

The Natural Angle

A PUBLICATION OF PRACTICAL IDEAS AND SOLUTIONS FOR FARRIERS

Volume 4: Issue 3

Application of the Heart Bar Shoe

DAVE FARLEY, CF

I have had a lot of success over the years with the heart bar shoe. Burney Chapman and others popularized this shoe in the 80's for use on foundered horses but I find it useful for other problems as well, such as:

- Navicular or chronic heel pain, including navicular bursa problems
- Bruised frog
- Weak, shelly or brittle heels
- Quarter cracks
- Sheared heels & sheared quarters
- Corns

No matter what the reason for applying the heart bar it has to be put on correctly. Otherwise it can create additional problems. You should always consult with the veterinarian in charge of the horse. Ask for x-rays with markers such as a small wire attached to the front of the hoof. This will be very useful in determining how much rotation there might be and positioning of the bar. Good x-rays will also indicate how much sole you have to work with. The lateral view is the most important view for my work.

When considering the use

of the heart bar I start by looking at the hoof from four angles.

- a. Front (anterior)
- b. Side (lateral)
- c. Rear (posterior)
- d. Bottom

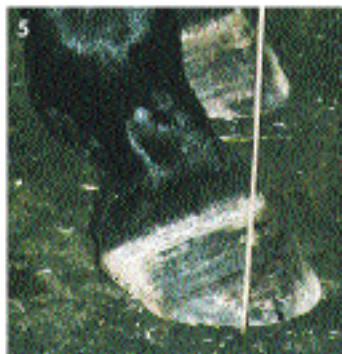
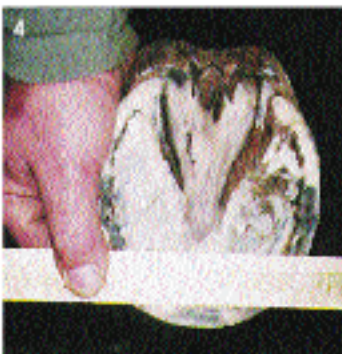
I start my work by trimming to establish balance. In the pictures we have you can see the horse is due to be shod. The heel is too far forward and length of toe is excessive. After removing the shoe I mark the sole and sides of the wall to show where the untrimmed frog extends. This is important in fitting the bar shoe. I never fit to the untrimmed frog. Always trim

first. As you can see the point is much further back on a freshly trimmed frog. I use a general measurement of $3/8"$ behind the point of the trimmed frog as my point of the heart bar.

As I shape the shoe I keep in mind the goal I have of placing the foot in the center of the shoe to give good support and help with the medial/lateral balance. The heart bar should fall over the center of the frog, from my $3/8"$ mark back. You should always be able to see frog on either side of your bar.

The centered alignment of the bar over the frog is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



1. Lateral view of hoof before starting job.
2. You can see how far forward the foot has grown.
3. The marks indicate the point of the untrimmed frog.
4. With the frog trimmed, note how far back it is from the original marks.
5. The mark on the side is the point of the untrimmed frog. The rule is where we have the trimmed frog.
6. The shoe is fit now. The point is approximately $3/8"$ back from the point of the trimmed frog.

Heart Bar Shoe

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

important but you have to be especially careful with the contact of the bar on the frog. The shoe is meant to be a support device, not to put pressure on the frog. It's critical to get even contact with the frog and the bar. We have some pictures here that illustrate too much contact, creating pressure, and not enough contact, defeating the purpose of the shoe. The lack of contact can allow debris to get under the bar and create problems. Take your time in adjusting the bar to make the right contact.

The heart bar shoe can be a useful tool in your business as long as you are careful with the application. The farrier-products™ pre-made heart bar shoes save me a lot of time and do a nice job. The crease and punching make it easier to get the fit I need and the clips are a real time saver. I used the SX-7 for this smaller

foot but on most of my bigger horses I use the SX-8.

Keep in mind the foot that can be helped with a heart bar needs more maintenance than the sound hoof. Be sure to schedule regular resets—no more than 5 weeks apart. Otherwise, as the foot grows forward, the heart bar is also moving forward and in time will no longer be effective and can be counter productive. And don't forget to get the vet involved before you start. ■

7. This shoe shows the bar with way too much contact. Nailing this would result in a big problem.

8. You can see this bar is tipped up away from the frog, leaving no contact.

9&10. After nailing, I can check my fit on the egg bar. The foot is in much better balance from all angles and I have provided maximum support for the hoof with the heart bar.



