

Riding & Training Perspectives

REMINDERS:

Don't forget, for your safety and for your horse's state of mind, to practice your single rein controls and reinforce the conditioned responses your horse needs to remember.

Whether riding a shod or barefoot horse, it is a good idea to carry at least a single boot (Easy Boot / Old Mack / etc.) for use as a "spare tire" should a shoe be lost or a foot becomes injured. It can mean the difference between walking / leading a horse home and riding home.

MORE ABOUT HORSESHOES:

Horseshoes seem to date all the way back to the Middle Ages with St. Dunstan 925-988 A.D. He was a blacksmith and eventually became the Archbishop of Canterbury before his death and being made a saint (courtesy of the *International Museum of the Horse*). St. Dunstan is also credited with the practice of placing a horseshoe over the door to ward off evil.

Early shoes came in many forms. Some were socks made of leather or woven plant fibers, tied around the fetlock. These sometimes included a plate of iron, silver or gold underneath. Some Greek and Roman shoes were iron and secured with leather thongs. Greeks wrapped their horse's feet in bags when traveling in the snow.

The practice of nailing on metal shoes is believed to have begun during the Middle Ages in Europe where Noblemen wanted their horses close at hand, ready at a moments notice. They were taken from their natural living environment and put in stalls in the castle complex. This wrecked their feet by standing in muck and mud in stalls, which caused their hooves to soften and deform. Metal shoes were devised to solve this problem. The Greeks also (in particular Xenophon) wrote about stalls as early as 360 B.C..

However, widespread shoeing didn't become popular until the last few centuries.

Following many years of development in the United States and elsewhere : strong, flexible, plastic and aluminum shoes are making headway in replacing metal shoes with the advent of effective and reliable glues, such as *acrylic polymer adhesive*. It is now being claimed, following long endurance testing, that some of these flexible shoes, such as the Sigafoo Series 1, can be even more secure than nailed on shoes. Flexibility is also given back to the hooves of those horses needing to wear shoes for reasons of conformation, illness or for any other reason. These new findings and inventions are easing pressures generated by the ongoing debate of shod vs. barefoot. They are also improving the leg and foot health for the horses by improving circulation. Long term study, experimentation and development efforts have generated good results. One example is at *Sound Horse Technologies* in Unionville, Pennsylvania, USA. The Chief of Farrier Services at the University of Pennsylvania, New Bolton Center, Robert Sigafos,

C.J.F., has produced a very successful adhesive shoe system known as the “Sigafoo Series 1”. (*USA spelling of Ferrier is Farrier*)

Although it is a good idea to carry at least a single boot as a “spare tire”, it is even better to have two for the front feet in case of rough terrain and in cases of extremely bad terrain; four would be well worth having on hand.

REGARDING FOALS:

I asked some Stud Farm professionals (clients of mine) for some things that they would like to see discussed more in my articles. One subject was that of how to deal with foals, be they filly or colt.

I have found that from about three months and on up to an average of seven months, very steady and patient pressure release exercises, such as what the foal’s mother has been teaching it from birth, with your hands as well as with a rope halter and 12 foot rope makes for a good beginning. Do not coddle them too much, but do be benevolent as well as firm and very patient with the lessons.

Once the foal is a bit older, more firmness will probably be required. Should they begin nipping excessively it becomes necessary (for one thing) to start putting a finger or thumb into their “bar” gum area of their mouth so that they learn that their nipping brings a response from you that they don’t really like, but is not seen as a reprimand. Be sure to also use the rest of your fingers / hand to keep control of the lower jaw so your finger doesn’t get moved to the teeth by the tongue.

NOTE: I do my best not to overtly reprimand a young horse. I also apply this thinking, to a great extent, with all horses. I give horses my response to their unwanted actions in such ways that they will think that I am responding as I believe they are asking me to. This will cause them to stop such actions on their own accord, instead of from being struck or reprimanded in some human way.

A closing reminder: Try to keep your horse’s point of view in mind as much as possible and keep up your communications and leadership exercises *without driving them to distraction*. In the meantime have fun and stay safe.

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