

Horses for the Home!

Purchase professional photos at a fraction of the price!

TheHorse.com/Photos



theHORSE.com

YOUR GUIDE TO EQUINE HEALTH CARE

News and veterinarian-approved articles on equine health care from *The Horse* magazine.

Google™ Custom Search

Search

Karen's Info

My Profile

My Favorites

Log Out

HomeTopicsNewsVideosFree ReportsResourcesFree HorsesBlogsPodcastsNewslettersSubscribe



Reining horse breeder **Lisa Coulter** uses EO-3™ to maintain optimal reproductive health of her mares and stallions.



# Hoof Boots: Protection Without Permanence

by: **Karen Briggs**  
March 03 2005, Article # 5575

 Recommend

 You recommend **Hoof Boots: Protection Without Permanence.** · [Add Comment](#) · [Admin](#)

 Print

 Email

 Add to Favorites

 ShareThis



We all need protection from the elements. That goes for your horse's hooves as well. Millennia ago, when humans first vaulted aboard equine backs and guided them over terrain they probably would not otherwise have traversed, the value of providing protection for hooves became clear--as the leather "hipposandals" and early iron shoes unearthed by archaeologists attest.

These days, of course, farriery has become both a science and an art, up to most of the challenges modern-day equines face. But metal shoes aren't the only option for hoof protection, and hoof boots have become a viable alternative for many horse owners. This is especially true for the groundswell of holistically minded horse owners who've embraced the idea that barefoot is better.

Although there are many advantages health-wise to not putting nail holes in hooves, it's equally true that many horses' unshod feet don't stand up well to pavement, gravel, and other unforgiving types of footing. Hoof boots provide an only-as-needed solution for those situations.

The boots come in a staggering array of shapes, sizes, materials, designs, and colors. Fortunately, they can be grouped into three categories: Reusable therapeutic boots designed only for soaking or medicating the feet of a horse in cross-ties or on stall rest, light-duty "spare tire" boots intended for emergency replacement of a lost shoe, and full-service boots designed to take on any task a steel shoe can, including turn-out, riding, or driving, even at high speeds.

## The Wish List

Encasing a hoof with a boot is rather like wrapping a trapezoidal Christmas present. Some solutions work better than others, and manufacturers have had to be more than a little creative with their materials and fastenings. Regardless of the design, however, a good hoof boot should:

- Not affect the horse's gait;
- Stay on in all types of terrain, including mud;
- Allow the hoof to flex and breathe;
- Protect the sole from bruising, cracking, and concussive injuries such as corns and ringbone;
- Not accumulate snow, dirt, or mud (within reason);
- Be easy to put on and remove with a minimum of tools;
- Be easy to clean;
- Be adjustable to changes in the horse's hoof from trim to trim;
- Not twist or rotate on the foot;
- Provide adequate traction (but not excessive, since many farriers argue that injuries suffered from sliding hooves are less severe than those from stumbling);
- Not rub, chafe, or put undue pressure on any part of the hoof, coronet, or bulbs of the heel.

No one brand of boot can fulfill all of those requirements for every horse, of course. Some fit long, narrow feet best, and



Stay up-to-date with our free newsletters!

## Related Topics:

- [Puncture Wounds](#)
- [General Equipment Information](#)
- [Hoof Care](#)

## Latest News:

- [Industry Standards for Frangible Cross-Country Jumps Defined](#)
- [Missouri Court Rules in Non-Veterinarian Dentist Case](#)
- [Riders4Helmets to Host 3rd Helmet Safety Symposium](#)
- [Wisconsin Horse Nutrition Workshop Scheduled for Feb. 11](#)
- [Read more news...](#)

Horses: In Living Color



click here

You guard him against injury and disease.



Now guard him against stomach ulcers.

UlcerGard®

(omeprazole)

@ULCERGARD is a registered trademark of the AstraZeneca Group of Companies. ©2008 Merial Limited, Duluth, GA. All rights reserved. LAGEUGD867

EXCLUSIVELY EQUINE

More Than Just Books!

www.ExclusivelyEquine.com

http://www.thehorse.com/ViewArticle.aspx?ID=5575[10/01/2012 1:46:52 AM]

others round, "cuppy" feet. Fastenings vary a lot, with some fastening on the front, others around the back, still others on the outside of the hoof wall, and there might be Velcro hook-and-loop closures, buckles, snaps, or laces.

At least one brand of boot fastens with a cable-release system "based on snowboard boot technology," according to its literature. Only you know the terrain you're likely to encounter with your horse, and only you can judge what fastening system will be safest and most convenient for the two of you.

So Many Options

Although EasyBoots can be tricky to get on and off, they've been embraced by many riders eager to avoid nailing steel shoes to their horses' feet, and they have proven their durability with long-distance riders, such as competitive trail and endurance competitor Helen McMaster of Marmora, Ontario.

