

It is not unusual to come across a hoof that needs protection but is so short or uneven that it may be impractical or even unsafe to nail a steel shoe on. I've seen feet wear through the shoes on one side and then proceed to wear the exposed quarter down another one-half of an inch. Sometimes a horse will wear his feet right down to where he lives.

It's tough to shim up such a foot and still get a tight job. If you do get it tight, the pressure on the sole will probably make the horse sore. I've shod at hack stables where apparently no one was in charge and this was not an unusual situation.

The problem is that the horse needs more foot. It isn't possible to nail a shoe on the foot, but if the foot is left uncovered, it will take the horse a long time to grow more.

Today, there are "EZ Boots" and a lot of other plastic slip-ons available, but, unfortunately, they aren't free. Besides, they don't stay on every foot and, most of all, they are not always on hand when you need them. Plastic shoes will work since they bend to the unevenness of a worn-down foot, and horses don't seem to mind the pressure of the plastic on the sole. Like the boots, however, there is not always a full range of plastic shoes on hand.

Something that works well, costs little, and lasts long enough for the foot to grow out and toughen up is plain pads. For years, gaited-horse shoers have been covering up short feet with thick pads. This will work well on your average backyard horse, too. Just outline the pad on the foot, cut it out, and nail it right on the foot. A little venus of turpentine and oakum under it will keep dirt out and help relieve the soreness. Put two extra nails up near the toe so the pad won't scuff off.


These days I don't shoe any hack horses (I guess that's progress) but I still nail on shoeless pads now and then. This is done not to treat worn-through feet but to keep feet dry while treating thrush. I watched Jimmy Roach from Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania do this back in the fifties and I thought it was a great idea. He simply marked out a leather pad to fit the foot, left the heel area long enough to fold up to the hair, and nailed it on. All the nails are kept in the forward half of the foot so that the pad can be folded forward for daily thrush treatment. The back of the pad

A Different Use for

HOOF PADS

BY BRUCE B. DANIELS

can be tied up with a strip from a feed sack or a piece of tape.

A pad nailed on in this manner will protect the infected area from the filth of the stable. I've had them last for three weeks. I'm not saying that you can go fox-hunting with only a pair of pads on your horse, but I have seen people ride in the fields on horses only wearing pads that still held up several weeks later. With daily treatment for the thrush, this should be enough. I've had good luck keeping feet clean while treating thrush in this manner: perhaps it will work for you. 



Bruce Daniels photo

Hoof pad nailed on in this way can be peeled back for thrush treatment, then taped back in position. For more on nailing pads, see "Hot Tips" by Bill Miller, September 1979, AFJ.



Bruce Daniels photo

This foot pad was put on for thrush treatment on a "lay up" horse. One piece of tape around the foot kept the back closed up. It was on the foot for three weeks and you can see how nicely it has molded to the foot.