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Hoof Abscesses

STEPHEN E. O'GRADY, DVM, MRCVS

Hoof abscesses are probably the most common cause of acute lameness in horses. Foreign matter (such as gravel) or bacteria gains entry into the hoof through the sole-wall junction (white line). This foreign debris will migrate in the hoof to the sensitive sub-solar tissue leading to infection. Another common cause of sub-solar abscesses is penetration of the bottom of the foot (sole) by a sharp object. Infection may also gain entry into the foot by way of a hoof wall crack or multiple old nail holes.

Conditions that cause mechanical breaks or weakness in the continuity of the white line are hoof imbalance (long toe-underrun heel syndrome, excessive toe length, heels too high) hoof wall separations (white line disease, seedy toe), aggressive removal of sole and chronic laminitis. Excessive moisture or dryness may also contribute to weakness in the white line. If left untreated, the sub-solar abscess will follow the path of

least resistance up the hoof wall rupture and then form a draining tract at the coronet.

Clinical Signs

Most affected horses show sudden (acute) lameness. The degree of lameness varies from subtle to non-weight bearing. The digital pulse felt at the level of the fetlock is usually bounding and the involved foot will be warmer than the opposite foot. The site of pain can be localized through the use of hoof testers. A small tract or fissure will commonly be observed in the white line where the pain is noted. The wound or point of entry may not always be visible, as some areas of the foot such as the white line and frog are somewhat elastic and wounds in these areas typically close. Sometimes pain will be noted over the entire foot with hoof testers and, in this case, the veterinarian may want to rule out a severe bruise or a possible fracture of P3 (coffin bone).

Treatment:

The object of treating a simple sub-solar abscess is to open and drain the infection. The opening should be of sufficient size to allow drainage but not so extensive as to create further damage. Establishing drainage is the most important aspect of therapy. Preferably, this is done at the onset of lameness before the infection ruptures at the coronet. The offending tract or fissure is opened on the hoof wall side of the white line using a 2-mm bone curette or other suitable probe. A small opening is sufficient to obtain proper drainage and care must be taken to avoid exposing solar corium, as it will invariably prolapse through the opening and create an ongoing source of pain. Drainage is enhanced by the application of an Animalintex® poultice for the first 48 hours. This is a self-contained, medicated poultice, which is commercially available through your veterinarian or tack shop. In most cases, this eliminates the need for continued foot

soaking.

The hoof is kept bandaged with a suitable antiseptic until all drainage has ceased and the wound has closed. At this point, a small gauze plug is used to fill the opening of the tract and is held in place with super glue. This keeps the affected area clean and prevents the accumulation of debris within the wound. The shoe is replaced if the horse is sound.

Many times the painful tract can be located but drainage cannot be established at the white line. In this case, the infection has migrated under the sole away from the white line.

Under no circumstances should an opening be created in the adjacent sole. This only leads to a persistent, non-healing wound and increased susceptibility to bone infection. Instead, a small channel should be made on the hoof wall side of the white line in a vertical direction following the tract to the point where it courses inward. Drainage can

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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New Products

The farrierproducts™ bar shoe line has been expanded to include egg heart bar shoes. They are now available in the SX-8 clipped front shoes in sizes 0 through 4. In the near future the SX-8 size 00 will be available as well as the SX-7 clipped fronts in sizes 000 through 2.



Hoof Abscesses

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

be established here in a horizontal plane. Tetanus immunization status of the horse should be determined. Use of systemic antibiotics are optional and based on the needs of the individual horse.

Prevention

Prevention is achieved through proper hoof care and centers around promoting a strong, solid white line, which will resist penetration by debris. Excessive toe length increases the bending force exerted on the toe, leading to a widening and weakening of the white line. This, along with toe cracks and hoof wall separations, are the most common cause of hoof abscesses.

To prevent abscesses it is important that the foot be trimmed in a manner that accentuates a strong healthy foot. A few basic principles can be used when trimming to create a strong foot and strengthen the white line. First, the bars of the foot are left untouched and the heels are trimmed back toward the widest part of the frog, or as far back as possible. This creates additional ground surface, which allows more weight bearing to occur in the posterior portion of the foot and not the toe area. Sole is only removed adjacent to the white line to

identify excess hoof wall to be removed. It is not necessary to concave the sole as this occurs naturally. The toe is then backed up from the dorsal surface (front) of the hoof wall and/or the breakover is set back accordingly.