"I stopped using steel shoes in 1995, mostly because I'd had trouble finding a reliable farrier whose work I liked," she says. "I took a basic shoeing course at Kemptville College, and it was enough to make me confident about trimming, but less so about nailing on shoes, and I do believe in keeping my horses as natural as possible. So my horses are all barefoot, and I started using EasyBoots for training.

"They were a pain to begin with, but they allowed me to put them on and take them off as needed, which I liked," she adds. "They didn't have to wear something on their feet 24 hours a day. Now they're such a part of the routine that I can put a set of four on in under a minute, and the horses have gotten really good about it. I clean the hoof, put the boot on, tap a hammer on the toe of the boot to make sure the toe is really right in there, then do up the cables.

"I have lost a couple of them over the years, but not any more than I would have with steel shoes," she adds. "And the horses usually let me know with a flip of the head when they feel one come off! I can usually backtrack down the trail and find the boot very quickly, but I have a friend who spray paints hers fluorescent blue to make them easier to locate. I did find that my one horse who had 'park' action did tend to flip the boots off more easily than my other Arabians, so his boots had to be quite snug. I also wrapped his hooves with Vetrap or duct tape before I put the boots on, which gave the little 'teeth' inside a better grip."

McMaster uses EasyBoots today for both competitive trail and endurance riding, and says she sees more long-distance competitors switching to boots every year. "I don't ever intend to go back to shoes," McMaster states. "I think I've saved a fortune by trimming my horses' feet myself and using the EasyBoots, which often last two to three years before they need replacing, much better than a steel shoe."

For long-distance competitors, "low-profile" EasyBoots, which sit below the coronary band, are the preferred boot because boots that extend over the coronet are classified as "leg protection" by most endurance riding jurisdictions. In Ontario, that amounts to a 10-point deduction, which most riders prefer to avoid.

There are other boots on the market that sit below the hairline (the Italian-made Bosana boot is one other). But in other disciplines, that distinction is less important. For example, Canadian short-listed three-day eventer Penny Rowland, DVM, is a fan of Australian-made Old Mac boots, which she uses on Roundabout (a.k.a., Tony), one of her advanced mounts.

"Tony is kind of a quirky horse, and when I first got the ride on him he was having some shoeing issues," says Rowland. "He seemed happier barefoot, but it's hard to get a horse fit for a three-day without any foot protection at all, so I was looking for an alternative for him. I saw the Old Mac boots in a tack shop and liked the way they were constructed, so I called the company and they were very good about answering all my questions. Tony was instantly happier in the boots, and although I haven't been brave enough to jump in them because they're a little bulky, I do all my dressage training and conditioning work, including his gallops, with the boots on."

At the Foxhall Cup CCI three-star last spring, Rowland and Tony did their dressage test in the Old Mac boots. She had shoes applied the day before cross-country and pulled off immediately after stadium jumping on the final day.

"I'm very happy with the boots, and now keep three sizes on hand because there are other horses in my barn who need them occasionally for turn-out, medicating a foot, or protecting a healing abscess or something," says Rowland. "I use them daily for both riding and turn-out. I've never had a problem with them rubbing or chafing around the pastern, but they do have to fit properly, and they have to be put on correctly. In particular the wrap around the pastern has to be quite snug--I put a finger inside the boot against the horse's skin and tighten till it feels quite tight against my finger. You really need two hands to put them on. I find it takes about three minutes now.

"The company has a video on how to fit them, and I really think it's important to watch that and talk to someone at their head office about how to do it properly," advises Rowland. "The only time I've had problems with losing boots has been when someone other than me has put them on!"

The fitting issue is one that horse owners will face with almost any boot--and a badly fitting boot will either fall off at the most inopportune moment or rub away hair and create raw spots.

Experimentation might be the only answer to find the perfect off-the-rack boot, or you can consider ordering a pair of hoof boots custom-made to your horse's individual feet from Horsneakers of Sonoita, Ariz. Developer Frank Orza has been manufacturing these custom boots from flexible polymers for two decades.

Says partner Mary Winn, "People call us after they've tried off-the-shelf boots and found them unsatisfactory for their needs.



Check Out More Horse Podcasts!

Go to Article #:

Go



**GET-A-DVM**  
Find an AAEP  
Veterinarian near you.

GO



Sponsored by  
Bayer HealthCare  
Animal Health

Adoptable Horse

Ontario  
Featured Adoptable Pet:



Northern Belle  
Freedom Valley Horse  
Rescue  
Omeme, Ontario  
compliments of Petfinder.com

Sponsored By  
Exclusively Equine

Sponsor Links

- All Natural Horse Food
- Horsemen's Laboratory
- SHEPLERS Western Wear
- Exclusively Equine
- JeffersEquine.com
- Back In The Saddle
- PetHotels.com
- Vivid Seats Ltd
- StateLineTack.com
- Horse Gifts & Collectibles
- More links...

