

# Technique helps horses stay shod in mud

**IT HAPPENS AT** least two or three times during the stormy season. It's only December, and already it's happened four times.

I'm talking about my two shod horses losing a shoe in the mud.

Apparently mud tends to act as a vacuum by sucking shoes off a horse's hoof.

Let me preface this column by saying that I'm not implying that any one farrier in our area is better than another. I'm simply sharing an idea that makes sense to me, along with other horse-shoeing advice I've picked up through the years.

I tried out a new farrier (who doesn't live in the area) five weeks ago and was extremely frustrated to have two horses lose two shoes each.

I accept that shoes do occasionally come off before the next shoeing seven or eight weeks later — but four shoes in five weeks?

Both lost the front right foot first after only three weeks.

That brought to mind some advice I was given long ago: A horse's soundness or lameness is often attributed to the technique of its farrier.

Each horse moves differently; each hoof has its own natural shape, and whichever riding discipline the owner takes part in needs to be taken into consideration for a well-balanced and healthy horse.

Another bit of advice I've gleaned is to look for a farrier who doesn't try to trim, or shape, a hoof to fit a shoe; the correct way is to get the right-sized shoe for the hoof, and then trim for balance.

## Unusual technique

After noticing how well-shod another woman's horse is, I decided to try her out her farrier, **David Croft**. David seems to have found an unusual technique that reverses the problem of mud sucking off a hoof.

## PENINSULA HORSEPLAY

**Karen Griffiths**



"It is hard keeping shoes on horses that live in mud," David said.

"I first advise people to try to prevent the mud in the first place, usually by covering the area

with a thick layer of sand or gravel before the rains start."

Through his mentor, he learned a trick to help keep shoes on the hoof in the mud.

He bends the rear angle of the shoes one or two degrees slightly up toward the hoof.

The shoes then actually tend to roll, or suck up, into the hoof as the horse walks and bears weight on it.

Hey, I've found that the rolling heel of an Earth Shoe works best for me, so why not try a similar idea on my horse?

I was very up-front with David, telling him I was just trying him out, so he gave me some welcome advice on what signs to look for in a good trim or shoeing job.

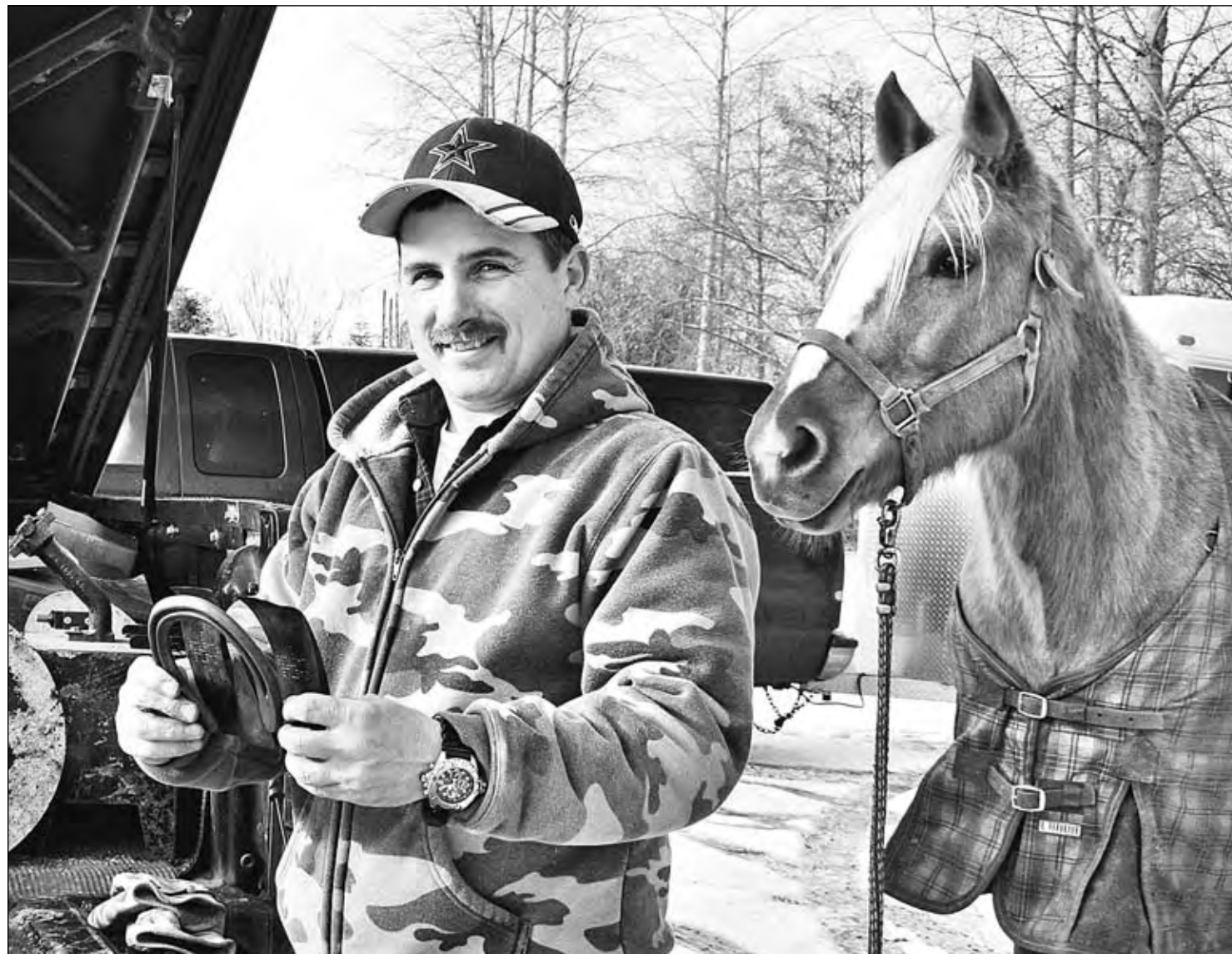
Much of it I'd read or learned before, but some I had not.

