

How Fast Can A Hoof Decontract?

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In my 11 years of experience trimming, I've come to realize (as I get wiser) that nature is truly miraculous and changes to the foot can and do occur with amazing rapidity.

Yesterday (April 19, 2012), out of curiosity, I suggested we compare the shoes I took off a foundered horse on November 29, 2011, with his actual foot. The changes actually occurred weeks ago, and the aim wasn't to prove anything, just to see how much bigger the foot had been before. All of us in attendance were shocked at how significantly the foot had changed!

I want to make a point of saying that the shoes were put on the day before I took them off (November 28, 2011) and they fit the hoof perfectly. Not that I was happy to see them - it broke my heart - but I couldn't fault the farrier as to fitting the shoe.

We never took before photos of what the hoof looked like, or any other photos until yesterday, so I had forgotten how contracted the foot had been when I first saw it. The shoes tell the tale however!



The photo to the left shows how much smaller and more normal the hoof has become. Imagine how deformed and disconnected the hoof capsule was when the shoes fit!

Note that this is post trim and the heels have not been touched. At no time have the heels been trimmed yet - they are not high enough above the sole to trim.



In the photo to the left, the shoes show how contracted the heels were. As I said, they were a perfect fit when they were put on. By backing the toe and leaving the heels alone - as they are not high enough above the sole to need trimming - the foot was **allowed** to decontract.

These photos clearly show how quickly the hoof can decontract - with no trimming of the heels, but only by backing the toe and allowing the hoof to regain a more normal form. Something it is always trying to do.

As I said, these changes were apparent weeks ago, unfortunately I didn't think of using the shoes to show the difference until yesterday. Still, there is over 1" of expansion in less than 4 months. Impressive in itself.

This horse (a Peruvian Paso) was foundered, with radiographic evidence of rotation. On the vet's advice he was shod (per the vet's instructions). The owner called me that evening, and the next day I removed the shoes. The horse was significantly more comfortable after the first trim and shoe removal. He became sound in his left front very quickly, but had a deep seated abscess in the right front, lateral heel area which kept him lame. Once the abscess exited he was markedly more sound, even on pavement, and gaited freely and smoothly. As of yesterday he has developed an abscess in the opposite heel - almost immediately after having bodywork. Hopefully this one will resolve quickly.