AdChoices

Automatic Horse Feeder

By the time they find us, they're usually pretty stressed and their horses have suffered some sort of setback. Often it's looking like they might never be able to ride that horse again, so it's very emotional.

"Our boots are more expensive than ready-made boots, but we're experts in designing a boot to fit *any* foot, from miniatures and donkeys to draft horses. Horsneakers conform to the unique characteristics of the hoof wall, right down to any scars. They're dense at the sole and rigid at the sides, and the back pieces are very flexible so they can be laid open to get the boot on and off."

Winn says it usually takes three days to make a custom set of four boots for a client, but the resulting footwear lasts for years and can even be returned for "resurfacing."

"They can be used for daily riding or for turn-out, and there are no metal parts in the boot that might be a hazard in an accident," she says. "We do recommend that you let your horse get accustomed to the boot gradually rather than going straight out on a four-hour ride. The fit should be so good on either our semi-custom or full custom boots that you'll never have a problem with rubbing or hair loss, but if there are any issues at all, you can send them back for adjustment. We'll work with the client until we get it right."

Winn notes that they also keep a small stock of boots on hand so customers can have a trial before committing to an order.

Regardless of the boot type you end up with, remember they will need to be kept clean and mud-free to fasten properly and keep your horse's feet in good health. Most will clean up with soap and water, but if you use a model made of heavy fabric, you might want to keep two sets on hand so you have a spare pair to use while one is slowly drying. Before each use, be sure to check the toe of each boot for gravel and sticks that might work their way into the white line, examine the buckles, straps, Velcro, or cables for signs of wear, and run your hand around the whole boot to find any sharp edges. If you need tools such as a hoof pick or flathead screwdriver to remove your boots, it's a good idea to carry those with you on the trail so you can check the equipment if necessary.

Hoof boots are definitely more hassle than nailing a set of shoes on once every six weeks, but for many riders the benefits outweigh the inconvenience.

A BOOT FOR EVERY NEED

THERAPEUTIC/SOAKING/MEDICATING:

- **Davis Horse Boots**-- [www.davismanufacturing.com](http://www.davismanufacturing.com).
- **Easy Soaker**--from Easycare Inc.; [www.easycareinc.com](http://www.easycareinc.com); 800/447-8836; 520/297-1900.
- **HOOFix boot**-- [www.hoofix.com](http://www.hoofix.com); 610/486-0708.
- **Sabre Sneaker**-- [www.sabresneaker.com](http://www.sabresneaker.com); 203/322-9002.
- **SHOOF**-- [www.shoof.co.nz/index.cfm](http://www.shoof.co.nz/index.cfm).

TEMPORARY or "SPARE TIRE":

- **Davis Barrier Boot**-- [www.davismanufacturing.com](http://www.davismanufacturing.com).
- **HOOFix Emergency Trail Boot**--foldable and lightweight; [www.hoofix.com](http://www.hoofix.com); 610/486-0708.
- **Horsemoc**s-- [www.horsemoc.com](http://www.horsemoc.com); 425/788-0141.
- **Easy Boot**-- [www.easycareinc.com/ebinfo](http://www.easycareinc.com/ebinfo); 800/447-8836; 520/297-1900.
- **Dalmer Clog**-- [www.dalmer.de](http://www.dalmer.de); (0 41 72) 51 00.

DAILY USE/MULTIPURPOSE:

- **Bosana Boot**-- [www.bosanaboot.com](http://www.bosanaboot.com).
- **EasyCare Inc.**-- [www.easycareinc.com](http://www.easycareinc.com) or 800/447-8836; 520/297-1900.
- **Horsneakers**-- [www.horsneaker.com](http://www.horsneaker.com); 520/455-5164.
- **Marquis Supergrip Boot**-- [www.strideequus.co](http://www.strideequus.co); 800/403-0689.
- **Old Mac's Multi-Purpose Horse Boots**-- [www.yourhorsecare.com](http://www.yourhorsecare.com); 877/818-0037.
- **Swiss Horse Boot**-- [www.primechoice.com/swissboot](http://www.primechoice.com/swissboot) or 870/743-4603.--Karen Briggs

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BOOTS, ANYWAY?

The simplest hoof boots are those designed for soaking or medicating a horse's foot. They're a big step up from trying to soak a foot in a bucket, because they allow for the possibility, at least, of walking away and letting the treatment do its job while you do yours. But design-wise, they're generally pretty uncomplicated, resembling oversized rubber gumboots that often extend up past the fetlock and have a loose fastening strap at the top.

No hoof, no horse! Learn the basics from simple cleaning to trimming and shoeing the foot to dealing with lameness in [Understanding Equine Hoof Care](#).

