

Over Reaching and Forging: Cause and Correction

Over reaching is when the toe of the back foot hits the heel bulbs of the front foot. Forging is when the toe of the back foot hits the bottom of the front foot. Both cause an interruption to the horse's cadence and cause shoes to be pulled during work, and also causes injury and pain to the horse. Both are caused by imbalance in the bottom of the hoof. OK that is all pretty easy to determine, but why is it so common?

The answer lies in one or more of a variety of reasons. Often we don't pare out enough sole in front of the hoof to find the true junction of the clean sole and the hoof wall at the toe, so we don't trim the toe down short enough or reduce the flaring in the hoof wall after preparing it at the appropriate level for shoe fitting. This causes an imbalance in the front half of the hoof which delays the break over and causes forging and over reaching.

The level of the bearing surface of the hoof wall for shoe preparation should be 1 - 2mm above the clean sole white line hoof wall junction. If you allow the horse to stand on that trimmed hoof for a matter of minutes, you will notice when you lift it again that it has very often moved out of level, or as I refer to this movement, that it has settled into its new position. So before fitting the shoe, we must re-check the level and the balance in the hoof, and adjust according to this movement to achieve a level balanced hoof.

In most cases, the natural shape of the coronary band will be a guide as to the ground surface of the correctly prepared hoof. Front feet should be round or slightly oval, hind feet should be diamond shaped with no heel flares.

When the sole of the hoof is prepared correctly, 99% of the time the white line will copy the shape of the coronary band, and yet too often we still allow the toe capsule to be thicker and cause an elongated shape in the bottom of the hoof. This will be recognised as long toe causing low heel syndrome and a pointed

shape to the front hoof. This should always be corrected.

Often we simply fit rolled or squared toed shoes to correct the problem, however the real resolution may well have been to simply balance the hoof correctly.

We can often overlook the geometric angle of the front of the hoof. It is the front of the hoof which causes so many problems in the heel, because the long toe will cause excessive pressure at the heel.

Think about this - if a hoof wall grows DOWN 1mm at the toe, it increases 2mm OUT at the front, so multiplying this, 2mm excess toe means 4mm distortion in the hoof, and 3mm means a massive 6mm toe distortion (Image 1). In some horses this ratio doubles and trebles much quicker, depending on the strength of the hoof wall and the angle of the pastern – a chestnut with soft feet will have a much greater and quicker distortion.



Image 1



Image 2

Most horses' soles can be taken down to the clean waxy surface at the junction of the hoof wall and sole. It is OK to go down to the bottom of the fissure cracks, but no further (Image 2). But this has to begin at the junction of the live sole and the clean frog to achieve the necessary concavity in the sole. We must understand that as the hoof loads up and expands through frog/ground pressure, the concave sole also moves downwards, hence the need for sole concavity.

If we trim the outer hoof wall low in an attempt to achieve levelness without first concaving the sole, we will end up with a flat footed horse, and a bruised sole.

Too often the sole is not concaved because it is 'too hard'. This is no excuse. The resolution for hard soles is to use home made water boots (Images 3 and 4) – slip a 2' length of car inner tube over the hoof half way up the fetlock, double it under the sole and up the rear of the pastern, fill with 2 cups of water, then tape around the fetlock with duct tape and leave preferably overnight, or even for 2 hours will make a huge difference. Also, use a sole chisel and composite hammer to remove the excess sole.



Image 3

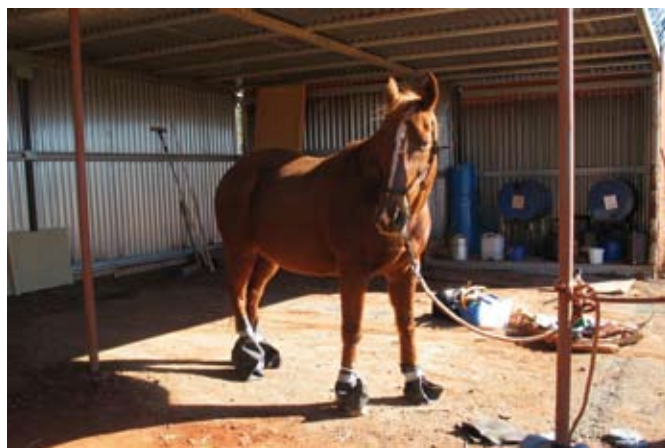


Image 4

One final point to note - through using blunt tools it is easy to push too hard and make mistakes. Using a sharp rasp and getting into the habit of always using it lightly will minimise unnecessary mistakes. 🐾

Horses scratched from 2008 Tamworth Music Festival

Horses are out of the Tamworth Country Music Festival – struck down by the E1 disaster.

Tamworth Regional Council has taken the precautionary track and decided the risk is too great to the equine industry to allow horses to take part in the annual festival.

The Council says the horse ban is part of an industry-wide move to steer its way through the effects of the influenza outbreak and follows a decision two weeks ago by the campdraft and rodeo horse group, the ABCRA, to cancel its National Finals Festival Rodeo.

The latest move will affect the annual festival cavalcade in a major way – up to 50 horses are involved in the Peel Street parade each year and star in some of the most popular categories where horse groups show off their community spirit. But organisers say the ban is the best decision in the light of risks associated with allowing horses to move around the city and prolonging or widening the influenza outbreak.

Festival director Steve Bartlett says the festival ban is a sensible move. He says organisers were faced with the prospect of not just allowing horses to take part in festival activities but more importantly relying on owners and other people to take the biosecurity precautions needed to prevent the spread of the disease.

“We’re supporting the decisions of other groups in cancelling festival events that involve horses, like the ABCRA,” Mr Bartlett said.

“This is a Purple Zone and there’s no restriction on holding events but vaccination is underway and we won’t know when that will be complete, but the risk of humans actually spreading the disease simply because they haven’t disinfected their footwear or any horse equipment is too great for us to take.”

“We want to ensure biosecurity is strengthened so we won’t have any horses in the cavalcade. We won’t have circus horses or pony rides in town and there will not be any visiting horse-and-wagon tourist rides either.”

Horse groups who traditionally take part in the cavalcade, like the Miniature Horse Association, and The Australian Stock Horse Society, are still being encouraged to participate – just without their four legged friends. Mr Bartlett says it is expected that horses will return to the starting gates for their traditional festival events in 2009. 🐾