

Keep It Covered

I shoe a variety of horses as do most of you and I have found that you can't shoe them all alike. Although, we would like to think we can and would like to think we are doing the best job for the horse sometimes it is just not feasible. I like to allow for some expansion and give just a little bit of length. After all, I would like for the shoe to fit in the fifth and sixth week too. Just because the shoe fits the foot today doesn't mean that it will in six weeks. We have a bit of a hurdle here in Georgia called humidity. Wet feet tend to fall right down through the middle and splatter out. Some of my clients are in barns a lot and others have to find a tree to get under during the monsoon season. Therefore, I can't do the same job on each horse. Of course there are many other factors that fall into play such as conformation, breeding, diet, environment, etc. I have a barn of five cutting horses that get very little turnout. They very seldom lose a shoe and their feet stay dry. The last two times that I shod them was at nine week intervals. I give them a certification style job and they still have support when I come back. I also have a barn of eventers that get day turnout. They constantly lose shoes and generally get shod on six week intervals. I can't give them enough expansion to carry them to term and still keep from pulling shoes. In both cases the feeding program, the care, and barn maintenance are excellent. The differences are the breeding (typical Thoroughbred feet on the eventers) and the turnout environment (the eventers get the hilly pastures). Now, to keep the horse shod well throughout the shoeing cycle will be easy with the cutters. When it comes to the eventers I just try to keep them shod. If I give them what seems like a nice job with a little expansion (nickels width with their splattered out feet) I will be back out tomorrow replacing shoes. Very seldom do I leave this barn feeling that I have done a good job for the horse. Unfortunately, the best job these horses are going to get is if they can wear their shoes until the next appointment. In my early years, like most others, I wanted to do the perfect job on each horse. I always thought there was something I could fix such as a lateral flare or uneven heel length. I have found that in many cases I can fix these. I also found that in many other cases I can't. I might rasp away the flare only to weaken the wall and make it worse the next time. Or I might lower one heel to the same length as the other only to misalign the bony column. The flare and the uneven heel lengths were due to conformational issues that I have no control over. Recently, an owner asked her trainer if I could stop her horse from forging. The trainer pointed out that the front legs nearly come out of the same hole as the hind legs. Once again, conformational issues beyond my control. I used to try and overshoe the horses with too much length and too much expansion. Now, I give enough to get them through to the next shoe job. I don't feel that I am short shoeing. I like to give good coverage. When you come back in six or seven weeks and the heels of the foot are hanging off the heels of the shoe, it was probably short shod. Keep the foot covered. I still have along way to go on my journey but for now all I am after is to Keep It Covered.