



Plastic hoof shoes can be applied very quickly and easily with standard farrier tools. They do not require any trips to the anvil and do not need any of the tools required to bend iron. That will save time and will be less stressful for your horse.

1) Preparing the hoof

- a) When trimming the hoof only excess sole and frog material should be removed, as the frog, the carrying wall and the sole are used as a further supporting part of the hoof and shoeing.
- b) The frog should only be cut back far enough to allow the bar to rest on the frog.
- c) The outer wall of the supporting edge should form a right angle to the shoeing.

2) Selecting the correct size

- a) Measure the widest part of the hoof from wall to wall, AFTER trimming and add 2mm on each side. Example: hoof width 120mm+4mm = 124mm. The shoe size you need to use is 125. It is indispensable to let the shoe jut out, as otherwise the hoof wall will soon grow over the edge of the shoe.
- b) Shape the shoe with a rasp AFTER shoeing.

NOTE: To understand what happens underneath our horses' feet, we need to be aware of the forces, horse and shoe are exposed to. At a working trot of about 210 meters/min (equals 12.6 km/h), a hoof has to cushion three times the body weight every time it touches ground. To elucidate, at trot a 350 kg horse puts about one ton of pressure on its hooves and shoes with every step.

Due to these forces conventional iron shoes need to be shaped and prepared to fit the hoof perfectly before being nailed on, or else the hoof will be forced into the shape of the iron shoe. Plastics on the other hand may be shaped with rasp or nipper after being nailed on to the hoof, as the material will always give in and adjust to the hoof.

When changing to plastics, after wearing steel shoes without barefoot periods, the horse might be uncomfortable for the first few days. Steel shoes artificially keep the hoof capsule together, whereas the flexible plastic material allows the hoof capsule to work and stretch out as nature intended. This may lead to cracks in the carrying wall if the hoof is not properly rounded and shortened. Mostly you will find that your horses shoe size increases after the first shoeing period.

3) Nail & Fitting

- a) Six nails per hoof are sufficient.
- b) To place the nail holes correct, simply hold the shoe to the hoof, the white line will be easily recognized through the transparent material.
- c) To prevent nails from coming loose, it is very important to countersink them very deep into the material. The horse must not walk on the nail heads!
- d) Nails should not be applied beyond the tip of the frog/behind the widest part of the hoof. This will prevent the nails from being twisted off by the hoof mechanism.

- e) The nails should come out of the wall at approximately ¼ to 1/3 of wall height.
- f) Recommended nails are REG or E nails, with thin shaft and very wide head to prevent nails from pulling through the plastic material.

NOTE: If plastics do not stay on the hoof probably, most of the times the problem can be found in the nails. In the flexible plastic hoof shoe nails do not sit as secured as in iron shoes. The strain is not distributed as equally as in stiff, inflexible iron shoes. Plastics have very good grip on the ground and gravity has a much stronger impact on nails and walls, for instance when turning around on tar. Plastics also get much easier sucked into mud and deep ground and therefore pull stronger on the nails and hoof wall. If the farrier did not work conscientious the nails can get loose in the flexible plastic and work in the hoof wall until the shoe starts twisting and the walls or nails break off or out.

4) Clinching & Finishing

- a) Because the nails are countersunk the lower jaw of the clincher will not reach the nail head therefore might draw out the nail during clinching, thus jeopardizing the correct position of the shoe. Use a small and hard tool to close the gap between clincher and nail.
- b) The nails must be clinched very strong. Preferably the "Nagelriet" (Tip of nail) should not be placed in a rivet bed or rasped to thin, to give as much support as possible.
- c) Adjust the plastic hoof shoe to the hoof using a rasp. Keep in mind to leave at least 2mm material at the widest part of the hoof.

5) General

- a) The horse will produce a rolled toe into the plastic material within a few days.
- b) In general plastics look terrible used after the first ride and make you wonder if they will last another day. But pressure and heat compress the material and stop the abrasion soon.
- c) Durability depends on many factors; e.g. the horse's specific motion, its weight and physique, the demand of work as well as shape, treat and composition of the specific product itself.
- d) Plastics can be used for several shoeing periods, depending on the wear, amount of nail holes and nail sizes used.
- e) Some horses might be used to "ice-skating", which means they slide on tar or asphalt to distribute the recoil of the steel shoes over a longer distance. plastic shoes do slide neither does the bare hoof. Some horses need a few days to get used to the new (natural) way of walking and while trying to slide, wear off the first pair of plastic shoes faster.
- f) Plastics do not conceal bad hoof conditions like unbalanced feet, unequal load bearing or weak hoof walls but make you work on the causes of those problems instead. Please consult your farrier!!