a toll on your body. But, while we don’t want to downplay how physically demanding the work is, we also want to mention that it’s possible to avoid a lot of injury by learning to handle horses in such a way as to not provoke “wrestling matches” with them. We’ve seen farriers make life harder for themselves because of the confrontational way they approach horses—provoking fights with 1,000 pound animals doesn’t make good sense. There are also ergonomic techniques that can help avoid physical stress and injury.

Developing a successful horseshoeing business (acquiring a customer base) takes time. But one factor can give a farrier a big head start after he graduates from a horseshoeing school and that’s working as an apprentice to an established farrier. When the new farrier goes out on his own the farrier he did his apprenticeship with can help him by sending him referrals that he knows are
appropriate. In any number of online equine websites we saw practicing farriers suggest to those starting out that the best thing they could do to build a business is to apprentice.

All farriers provide a service which in simplest terms is to provide regular hoof care to horses so that they remain (or can become through therapeutic shoeing) sound and serviceable. But the vast equine industry includes many widely different environments in which a farrier might work. A farrier whose clients ride their horses once in a while only for pleasure will work in a different environment than one who shoes performance horses whose winning (or losing) performance is of extreme importance to owners and trainers who often believe large financial gains or losses are at stake—think the race track or a breeding stallion with years of future stud fees hanging on how well he does. Again, the more experience and skill a farrier has the more options he'll have in deciding what he wants to do and also what people are willing to pay.

**Wages**

Neither the Bureau of Labor Statistics nor any other source we've been able to find (and we've looked), keeps good data on farriers' wages. Because of that we did some independent research on our own, as mentioned earlier—calling, among others, owners of large boarding and training stables. These people are good sources of information because their customers can choose their own farriers and so a variety of farriers visit the facility. (This is almost always true for boarding stables—not so much for training stables where a trainer can require all his customers to use the farrier of his choice.) We tried to speak with people who would know rates outside of one discipline or specialty.

We’re going to use another tactic here to help you understand the challenges in discussing farriers’ wages. One problem is that the range of wages for farriers, unlike fast food workers or health care aids, varies so dramatically. While researching wages we ran across a Time CNN article about plumbers that talked about the very thing we were struggling with. Here's an excerpt

.... a plumber's earnings vary widely depending on the region in which they work and whether a plumber owns a business that employs others. Journeymen in cities such as New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and Boston are in higher demand and command higher prices — up to about $250,000 a year. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2006 National Compensation Survey, pipelayers, plumbers, pipefitters and steamfitters nationwide made an average of $23 an hour, or about $46,000 annually for a typical 40-hour workweek.

To read more: .time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1851673,00.html#ixzz1LxsruqA

So trying to talk about what farriers make has all the challenges of talking generically about what plumbers make. A farrier in Wellington, Florida will make much, much more than a farrier in El Dorado, Kansas. The farrier we talked about earlier who only shoes "backyard" horses won't make what the international level show jumper farrier makes--not by a long shot. Experience,
level of skill and staying on top of the constantly changing materials available will all make a farrier able to command a higher rate.

So we’ll go to the results of our attempt to get some general information for you to start with and hopefully add to by your own research. In our small survey of farriers' rates, we asked those we talked to what the lowest and highest rates were they personally knew of for getting a horse reset in their area. This is what people told us:

- Austin and San Antonio, TX $60-200
- Wichita, KS $70-120
- Ft. Lauderdale, FL $150-300

We also spent time searching internet equine website forums where people will occasionally post questions about what farrier rates are in certain parts of the country. We aren’t going to include those scattered posts but want to make you aware that’s another source of information.

The next obvious question is, “How many horses can a farrier do in a day?” Again, it depends on so many different factors. A farrier will attempt to do as little driving around as possible—it wastes time and money. So an experienced farrier who’s built up a really successful business will likely have large accounts where he shoes many horses at one time—perhaps over several days at the one location. Someone getting started is going to get the accounts the established farrier won’t take any more—the people with one or two horses far out in a rural area. We’ll mention again that doing an apprenticeship can help build a customer base through the help of the established farrier you worked with. And his customers will know you as well. When people ask them for a recommendation, they’re likely to suggest you if their established farrier isn’t taking new customers.

