

## Packing Your Horse's Hooves

**Does your horse behave as if his feet are a little "ouchy" after a long trail ride over rough terrain? Are his tootsies tired by the end of a long day of showing?**

*By Cindy Hale*

9-3-2005

Does your horse behave as if his feet are a little "ouchy" after a long trail ride over rough terrain? Are his tootsies tired by the end of a long day of showing? Of course, establish that this is not an acute injury that requires a vet call. Then consider that it could be that the soles of his feet are slightly bruised or stung from the concussion of performing on less than cushiony arena footing. One treatment is to pack your horse's hooves overnight. You can do this by using one of several commercially made hoof packing products found in equine care catalogs or at your local major tack store.

To temporarily cover your horse's packed soles, and help it adhere to the hoof, you'll need a roll of that thin, stick-to-itself stretchy bandage material. Or you can cut thin cardboard in the shape of a slightly oversized hoof. To hold that onto your horse's hooves you'll need your handy dandy roll of duct tape.

Now that you have your supplies, tether your horse to a hitching post or put him in the cross-ties. Clean your horse's hooves thoroughly. Use a small, stiff brush to completely remove any debris. Next, dig into it the packing material with your fingers, and extract enough to form a small mound about the size of a golf ball. Then lift up your horse's foot and plop the ball of packing at the tip of his frog. Just like modeling clay, smooth it out so that it covers the entire sole of the hoof, including the frog. Push it all the way out to the inside edge of the horse shoe, or if your horse is barefoot, cover the entire outer edge of the hoof. Make sure you press firmly enough so that the packing adheres to the surface of the sole.

Finally, to secure the packing material overnight, either press the cardboard shape onto the packing--it'll stick while you set the foot down to pick up your duct tape--or carefully begin wrapping the self-adhesive wrap around the sole and the packing in a figure-eight pattern. Stop just at the base of the coronet band; don't go further. It should take about half a roll for each hoof. In the morning, remove the tape, pull off the covering and gently remove the packing with both a hoof pick and your fingers. After this spa-like treatment, your horse's soles should feel refreshed. If not, make sure you contact your veterinarian and consult with your farrier. Chronic sole soreness can be a sign of a more serious soundness problem.