

Barefoot in Indonesia!

by **Derry McCormick**

In the last ten years, my sister Emma has lived in Thailand and China, and has just moved to Indonesia. Her 7 year old daughter Hannah absolutely loves horses. However, due to where they have lived, and the fact that no one else in her immediate family is particularly interested, her primary exposure to the horse world has been through visiting me.

As such, she has grown up thinking that it is perfectly normal for horses to run around without shoes, be ridden without a bit or not at all, have 24/7 turnout without clothes, etc. So I was more than a little concerned when I learned she had found a stable in her area where she could take riding lessons. I resigned myself to the fact that I would have to periodically restate all the justifications for a more natural lifestyle for the horses, and the benefits to their health, longevity and general well being, in order to “undo” what she would be taught.



Havana Horses is a natural horse riding school, run by Havedz Nugroho and Anna van Rheeden. Havana Horses is situated in the village Tegalwaton (“the Stone Garden”) at the outskirts of the city Salatiga, in Central Java.

Well, one should never assume! Much to my amazement and delight, my sister called me to report that the owners of the stable, Havedz Nugroho and Anna van Rheeden rode bitless, kept all their horses barefoot and out in large paddocks 24/7, and did their own trimming. The odds seemed inconceivable that this one stable on an island on the other side of the world was not a conventional riding facility. The owners were equally surprised to hear that Hannah had a background in natural horse care!

I immediately asked to get in touch with them and found out that Anna is from the Netherlands and learned to trim there, and Havedz is from Indonesia. They started Havana Horses on the basis of natural horse and hoof care and are delightful people who are very committed to the health and well-being of their horses. They have traveled back to the

All photos courtesy Derry McCormick



Educated in the Netherlands, Anna is a practitioner of natural hoof care herself, trimming the hooves of their own and other people's horses.

Netherlands for training in hoof care and are always studying and searching out new information.

I was lucky enough in October to be able to visit Havana horses, and meet them both. They have a beautiful property nestled in the lush vegetation of central Java. Their horses are healthy and robust, even though some have come from challenging backgrounds. Most had fairly severe hoof issues, but are either in excellent shape or well on their way now. They live on hard, rocky ground in the dry season, and mostly mud during the rains. Weather in Java ranges from quite hot, to hot, to extremely hot, although at a higher elevation, the stable enjoys a nice breeze and slightly cooler temperatures.

The horses eat rice grass, which is cut daily for them by locals, and seem to thrive on it. Hay as we know it is not available, and grazing is scarce. They also get a supplement mineral mix that Anna and Havedz make themselves, and are out in paddocks with shelters 24/7.



Their horses thrive on a diet of rice grass.



The horses are of local bred (Sandalwood, Sumbawa) and some crossed with Australian or New Zealand Thoroughbred.



It was a real treat to meet this couple and their horses, and to be reminded that even though we still have so far to go in educating people about natural horse care, it is a small world—and even in remote corners, the word is out!

For more information about Anna, Havedz and Havana horses please visit: www.havanahorses.co.id

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