

The Farrier’s Corner:

by Ray and Michelle Smith

What Do You Do With a Loose Shoe?

There you are, two hours into a mountain trail ride, and a shoe starts clanking. Bad luck never seems to strike at convenient times. From where you and your horse sit, there is not a farrier in sight. What do you do? Do you know how to remove a shoe by yourself in an emergency? If you don’t, you need to learn.

If the shoe catches on something, it could easily tear off, taking chunks of hoof with it. If it is clipped, it may twist sideways and embed the clip in the sole of the foot. In order to deal with this situation, you only need a few tools and a little basic knowledge.

Obviously, the best tools for doing farrier work are farrier’s tools. If you can, you should carry the following with you: a clinch cutter, a driving hammer and a pair of pull-offs. Pull-offs are similar in appearance to nippers, but have blunt jaws. A “spare tire” boot and a rasp may also be included in the package. The rasp doesn’t have to be top of the line, just functional.

If you do not have access to or can’t afford farrier’s tools, here is your next best option: a pair of pliers or vice grips, a hammer and a rasp. Finally, pack a heavy duty roll of duct tape.

So, here we go. Grasp the affected foot and hold it like a farrier, between your knees for a front or on your thigh for a hind. Like a farrier, you will need both hands to work your tools. Being a responsible horse owner, you have worked diligently with your horse’s feet and the animal will be cooperative and compliant.

Cutting or filing off the clinches makes shoe removal easier and reduces the chance of hoof damage during pulling. Place your clinch cutter below the clinches on the hoof wall. Carefully tap on the cutter with your hammer to drive the cutter up under the clinch. Some clinches will already be pulled loose, this should loosen and pry up the rest. If you do not have a clinch cutter, you will use the rasp to file the clinches off. Some suggest substituting a stout flathead screwdriver for a clinch cutter. However, due to the likelihood of puncture wounds to the horse and/or you, we do not recom-

mend this method.

Next, place your pull-offs, pliers or vice grips between the shoe and hoof at the heel on the loose side. Clamp on and pull the shoe away from you with a steady downward motion. Angle your pull-off tools inward toward the toe while pulling. Prying outward increases the chance of hoof damage. Do not jerk the shoe violently or twist the fetlock. If you are strong enough to pry one-handed, secure the hoof with your other hand. Gradually work around the shoe, first prying one side then the other until the shoe comes off.

Some shoes will come off very easily, others will require more elbow grease. You may find that a few nails are still tight. In these areas, repeatedly pry the shoe up and gently tap it back down. Eventually, you should see the nail head starting to protrude. As soon as you can grasp the nail head with pliers or pull-offs, gently pull it out. Steady firm force should pull them. Never jerk or rip violently at nails.

If you’ve not been successful at loosening clinches, you can still pull the shoe. It will take a little extra strength and leverage. A few bits of

hoof may be lost, but this is preferable to the shoe being torn off on rocks or embedded in the sole.

Once the shoe is off, you may notice small nail shafts or clinches remaining in the hoof. Don’t panic, this happens. They are not going to work up in the foot or lame the horse. They are still in the same place that your farrier drove them. However, if you can pull them with pliers, do so. It is always best to get the nails out. If you can’t, rasp them off or bend the lifted clinches flush to the hoof wall. Protruding nails, especially on the inner side of the hoof wall, can cut the opposite leg if contacted.

No matter how much the shoe resembles a pretzel, do not throw it in the bushes. Put it in your saddle bag and ride out with it. With a little forge and anvil work, your farrier can straighten and reset it - assuming there is sufficient hoof for nailing.

If your horse cannot make it out comfortably on the barefoot, you will need the spare tire boot. There are several brands of boots for light riding and/or light protective use. They don’t have to be the most expensive, they just have to fit. If you don’t have a boot, break out the

duct tape! Wrap the hoof in several layers, avoiding the hair. People that are particularly good at this can even weave strips of duct tape into boots. You won’t win the Tevis endurance race on duct tape, but it will get you to the trailer. (Just FYI, if a weak hoofed horse tears a shoe off in the pasture, and you have no protective boot, wrap the hoof in duct tape to protect what’s left until your farrier arrives.)

Having read this, you may be asking, “Well, how loose does that shoe have to be before I go through this pull-off deal?” That’s a judgment call. If the shoe is literally rattling around, twisted or severely sprung(bent) at the heel - it probably needs to come off before you get into more trouble. If it is only slightly loose and not sprung or twisted, you may be able to make it home with a snug duct tape wrap.

It is said that luck favors the prepared. You may never have to deal with a loose shoe on your own. However, if you do, both you and your horse will fare better if you have the tools and knowledge to handle the situation.



(Photo by Judy Hoyle, Illinois Valley News)

Residents of all species participated during the All-Species Parade at Hathkapsuta June 14.

Home country:

by Slim Randles

Windy Wilson was on the prowl, this beautiful Independence Day morning, searching the neighborhood for something to do for others. He decided to let his weekly day helping others come on the Fourth this week, because he was feeling very American.

Let’s see ... he thought ... I can circumlocute over to Mrs. Hennessey’s and see if her flower garden needs weeding. She’s got very close veins and the sugar diabeets, and getting around ain’t easy.

He headed in that direction when he came across two friends of his arguing over politics. They were standing there in the shade of an elm tree and trying seriously to tear down each other’s theory on how the world, the United States, the state government and the local school board should be operated. Windy stopped and listened to them. Each would look at Windy as each point was made only to see the usually garrulous

Alphonse Wilson smile benignly and nod in response.

Pretty soon, the two combatants figured out that Windy was nodding to statements on totally opposite sides of the argument. They stopped and looked at him.

“How do you stand on this, Windy?” one asked.

“I stand as an American citizen,” he said, “on this recompensation of our Independence Day, knowing that our foundling fathers would want it this way. Yes, since this is a special day for all Americans, I am recumbent in the factotum that it is your very basic right to be wrong.”

“Which one? Which one of us is wrong, Windy?”

He grinned. “Well ... you both are.” Brought to you by The Home Country Hour podcast. Check it out at www.slim-randles.com.

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