



BILLINGS FARM & MUSEUM

DRAFT ANIMAL CELEBRATION: SHOEING DRAFT ANIMALS

Most people know that horses wear shoes call horseshoes but, did you know oxen sometimes wear shoes too?

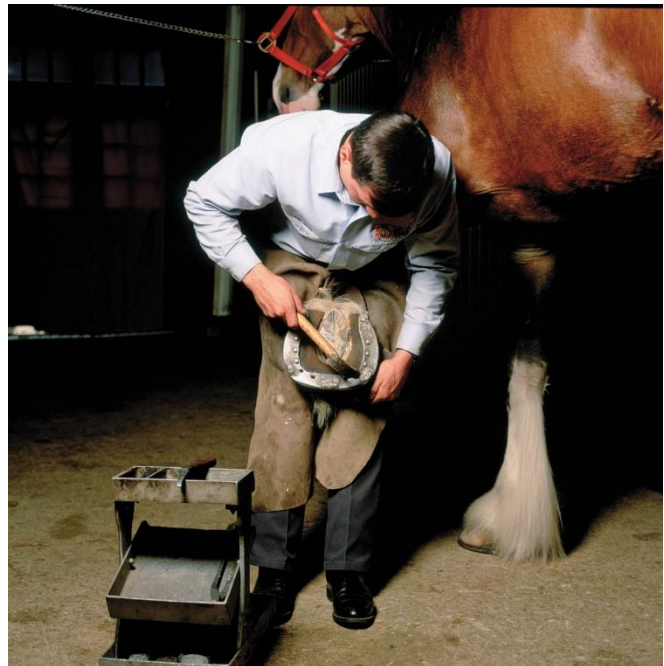
Horses wear shoes to prevent their hooves from wearing down on rough ground. Shoes can also help if a horse has a weak hoof or issues with a leg muscle. In the



Horseshoe with caulks.

winter, horses can wear shoes with extra traction on the bottom to walk over slippery ground. Draft horses tend to be much larger than the horses used for riding and therefore need much larger shoes. Some draft horses used for logging have special shoes with caulks. Caulks are small protrusions from the back of the shoe that help the horse dig into the ground and pull heavy loads.

When a horse needs work done on its hooves and shoes a farrier is called. The farrier will pick up each of the horse's feet, one at a time, to work on them. First, the shoe that is already on the horse will be removed and the hoof will be trimmed; like cutting fingernails. Once the hoof is cleaned and balanced the farrier will begin replacing the shoe. In some cases, the shoe is still good and can be used again. In other cases, the farrier is required to use a forge and alter the shoe to fit the horse. Once ready, the shoe is nailed onto the hoof. Farriers will do this to all four hooves of the horse.



A farrier nails a horseshoe onto a draft horse.

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Image of an ox being shod in a stock.

Shoeing oxen is not practiced as much today as it was in the past. In New England, oxen were the main draft animal on the farm and did a lot of work year-round. Just like horses, oxen needed extra support on their feet while working. Unlike horses, oxen have cloven hooves meaning their hooves are split down the middle. This means that when an ox is shod it wears eight shoes instead of four like horses.

Oxen also require a stock to hold the ox up while being shod. Cattle do not like having their feet off the ground and will not stand on three legs like horses do during shoeing.

When oxen get their shoes replaced, the farrier starts by removing the shoes that are already on the ox. They will then trim each half of the hoof and clean it. Once clean and balanced, the farrier will nail both halves of the shoe onto the ox. Some ox shoes have cleats on the bottom for extra traction.



A pair of shoes for a single ox foot.