

Time for change

A step-by-step look at shoeing a horse with plastics

Part 3



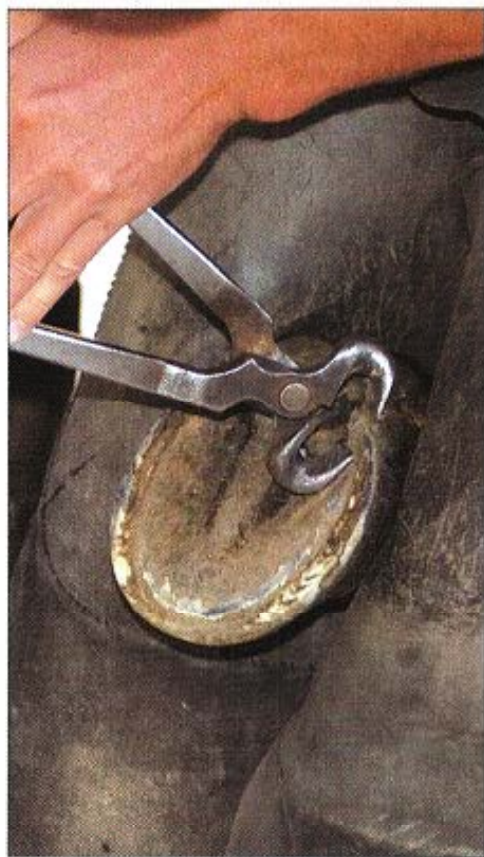
In the previous two editions of HQ magazine, we discussed the different types of plastic shoes, their advantages and disadvantages, and also tested some of the shoes on African soil. In this edition, a Cape Town farrier shoes a hack with polyurethane shoes by HIPPOFLEX®.

“Select the shoes in such a way that they jut out by about 2mm at the widest part of the hoof.”

As mentioned before, there is nothing fancy, dangerous or difficult in working with plastic horseshoes, but most importantly, if applied correctly, the horse is not endangered.

Plastic 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 steel, thus saving time as well as being less stressful for your horse.

Preparing the hoof for shoeing



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 further support for the hoof and shoeing. The frog should only be cut back far enough to allow the bridge of the shoeing to rest on the frog. The outer wall of the supporting edge should form a right angle to the shoeing.

Selecting the correct size



While steel shoes need to be prepared and shaped before being nailed on, plastics may be shaped and rasped after being nailed on to the hoof.

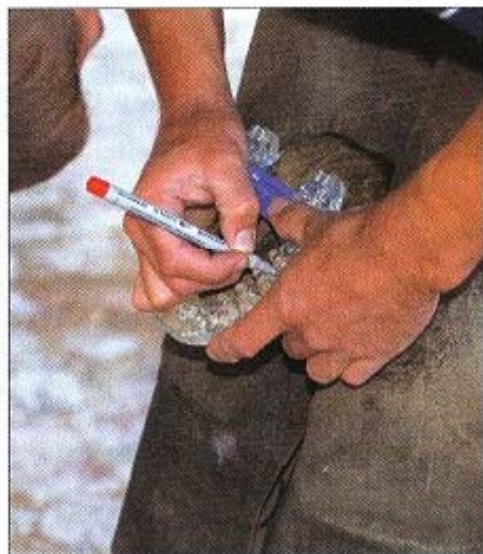
Plastics are available in various sizes and in round and oval shapes, to fit front and hind hoofs. Clips which are not required, can be easily cut off. It is often observed that hoofs shod with flexible plastic stretch out and the heels become wider, mainly during the first few shoeing periods. Select the shoes in such a way that they jut out by about 2mm at the widest part of the hoof.

Applying the bridge system

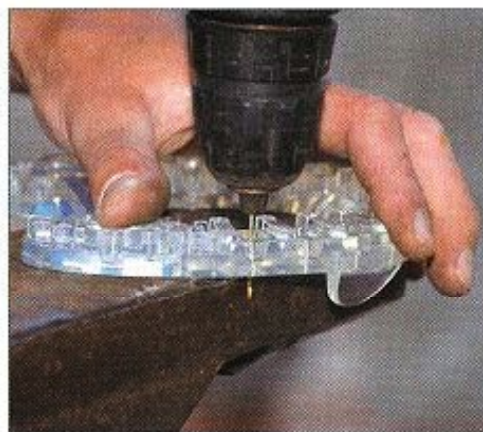


In the case of the Hippoflex® and the Natural Balance Shoe®, a bridge has to be screwed to the shoe.

Nail holes



Most plastics are transparent, but without pre-drilled nail holes. To place the nail holes correct, simply hold the shoe to the hoof. The white line will be easily recognized, and mark the nail holes with a suitable pencil.



Then pre-drill the holes by means of a 2–2,5mm drill. Do not nail the shoes without pre-drilled holes, as the nail will lose direction in the plastic material!

