

## THE EFFECTS OF CLIPS

I have been to many clinics over the years and seen numerous demonstrations on a basic shoe modification called clips. Now there are different names for clips such as toe clip, side clip, quarter clip, and possibly others. These names simply describe the placement. The American Farriers Association Certification Guide gives specific guidelines on clips as to thickness, height, width, angle, etc. There have been some great articles on how to fit clips describing the seating in process.

Today as I sit here at a show, waiting for someone's misfortune of a pulled shoe, I have time to write about clip placement and the effects on the hoof capsule. In the past, and even on occasion in the present, I have trouble deciding whether or not to use a clip and where to place it. It took me a few years to realize that not all hooves can have the same clips used.

I love to see a well placed toe clip for several reasons. First, it is the hardest clip to fit properly. Second, it can accentuate symmetry. Third, I just like a little bling in the front of the foot.

Quarter clips (between the first and second nail holes) and side clips (between the second and third nail holes) have a great advantage of steadying the shoe from side to side. Generally, we use side clips on the front feet and quarter clips on the hind. Although, it depends on the horse and the shape of the feet, we may mix it up. We may find that we need different clip placement on all four feet, so never stick to any set rule.

I have a few theories that I would like to share along with some photographs to explain my thoughts. I believe that a clip can transform the shape of the hooves either in a positive or negative way depending on placement.

### Toe Clip

First, there is the toe clip. I believe that a toe clip should be burned into the hoof and seated properly so that there is no distinction between hoof and clip. You should not be able to tell where the clip is when running your hand over it with your eyes closed. A toe clip does not interfere with expansion in an adverse way.



Properly seated toe clip using the “burned in method”.

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**Improperly seated toe clip using the “rasp away and hope it fits in a groove somewhere method”.**

But, some hooves may not be acceptable to a toe clip in a positive manner. A foot that has a toe that constantly dishes or flares would be a bad candidate for a toe clip. The toe will drag the shoe forward as it dishes instead of just hanging off the front of the shoe. Depending on the shoe fit in the heels, it may even drag it out from under the heels. You may fit the clip very well and have the hoof dressed beautifully to come back in three weeks and see the clip standing out away from the hoof. If it is a proper clip without excessive wear, what has probably happened is the toe has changed shape but the clip has not moved.



Often, farriers get blamed for the shoes not fitting the way we originally shod the horse after a period of time. What people fail to realize is that the shoes and nails are metal and don't really move a great amount. The hoof on the other hand is constantly expanding and contracting (at least here in Georgia) and the hoof has moved around the shoe and nails.

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### Quarter Clips

Quarter clips are a great tool on hind feet. Occasionally, we may need them on front feet. A well placed quarter clip should also be burned and seated. It takes some practice to get good at seating clips. The lateral clip will usually be at a lesser angle, so when folding the clips before going to the foot take it into consideration.



**Hind foot that has not had clips. Notice the natural shape is conducive to quarter clips.**

Quarter and side clips will inhibit expansion where placed. A hind foot is normally straighter from toe to quarter following the shape of the coffin bone. Therefore, a quarter clipped shoe should not alter the shape of the hind foot. The hoof expands outward at a point forward of what is known as the Bridge as described in an article by Craig Trnka. If a clip is there, then the hoof cannot expand in that area. It still needs to expand to function properly so it will either expand in front of or behind the clip. This can be used to help reshape hooves to a more symmetrical and uniform status. Example, holding in a flare until the hoof is rebalanced and able to grow more correctly. Unfortunately, when clips are abused they will reshape the foot in a negative fashion.



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**Can you tell where the clips were on these front feet? They have created the flat spots through the quarters. Notice how straight the white line is through that section.**

With the straightening of the quarters on front feet we are setting ourselves up for trouble. Soon there will be a flare somewhere, probably behind the clip. There will be a lack of flow making shoe fitting more difficult. Without proper shoe fit, nailing in the white line becomes harder. Then the feet tend to break up around the nail holes. Somewhat of a domino effect. Now there are many talented farriers who seem to dodge these obstacles out of necessity. Because of their horse clients rigorous training schedules they rely on side clips to maintain solid contact and reduce nail stress. I give a lot of credit to the farriers that can keep up a good foot with continued use of side clips and also for knowing when to not use them.

I don't condemn any type of clip that is properly applied in a proper fashion. But what I do condemn is a lack of respect toward the clip. I hate to see clips hammered over to the foot instead of seated in correctly. It simply shows a lack of craftsmanship and/or laziness. What is worse is to pull a shoe off of a horse and see that the last person not only hammered the clip over after it was nailed on but only hammered over the top of the clip causing it to curve in toward the hoof. If we are going to apply clips, either store bought or drawn, let's be aware of the effects that they will have on the feet. If you notice the hoof starting to reshape in an adverse manner, change up where the clips are placed. Take some pictures throughout several shoeings to see if you are helping or hurting the situation.

I buy a few clipped shoes, but the majority of them are hammer drawn. By drawing my own, I can decide where, how tall, and how thick to make the clip. I may put a clip between the first and second nail on the medial and third and fourth on the lateral. There is no set rule to follow. It completely depends on the horse as to the decisions made. I apply clips to about ninety percent of the horses that I shoe. I do this so that either I can use less nails or take stress off of the nails.

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