

Chapter8 - What is Good Horse Shoeing?

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Does the hoof expand under pressure?

Most people are aware of the fact that the hoof expands under pressure. This can be checked out by examining the foot surface of a shoe that's been removed, the heel area will be a little bit shiny, showing the movement at the heels that occurs. The amount of movement is determined by the size of foot, weight of horse and way going. If he is light on his feet, the movement will usually be less than if he pounds his feet, also a stallion often moves as though he owns the ground he walks on, therefore exerting extra pressure on the ground.

People are not aware of just how much the hoof expands. The wall thickness and general shape of the hoof is also a factor regarding expansion, with the rounder the hoof, the more the expansion. The front hooves that carry most of the weight when working, usually expand more than the hinds that are pear shaped and provide the impulsion for the horse.

A normal healthy foot that is shod with a good solid steel shoe will expand no more than a quarter to three eighths of an inch maximum under heavy work. Not 2-3 inches as is often implied.

For horses that are shod with clipped shoes, the placement of these clips are very important and should not restrict or pinch the foot by being too far back towards the heels. There has been a trend in the last 10-15 years to use side or quarter clips on front feet. Providing the clips are kept towards the front toe nail holes, and realizing that the expansion occurs mostly at the heels, this practice is acceptable. The farrier that uses the forge to draw his own clips will have an advantage in that the clips can be placed wherever he/she chooses and not be restricted by the manufacturers placement.

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