Since soaking boots aren't meant to be worn for very long, it's more important that they're waterproof and won't react with medications than that they breathe. Sizes don't need to be exact either (although most brands come in pony, cob, and horse sizes).

Feed flake hay up to 6 times a day! Healthier Horses - Happier Owners. [www.StableGrazier.com](http://www.StableGrazier.com)

[Shoes](#)  
Shop a Complete In-Stock Selection + Fast Order Processing & Shipping!  
[Carhartt.com](http://Carhartt.com)

[Bare foot shoes](#)  
Recover faster. Increase endurance. Run Naturally in Newton shoes  
[www.newtonrunning.com](http://www.newtonrunning.com)

"Spare tire" boots, in contrast, put emphasis on portability. They can be a trail-rider's best friend when a shoe gets lost out in the back country. But like one of those "doughnut" spare tires most cars are equipped with these days, they're not built for unlimited mileage. Still, they should offer good traction, a snug fit, and the ability to stay put until you get that unshod hoof home. Many can do double-duty by serving as short-term protection for turn-out until your farrier can arrive to put things back to normal.

The "full-service" boot is the most plentiful of the crew, and in many ways the most problematic for the consumer. With so many choices, it's hard to figure out which might work best for your purposes.--Karen Briggs



You recommend **Hoof Boots: Protection Without Permanence**. · [Add Comment](#) · [Admin](#)

[Print](#)

[Email](#)

[Add to Favorites](#)

[ShareThis](#)

[+1](#) 0

### Most Popular

- Viewed
- E-mailed
- Saved

- [1. Recognize Insulin Resistance Before Laminitis Onset](#)
- [2. Preparing Horse Farms for Winter Weather Disasters](#)
- [3. Supplementation Strategies for Performance Horses](#)
- [4. Understanding Potomac Horse Fever](#)
- [5. Study Confirms Horseback Riding has Human Health Benefits](#)
- [6. Wisconsin Horse Nutrition Workshop Scheduled for Feb. 11](#)
- [7. Back Pain in Horses Table Topic \(AAEP 2011\)](#)
- [8. Detecting Discomfort](#)
- [9. Former Olympian Facing Animal Cruelty Charges](#)
- [10. Thoroughbred Stallion Einstein To Help Kentucky Students](#)

### Related Free Reports

- [• Laminitis 2011 Conference](#)
- [• Common Hoof Problems Fact Sheet](#)
- [• Thrush Fact Sheet](#)
- [• AAEP 2010 Convention Complete Coverage \(AAEP Convention 2010\)](#)
- [• Hoof Care \(AAEP Convention 2010\)](#)
- [• See all reports...](#)

### More Related Content

- [• Riders4Helmets to Host 3rd Helmet Safety Symposium](#)
- [• Recognize Insulin Resistance Before Laminitis Onset](#)
- [• 2012 International Hoof Care Summit Set for Jan. 31-Feb. 3](#)
- [• Economics of Round Bale Feeders Examined](#)
- [• Support Strategies in Chronic Laminitis Cases](#)
- [• Using Foot Casts to Manage Laminitis 'Sinking' Cases](#)
- [• UC Davis Lecture Addresses Foot Shape, Shoeing Lameness Horses](#)
- [• How to Bandage a Horse's Leg with Vetrap](#)
- [• How to Clean/Disinfect Horse Equipment](#)
- [• Farriery Program \(AAEP 2010\)](#)

Confirm

You like this.

[Admi](#)

[Page](#)

[Insights](#)

[Err](#)

You like this.

[Admi](#)

[Page](#)

[Insights](#)

[Err](#)

17,236 people like **TheHorse.com**.

17,235 people like **TheHorse.com**.

Mary-Ellen

Joy

Steve

**Yes, send me a free trial issue**  
of *The Horse: Your Guide To Equine Health Care* and enter my subscription. I'll get 12 issues for only \$24! I'll also get full access to TheHorse.com!

Ask a Horse Vet Online

5 Horse Vets Are Online. A Question is Answered Every 9 Sec!  
[HorseJustAnswer.com](#)



AdChoices

[For Canadian orders click here](#)  
[For international orders click here](#)



First Name:

Last Name:

Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Email:

Confirm Email:

Sales tax charged where applicable.

SEND MY TRIAL ISSUE NOW!



- [Site Map](#)
- [Terms of Use](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Help](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Freelance Info](#)
- [Upcoming Topics](#)
- [Buy a Copy](#)
- [Advertise](#)

Seek the advice of a qualified veterinarian before proceeding with any diagnosis, treatment, or therapy.

Copyright © 2012 BLOOD-HORSE PUBLICATIONS. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part in any form or medium without written permission of BLOOD-HORSE PUBLICATIONS is prohibited. THE HORSE, THE HORSE logo, THEHORSE.COM and THEHORSE.COM logo are trademarks of BLOOD-HORSE PUBLICATIONS.