This assures that there is no excessive toe length. A good rule of thumb to use when trimming the foot is to leave the last few rubs on the bottom of the foot. When applying shoes, fitting the shoes hot may be helpful to seal the sole wall junction.

The use of hoof hardeners (Keratex®) and bedding the horse on shavings or sawdust may be useful to harden the feet during extremely wet weather or when the horse is being washed frequently such as during horse shows. During dry weather, a hoof dressing such as a combination of cod liver oil and pine tar (mixed in a ratio of 3:1) painted on the entire foot may help to contain moisture.

Preventing indirect penetration through the white line is therefore dependent on providing adequate protection to the underlying sensitive structures. The hoof capsule has a natural ability to provide such protection and it is imperative that we strive to enhance these strong features through proper trimming. Excessive removal of protective

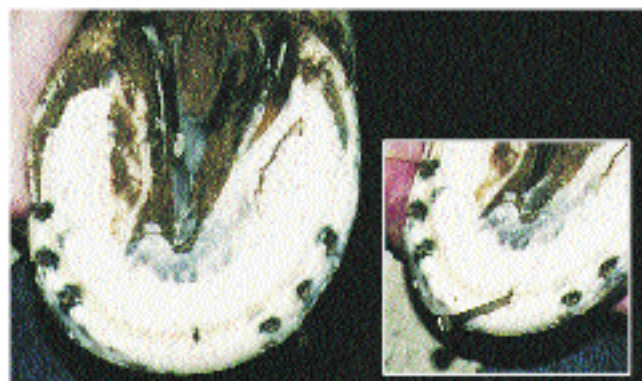


photo above with inset:

Small abscess at toe that doesn't appear to have significantly undermined sole. Notice the depth in the inset photo.



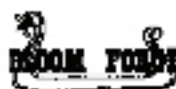
photo left:

Larger abscess that has undermined sole. Excess toe and growth may have made it difficult for abscess to break out.

horn is a common practice, as emphasis is often placed on eye appeal instead of functional strength. ■

Dr. O'Grady has a very useful website focusing on hoof care and hoof problems. Visit the site at www.equipodiatry.com.

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Y2K Fears?

Experts Advise Keeping Money In The Bank

Can you stand one more story about the potential millennium bug coming our way January 1? We hope so, because this story is one you need to pay attention to. Independent business owners – especially those in small businesses – may be a tad worried about the country's banking system and whether it's ready for Y2K. Will business owners be able to access accounts? Will account information be secure? And how long will it take to correct any problems that do arise?

According to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, both the nation's federally insured banks and credit unions are ready for Y2K. In fact, their

level of preparedness is such that withdrawing extra cash the week of the New Year may be unnecessary.

In a press conference held earlier this year, agency officials said that 99.7 percent of the nation's insured institutions are now rated satisfactory – the highest rating given for Y2K readiness. The few institutions that had not yet achieved that rating were receiving very close regulatory attention, they added.

"We're not just taking their word for it," said John D. Hawke, Jr., Comptroller of the Currency. "Federal examiners have conducted Y2K examinations in each insured financial institution at least twice, and in some cases, three, four or more times. The largest banks

have received continuous Y2K oversight."

The remaining few not prepared for the new millennium, he said, "are receiving intensive, on-site supervision to ensure that they, too, will experience no disruptions of the systems their customers depend upon when the long anticipated day arrives."

While that assurance is good news to consumers, it doesn't mean bank and credit union customers shouldn't take some precautions as the New Year approaches. The nation's banking leaders advise consumers to keep copies of financial records and balance their checkbooks regularly as 1999 draws to a close. Consumers should also be realistic and

withdraw only as much money from their financial institution as they would for any other holiday weekend once the New Year gets here, the experts agreed.

But perhaps the best advice was this: watch out for Y2K scams. Anyone not from your bank or credit union calling and promising over the phone to secure your funds for Y2K and asking for account information or a social security number should be reported to the authorities.

More information about Y2K preparedness and the country's banking system may be obtained on-line at www.fdic.gov or through the FDIC's Public Information Center at 800-276-6003. ■