

Shoeing The Roping Horse

By Michael Chance, CJF



wouldn't square a toe and dub his hind foot if he were weak in his stop. These are all factors you must learn through communication with rider/trainer and or using your observation skills. You should have a good understanding of the horse's job description.

The average age of the rope horses you see at the top end of the game is 15-18 years old. Many of these horses reach the peak of their career with existing maladies and management of soundness is the key factor of these horses. These horses will work temporarily, regardless of what we do to them, as seen in **Photo 2**.

The most common concern of cowboys is shoe pulling. Rarely does a horse of sound mind and body pull a shoe, if the foot is properly balanced and supported. **Photo 3** (same horse as **Photo 2** after shoeing) In fact, it is less likely under normal circumstances. I choose not to cheat any horse of the advantages of proper shoeing because of occasional lost shoes.

Chronic shoe pulling is most often caused by bad management, such as turning them out in hazardous environments, such as deep mud, fencing on the ground and so on. This is not your fault, unless you don't point it out and show customers their roles and responsibilities. The management of the equine athlete is a team effort.

Lameness is a common cause of gait faults. Veterinarians play a key role and can make life less stressful, provided you're fortunate enough to have a good relationship with the good doctors in your area. It's amazing how a chronic shoe puller is miraculously cured by a simple hock lubrication. Calf horses, like reiners are notoriously hard on their hocks. It comes with the job.

Over the years of practice and study, I've developed a picture in my mind of a balanced and functional foot. Good basic hoof prep with a little extra attention to details will solve most problems and keep a



There are as many ways to shoe roping horses as there are horses. Each one is unique, with its own strengths and weaknesses. A sound horse with good conformation, in a desirable environment, would do well barefoot. Yet this scenario is rare. Their riders each have their own set of priorities, skill levels, and schedules to factor in. Because of all these variables, each horse should be assessed as a unique individual. Communication and observation skills are essential in determining how best to shoe each horse in order that he may perform at his peak within his environment. For instance, you would not put sliders on a calf horse that chased cur dogs and wild cows during the week. You

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horse sound under normal circumstances. **(Photo 4)** This is my approach to what some refer to as corrective shoeing. In general, I simply trim away the parts that do not fit the balanced picture. I take away all the excess hoof, but avoid excessive trimming and rasping. Your goal should be to preserve as much hoof mass as possible. Trim heels to the tallest, widest aspect of the trimmed frog. The frog should be somewhat parallel to the ground. While dressing the outside of the hoof, keep your goals in mind.



Fit a shoe that compliments what is trimmed. I often choose a shoe based on the hoof's condition, allowing me to use a smaller nail, for example. I prefer a shoe that is punched coarse. This allows me to nail in the white line, yet still fits the outside perimeter. Hoof walls will become thicker and of better quality if we allow them to. Rasping on the outside of the foot serves no practical function. Your shoe fit and its placement is what does the work **(Photo 5)**.

A horse is a horse. It makes no difference what his job is: dressage, walker, or ropers, they need the same trimming principles. The center of the foot is the same respectively. The posterior portion of the foot must balance the anterior regardless of the length of toe and/or hoof conformation **(Photo 6)**. Enhanced break over is very important, yet it's only part of AP balance. Posterior support is the other half of the equation and must be addressed to achieve AP balance. Think about the posterior portion of the foot, the portion that bears the weight and does the work **(Photo 7)**.

Proper hoof prep and shoeing of the hind feet is just as important as the front. If not, a sore or dysfunctional hind can dump extra work to the front and set you up to fail. In order for a horse to stop properly, the hind foot must slide. If the foot is excessively dubbed or pushed back, it won't function properly. On the other hand, excessive toe length isn't necessary and can cause undo stress on the limbs.



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Somewhere in the middle is where I find works well (**Photo 8**). One quarter inch to 3/8" longer than the fronts is a good place to start. There should be enough toe and or shoe in front of the center of the foot to allow it to stay on top of the ground going in. The heels of the hind shoe must be of sufficient length to slide on once it's under the horse. It is sometimes necessary to sweeten or taper the branches of a hind shoe to enable the heel of the foot to fall while the toe stays on top of the ground. The opposite drives the toe straight in, therefore you don't get the slide you want. Anything you do to facilitate the sliding stop makes it easier on the horse as well as the ropers ability to step off (**Photo 9**).



