

How to Pull a Loose Shoe

A loose shoe is a danger to your horse. Learn how to take care of it when your farrier isn't around.

By Leslie Potter Photos By Lesley Ward

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The distinctive clank of a loose shoe is never a welcome sound for a horse owner. In most cases, a loose shoe will probably put your horse out of commission until the farrier arrives.

Tools of the Trade

Clinches: The end of the horse shoe folded over the outside of the hoof wall to secure the shoe.

Rasp: A long, flat tool used by farriers to trim and shape hooves.

Nippers: Cutting tool used by farriers to trim excess hoof wall. **Pull-offs:** Tool used to cut nails and pry off horse shoes. Left alone, a loose shoe can cause serious problems for your horse. At best, it will eventually fall off, leaving your horse unevenly shod. When the shoe comes off on its own, it may take a chunk of hoof with it. Worse yet, the shoe can twist, putting the newly exposed nails or clips right under the sole of your horse's hoof every time he takes a step. Since your farrier probably can't show up at your barn door at a moment's notice, learning to pull a shoe is a necessary skill for anyone who cares for horses.

Make sure you have a rasp and pull-offs or nippers on hand at your barn. These can be purchased at most tack and agricultural supply shops, or by asking your farrier.

Step 1: Pick up your horse's hoof, and rest it on your thigh. If you have pull-offs or nippers, you can clip the clinches right where they bend on the outside of the hoof wall.

Step 2: You can also rasp each of the clinches individually.

Step 3: Gently pry off the shoe with the nippers, starting at the heels. Pull on one side of the shoe at the heel, and then the other, alternating until the nails come out. Do not try to pull the shoe off in one tug as this may break off pieces of hoof wall or weaken the hoof by making the nail holes larger.

Alternatively, you can use the nippers to pull each nail out one at a time. This will decrease the risk of breaking the hoof wall. Be sure to pull each nail out straight so you don't enlarge the holes.

If your farrier cannot get to your barn immediately to replace the shoe, you may want to bandage the hoof for protection. [Learn how here.](#)

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