

## Chapter6 - What is Good Horse Shoeing?

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Is there a proper size shoe for your horse?

Yes there is. However this can change if your horse goes into different disciplines or riding environments, e.g. if riding in very hilly or rough terrain, your farrier might want to set him very tight, or if your horse travels clean and is long coupled, he may be able to be set very full, without fear of losing shoes, and so on.

Often You will hear complaints about the heels of a shoe being turned in too much. This is rarely the case if the horse has been shod hot, for heels that extend a little too long are easily cut or reshaped to size. To decide whether or not the heels of a shoe are turned in too much, there are a few considerations. First, are both feet the same size? If not the blacksmith will usually set to the larger foot, consequently the smaller foot will have the heels turned in slightly. This should not be excessive. The reason this excess is not cut off is simply to maintain equal shoe weight. Some farriers are not concerned about equal weight for both hooves of the same pair, but I do believe that it is important. The extra length of shoe past the heel on the fronts, also brings into play capping the elbows when laying down, or worse yet chipping the bone.

This applies to the hind feet as well as the fronts. However, the hind feet are usually a little smaller than the front so that the heels of your shoe may extend slightly beyond the heel of the hoof. Again this should not be excessive. The exception to this rule is when there is a need for a corrective trailer or other corrective measure to the shoe. Obviously the shoe being pulled off by being stepped on, isn't a factor with the hind hooves, so extra length past the heels is not as critical.

The weight or thickness of a shoe should also be considered. The thin steel shoe such as the training plates for race horses are fine if economy and protection from rough ground is not an important consideration. In other words, light shoes wear out quickly and protect the hooves only minimally. An experienced farrier gets to see a wide variety of horses and how they fare under many different riding conditions, so he/she develops a pretty fair understanding of what shoeing package works best for various disciplines. However most riding horses whether for pleasure, jumping or various types of showing, should have a good solid shoe for protection. Thin or light shoes on large hooves will spread easily and provide little support, while heavy shoes on small feet will distort the action of the horse.

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