A hind shoe of adequate length also helps keep them off the front shoes. The extra length causes the hind to plant a little sooner. A horse that spreads excessively in the stop can't stay in it. Check medial/lateral hoof balance and make sure your shoe is pointed straight with the frog (**Photo 10**). It's sometimes necessary to lower the medial heel and build a shoe with a little extra length in the medial branch (**Photo 11, 12**).

The more educated we are the more confidence we have. We are more able to communicate with confidence, what we do and why we do it. Education and experience is the key to success but also helps you to know your limitations. Nothing is more frustrating than giving your all to a customer with unrealistic expectations. If you learn to listen well and observe, you can pick out the things on which you can have an impact and alleviate complications and disappointment. Education gives you the confidence and skill to handle this aspect of your job well and to your advantage. n



Michael Chance is an AFA certified journeyman farrier from Hugo, Oklahoma. Michael has been shoeing for 18 years, working with many disciplines. He continues to have a mixed breed practice but is working on some of the top rope horses in the nation.



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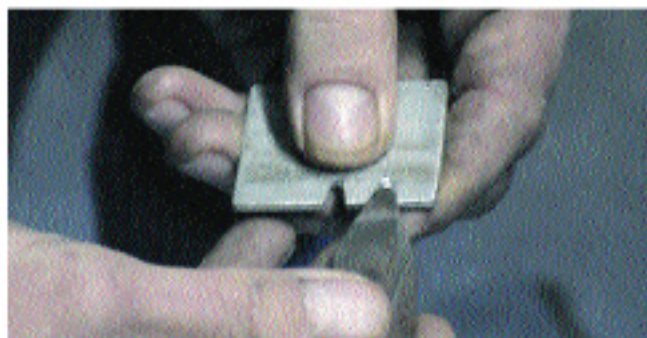
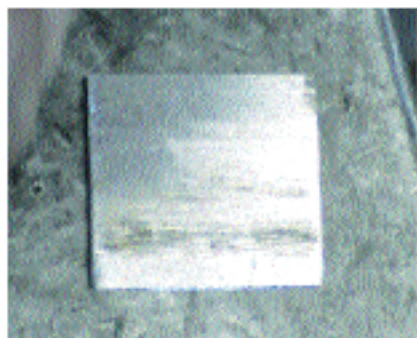
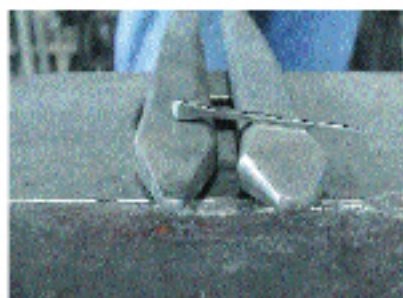
Gauge – Don't Guess

From Roy Bloom Clinic

You can make a very simple template or gauge to use when prepping or maintaining your punches. It takes the guesswork out of it and gives you a consistent finish.

Start with a light gauge aluminum plate. Cut it to a couple inches square. Using the nails that your punches will be used for, mark the angles of the nail head - both ways. You can use a band saw or hacksaw and carefully cut to the inside of your marks. Don't worry about the depth and the joining point of the two angles - the important thing is to get the angles right and make sure your depth is enough to fit your tool point in. When you have the rough cut in, take a small, fine cut file and finish it off.

This is a very simple but effective method of gauging your punches. If you are using a variety of nails, make templates for each and make them accordingly. You can now use these as you adjust your punches. Regular maintenance of the punches will give you longer life and more accurate results. **n**



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designed to glue on steel, aluminum, and most plastic shoes as well as complete any hoof repair project. With an initial set time of one minute and a final cure of six minutes, Adhere is perfect for most every application. Adhere sets hard with a superior bond, but maintains the flexibility necessary at the quarters and heels to allow the natural movement of the hoof.