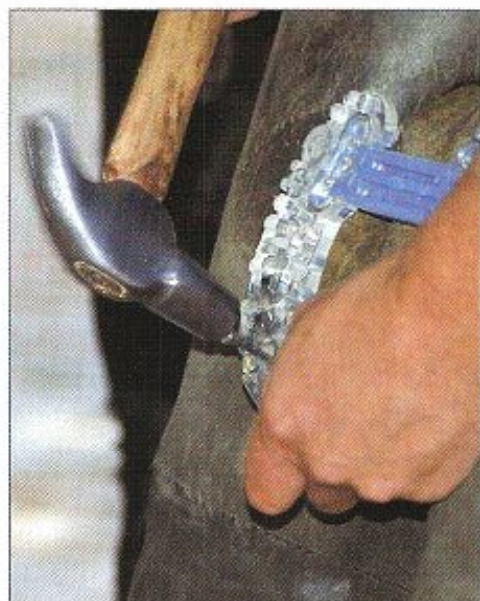
TIP: Drill the holes at the same angles as the nails will be driven into the hoof.

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Driving the nails

In most cases where plastic shoes do not stay properly on the hoof, the problem lies with the nails. One needs to apply a different technique when nailing and clinching plastic hoof shoes.

Nails do not stay as secured in the flexible material of plastic hoof shoes, as they do in steel shoes. Furthermore, plastics have very good grip on the ground surface, and the gravity has a much stronger impact on nails and walls, for instance when turning around on tar. Plastic also does not distribute the strain to the nails as equally as the stiff, inflexible steel does, and get much more easily sucked into mud and deep ground. The pull action on the nails and hoof walls is therefore much stronger. Should the nailing not be done correctly, the nails might come loose in the flexible plastic, causing more movement and grinding in the hoof wall, until the shoe starts twisting and the wall or nails break.

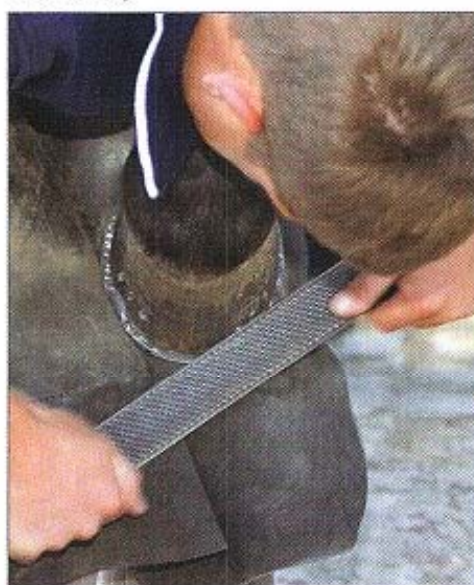


To prevent nails from coming loose, it is very important to drive them very deep.



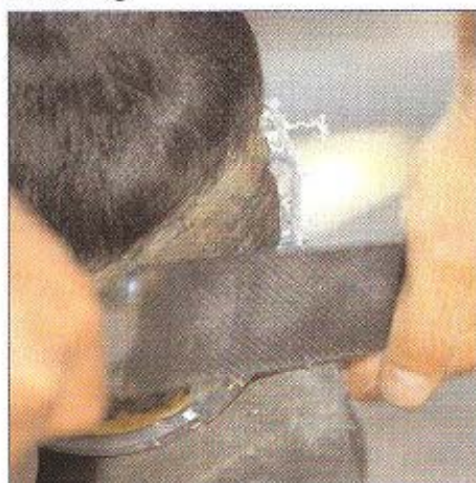
The nail head must be worked to below the ground surface of the shoe (as pictured, a special tool is needed), so that the horse does not walk on the nails but on the plastic material. The nails should come out of the wall at approximately 1/4 to 1/3 of the wall height. Usually six nails are used per hoof. Recommended nails are REG or E nails, with thin shafts and very wide heads to prevent nails from pulling through the plastic material.

Clinching

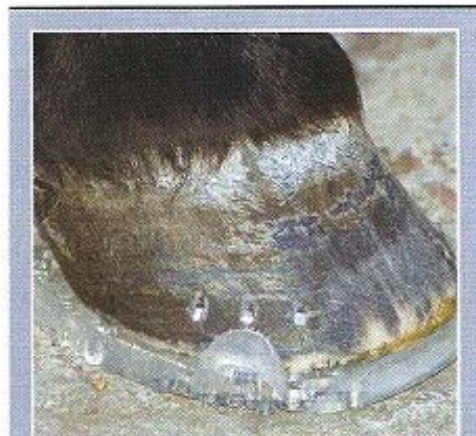


Because the nail head is below the ground surface of the shoe, the lower jaw of the nail clincher will not touch the nail head and might draw out the nail during clinching, thus jeopardizing the correct position of the shoe. A helpful tool, which can be screwed on almost all conventional clinchers is available from EquiTracks. The nails must be clinched very strongly, and the nail tips should stay very strong. In order to give as much support as possible, the nail tips should not to be placed in a rivet bed or rasped down too thin.

Finishing



Adjust the plastic hoof shoe to the hoof using a rasp. But don't forget to leave at least 2mm material at the widest part of the hoof.



The above pictures were taken when the horse was shod on 9 November 2004.



After 30 days and going out for a hack on stony ground, at least four times per week, the shoes were still intact.