

## Contracted hooves (Norsk: Trange hover)

Shoeing and/or incorrect trimming of unshod hooves combined with a lack of sufficient movement or unsuitable ground causes what is commonly known as "contracted hooves."

In contracted hooves, the hoof capsule has become narrower. Now the foot becomes even narrower during weightbearing instead of being expanded. This constricts the blood vessels, nerves, bones, cartilage, tendons and ligaments within the hoof. This leads to compression and inflammation of the front lateral lamellar corium, the solar corium, and parts of the lateral cartilage. Contracted heels also cause painful compression of the bulbs of the heel.

In an attempt to ease the pain, the horse tries to relieve the hind region of the hoof, and the coffin bone stands more steeply. This overloads the front regions of the corium and the front edge of the coffin bone presses on the solar corium. The blood flow through the sole is reduced and as a result poorer quality horn is produced. Because of the decreased weight put onto the heel, the pressure on the heel is reduced; it grows more quickly, making the hoof steeper still. Such a change in the angle of the hoof also affects tendons, joints and ligaments.

After removing the shoes, these alterations show themselves as pain, because with the blood flow returning to the hoof, the nerves regenerate and report the damage that is already in existence for a long time.

Since the whole lamellar corium can be inflamed, rotation of the coffin bone must be considered. The more the hoof deviates from the form of a normal, healthy hoof, the more painful it is. The horse walks stilted, carefully, or lame.

The hooves must be trimmed at frequent intervals, in such a way that the hoof capsule can broaden. Inflamed hooves especially must be pumped regularly, i.e. they have an absolute need for constant movement, day and night. Until the inflammation has subsided, the horse should be kept on even ground or on pasture, since vibrations are additionally painful and slow down healing. The horse owner must show consideration for the horse at this time and refrain from riding or driving for a while.

Contracted hooves are a serious and complex problem. Reshaping contracted hooves into healthy, natural hooves can take weeks, months or years. The timeframe depends on the individual circumstances and the damage already in existence.

Copyright Dr. vet. med. H. Strasser  
Blaihofstr. 42/1, 72074 Tuebingen, Germany  
Tel/Fax: (011) 49-7071-87572  
Ed. & Canadian contact: Sabine Naujoks  
Box 44, Qualicum Beach, BC, V9K 1S7