## Streamlined

When a horse is properly trimmed and has no obvious structural problems — such as when a horse is coffin-footed or broken down in the tendons — the top slope of the shoulder needs to be in a straight line with the pastern.

Hind-end hoofs should be trimmed a little steeper than the front, which on most horses is between 55 to 57 degrees, for the breakover to occur correctly.

According to a recent article in *Equus* magazine, if a horse is shod with long toe and low heel, the risk of suspensory desmitis increases.



KAREN GRIFFITHS/PENINSULA DAILY NEWS

**After farrier David Croft fitted Lacey with a new set of barrel racing shoes, he shows a type of rim shoe and Heart Bar Pad he might have recommend for her to protect her from rock founder, or a bruised sole and heel, commonly encountered after ridden on rocky trails or over heavy gravel-layered logging roads**

"Low heels puts too much pressure on the coffin bone," David said.

"If a horse has a problem, I'll build it up by putting a pad under the shoe, such as an Equine Digital Support Pad. Under a full pad I'll squirt a green gel made by Equi-pak to keep bacteria out."

Protective pads can also be used short-term by those who trail-ride in rocky areas as a means to protect the frog and sole from bruising and get-

ting rock founder

## Rock-bruising prevention

To help prevent rock bruising, David will sometimes recommend using a rubber Heart Barr pad under a metal rim shoe, which has more traction, or an Extra Easy metal shoe, which is a wider shoe providing more protection to the sole.

Old Macs and other types of rubber boots can also be worn as a protection against rocky terrain, but be aware

metal shoes do void the warranty and wear the rubber boots out faster.

Look for more about hoof care in my next column.

## Events

■ **Today:** Dressage clinic in Sequim at Angelfire Farm canceled due to weather. It has been rescheduled for Jan. 14.

For more information, phone **Dede Milligan** at 360-808-1920.

■ **Feb. 15, 9 a.m.:** Baker

Stables Winter Buckle Series. Additional show dates are March 15 and April 19.

*Karen Griffiths' column, Peninsula Horse Play, appears every other Wednesday.*

*If you have a horse event, clinic or seminar you would like listed, please e-mail Griffiths at horseplay.kbg@olympus.net at least two weeks in advance.*

*You can also write Griffiths at PDN, P.O. Box 1330, Port Angeles, WA 98362.*