

Sound Horse Conference

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Ohio State University Equine Medical Center

“Pressure Shoeing”

Panelist,

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Talking Points

- Thank you Ms. Bippen.
- What is pressure shoeing?
- In the literal sense, it is an object creating pressure on the hoof as a result of shoeing.
- But, more commonly, the term Pressure Shoeing is used in a broader sense.
- In the industry joint contract, that some of the inspection programs have signed onto called the Operating Plan, it is defined in a broader sense.

For example the Operating Plan contract defines a Pressure Shod horse as:

“A pressure shoeing violation shall be defined as shoeing, trimming, or engaging in any practice the result of which causes the inducement of pain in the sole of the foot.

If a DQP or VMO suspects that a horse’s hoof has been subjected to any such practice, the DQP or VMO may require the horse’s custodian to remove the shoes, pads, or both, to allow further examination.”

- Some of the things that are done to the hoof are:
- Sanding the sole with an electric sander, until beads of blood start to ooze out of the sole. They will then put the shoe or pad on the horse and watch him move. If the desired gait has not been achieved, they will remove the shoe or pads and sand some more. This process continues until the desired gait is achieved.
- Trim the hoof wall so that it is shorter than the sole of the foot and in such a way that the sole becomes the weight bearing surface. This causes the horse to be sore.
- There was a case awhile back where an individual was caught with welded beads on the underside of a hoof band. (For those of you who do not know what a hoof band is, it is an

adjustable band that goes across the upper portion of the hoof and is attached to the shoe on either side of the hoof, to help hold the shoe on. It can be loosened or tightened with a screw and nut that joins the two pieces of band into one piece.) When the band is tightened down, the welded beads would dig into the hoof wall and sore the horse.

- Another method of soring the horse is to cut or sand the bottom of the hoof in the heels, down to the sensitive tissue or quick and then apply the pads or shoes. If this area is sensitive and the horse pounds the ground with his feet when he is moving it will cause the horse to react to the pain.
- Sanding or filing down the hoof wall under the area where the band goes across the hoof. So that when you tighten down the band, it creates pressure across the hoof wall. Have any of you tied your tennis shoes too tight and had the arch of your foot ache? It would be very similar.
- Another method of soring the hooves is to stand the horse on what they call blocks. The USDA found a horse on blocks a couple of years ago at a horse show. The blocks were pointed and the points were sticking up into the sole of the two front feet and taped on with duct tape. The horse was standing in a stall before he was to go in a class to compete. The blocks, of course, would be removed before the horse went to inspection and into the class.
- Another technique is to stand a horse on bolts. There was a device made out of metal bar stock. The two ends were angled in such a way so as to be able to put this piece of metal across the bottom of the hoof with the metal reaching each side of the shoe. In the middle is a hole with threads with a bolt inserted into it. The threads would allow a person to adjust the amount of pressure you could apply to the sole of the hoof and adjust exactly how sore you wanted the horse. These bolts would be removed prior to taking the horse to inspection.
- Another method of soring the horse is to cut the toe of the hoof short and leave the heels long, thereby changing the angle of the coffin bone which is the last bone on the limb of the horse and should be horizontal with the ground. Once the coffin bone angle is changed so that the tip of it is now pointing down towards the sole of the hoof, it can sore the horse. This is why, what is called the “heel/toe ratio” regulation in the federal law, was created. Often times, to camouflage this, they will put the shoe out in front of the toe and fill in the distance from the toe to the tip of the shoe. This makes it impossible to do an accurate measurement to determine compliance with the “heel/toe” regulation. The toe length must exceed the height of the heel by 1 inch or more.

This is often times identifiable by observing the angle of the cornet band. If it is horizontal it is suspect and the heel and toe should be measured. If a horse has had a great deal of acrylic

applied to the toes, it makes it impossible to measure for compliance of the “heel/toe” regulation.

- Foreign objects are sometimes placed between the sole of the hoof and the shoe or pad to create pressure and sore the horse. This usually can be detected with a fluoroscope.
- Another method, of pressure shoeing that has been used, is to router out the white line of the sole of the hoof and lay a piece of pliable metal in the routed out area and then apply the shoes over this. Some people use acrylic that has been mixed different than the instructions, so that it makes the substance very hard and not pliable. This will create pressure and sore the horse.
- This acrylic mixture is sometimes used on padded horses in the area of the frog, instead of the acceptable (by the federal regulations) hoof packing which includes pine tar, oakum, live rubber, sponge rubber, silicone, commercial hoof packing or other substances used to maintain adequate frog pressure or sole consistency. When this is used it sets up very hard, like steel and creates pressure on the frog, just as any other hard foreign object would. This sores the horse.
- What is being done to identify pressure shoeing?
- Well currently, not much.
- Occasionally, hoof testers, which for those of you who do not know what hoof testers are, they are like extremely large tweezers. They will be used on the soles of the hoof to test for sensitivity of the soles.
- Locomotion test is used to observe the way a horse is moving and to detect any abnormality in his gait.
- The stance of the horse will be observed. This is to observe the way a horse is standing and how he is balancing his weight on all four limbs. You look for an irregularity in balance. Is he drawing his hind legs up under him to take weight off of the front limbs? Is he having difficulty placing all of his weight squarely on all four limbs, favoring one limb or another. You look for the contraction of the abdominal muscles or the lifting of his head, to name a few indicators.
- The fluoroscope machine is often used to identify foreign objects between the sole and the pad or the sole and the shoe, but it has a limited application since it primarily detects foreign objects.

- What could assist in the detection of pressure shoeing?
- Pulling shoes would be an enormous step toward examining the feet for soreness. When you have the large shoes made of bar stock that is sometimes 1 ½” by 1” or the pads and stacks on the hoof it makes it almost impossible to do an adequate exam to determine compliance.
- Aside from the things we have just discussed, thermograph would be a huge help in identifying inflammation in the hoof and could compliment the other findings.
- Dr. Turner will be discussing the use of thermograph later, so I will end with that and thank you.