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Horseshoe Nail Manufacturing Methods



This is just a brief description of the different processes used in manufacturing horseshoe nails. If you have tried different brands you have probably noticed that each have unique properties and a certain "feel". This is a direct result of the manufacturing process. All of these processes require very close attention to the tooling, equipment and raw materials.

Mustad Process - Cold Forged
Rectangular wire is drawn from round, low carbon steel rod. The wire is then annealed. The nail shank and head is formed in a Mustad swedge press. The shank and the head are formed through a series of successive mechanical hammer blows.

Output: 140 blanks per minute.
The blanks are tumbled in drums to remove burrs and clean them for the pointing machine. The Mustad pointers bevel the blanks, draw the shank and cut the points.
Output: 170 nails/minute.
Nails are polished and receive rust inhibitor coating in vibratory bowls before packing.

Capewell Process - Cold Rolling
Rectangular wire is drawn from round low carbon steel rod. The wire is fed into a Capewell rolling machine. Eight pairs of successive rolls form the shank of the nail. Then the bevel is formed, the point is cut and the head is formed. The output of this machine is a finished nail.
Output: 95 nails/minute.
Nails are polished and receive rust inhibitor coating in vibratory bowls.

Australian Process - Die Formed
1/8" x 6" wide strips of hot rolled deep draw, quality steel are fed continuously into a progressive die tool. The die is mounted on a high capacity press. Successive steps in the tool form the nail geometry as the metal advances. Finally the nail is cut in its final form from the steel strip.

Output: 80 nails per minute.
Nails are then heat treated to relieve process stress. Nails are tumbled in a barrel to clean, polish and apply rust inhibitor.

Nail Types
Two basic styles, E-head and City (including regular). E-head may lock more securely as it has more symmetrical angles and is easier to design punch. Also has more strength at base of head. Bevel face of city and regular with straight back makes it more difficult to get precise punch fit. The base of shank may also be weaker.

Nail Dimensions Key differences in nails beside the process are dimensions of heads and shanks. Each manufacturer has their own specs and they won't necessarily be the same as other manufacturers. For best fit you need to consider the head size as it relates to the punching and crease of the shoe you are using. Shank size is less critical if the head is secure but it should fit close to the size of the pritcheling.



Farrier Steve Norman and Trainer Bob Baffert break with tradition to provide a solid base of support for War Emblem - with results that speak for themselves.

NEWS FLASH! War Emblem & Kerckhaert Race Plates. Winners From Start to Finish.

Kentucky Farrier Steve Norman shod 2002 Kentucky Derby and Preakness Winner War Emblem with Kerckhaert racing plates. Using low toe fronts and regular toe hinds (which he side clipped), Norman has added to his list of Derby winners and started a new list for Kerckhaert! A number of other Derby entries were shod with Kerckhaert racing plates, indicating the strong support for the shoes by top farriers and trainers. Our congratulations to the winning team of War Emblem, Bob Baffert and Steve Norman. n

Look for more details on racehorse shoeing in future issues.

NEW PRODUCTS

May, 2002



KERCKHAERT TRIUMPH

The Kerckhaert Triumph aluminum shoes are now available at your farrierproducts™ dealer. These shoes have several design features that farriers have been asking for. A bold toe front shape fits effortlessly. The shoe has a sole relief feature as well as a heel cut that allows for a good cleanout. The design of the shoes will fit applications in all riding horse markets, including western pleasure and hunters. The Triumph shoes are available clipped and unclipped in sizes 000 through 3 with the dimensions of the stock graduated proportionate to the shoe sizes. Packed in 15 pair boxes.



LOPEZ 15" NIPPERS

Lopez Farrier Tools has started shipping their new 15" hoof nipper. The quality finish that Joe Lopez puts in all his work is evident from first glance. Made with a high quality tool steel these nippers are finished to provide maximum cutting performance. Look for Lopez to add the 14" version as the next step in their expansion. These nippers complement the already well accepted clincher and crease nail pullers available at your farrierproducts™ dealer.

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