What you make will depend on how hard you’re willing to work and what demands you’re willing to place on your body. There should be some balance here—you want to make money but you also don’t want to break down your body; you need to consider pacing yourself so that you can shoe for many years.

In figuring what you can make it's important to remember there's overhead—supplies, gasoline, propane for the forge, motel rooms if you travel and stay out overnight, to mention a few. This is one of the areas where wise business decisions are necessary.

So it comes down to some of the points we made earlier. There's the potential to make a very good living. There certainly are farriers who make $100,000 a year, but they're hard workers, they've paid their dues by gaining substantial experience, continually learning and striving to improve and they have the business skills that are required. And to
make that kind of income you know they’re working very hard—shoeing during the day and taking care of paperwork and business decisions in the evening. We don’t think it’s giving people an honest picture to just plaster on a website “You can earn over $100,000 a year.” That’s a very, very misleading statement.

**What's the employment outlook for farriers in the future?**

In the process of talking to people while preparing this report, we didn't encounter a single person who felt that the outlook wasn't quite good for well trained, competent farriers. We heard over and over again that the successful farriers aren't taking new customers. We heard people regret, for instance, not being able to steer their boarding stable customers to a shoer they know is good.

We're going to qualify this positive news by saying again that successful farriers have a combination of horseshoeing and business skills. And there's no question that many customers will choose a farrier (and stay with them over time) on the basis of personality and convenience--whether he's dependable, punctual, is pleasant to be around.

To repeat what we've said a number of times: do some research on your own to determine the farrier employment outlook and wages in the area where you want to work.............and don't forget that working as an apprentice for a successful farrier will be the best thing you can do to get a head start to a successful career.

**Our best advice . . .**

We want you to make the best and most informed decision possible about choosing a new career.

We've encouraged you to talk to people in the equine industry and made some suggestions about how to do that. We also urge you to call our school founder and head instructor, Paul Dorris, Jr. All calls to the school go directly to Paul and he'll give you straight, honest answers to your questions. He's always happy to talk to someone who's interested in becoming a farrier. He loves what he does--shoeing and teaching--and that comes across when he talks about it. Paul can be reached at 479-858-1011.

**Why choose Arkansas Horseshoeing School?**

1. Quality of instruction
   The head instructor at Arkansas Horseshoeing School (AHS) and its founder is Paul Dorris Jr. Paul's qualifications include:
   - Operating a successful farrier business for over 25 years
   - Being an invited official farrier at:
     - 2010 World Equestrian Games (Three Day Event)
     - Official farrier of the Rolex Kentucky Three Day Event (9 years)
     - Tunica, MS Hunter/Jumper Shows
     - World Paint Congress
West Palm Beach Nationals

- Shoeing many national and international champion performance horses in various breed associations and disciplines
- Advisory Board Member for the Colorado School of Trades
- Member of the Board of Directors of the Arkansas Horseshoeing Association

The other instructors are: Mike Pallone, DVM, an expert in equine podiatry; Paul Dorris Sr., with 30+ years as a successful farrier and also an official Rolex farrier; and Glyn Turnipseed, Ph.D., retired biology professor and farrier.

2. Very small class sizes mean individualized instruction. Each student receives a great deal of one-on-one time with faculty. No one falls behind for lack of attention. Even when working after hours, Paul Dorris Jr. is usually on hand if someone has a question. We often ask graduates to evaluate their experience at AHS. One of the most common comments is that Paul is always there for students--always willing to explain something or demonstrate something again. That means a lot when a student has hit a rough spot in the road--extra support can make all the difference.

3. Students receive a set of tools with their tuition. As founder of AHS, Paul Dorris, Jr. wanted to make sure students graduated with a set of tools they could start working with. Over the years in the course of training many apprentices he found that graduates of other schools sometimes had run out of money by the time they graduated. Here they were as new graduates and they couldn't work because they had no tools and no money.

4. AHS firmly encourages graduates to work as an apprentice with an experienced farrier. The instructors use their considerable network within the horseshoeing community to find a good apprenticeship for graduates. As mentioned earlier in this report, if there is a "fast track" to success that would be a big part of it.

5. Students will get to work on many horses, both at the school and in the field. AHS firmly believes it's very important that students spend as much time as possible "hands on," so we make sure each student gets a lot of time under a horse. For the go-getters who want to do even more we always get them as many horses as they want.