

What is the best way to manage quarter cracks?

Quarter cracks occur due to chronic overloading of the quarters and heel area. There are a number of predisposing factors that may cause the hoof wall to fail, resulting in a quarter crack.

Prior to treating a quarter crack, it is important to try to figure out why the crack occurred in the first place so that you may make changes to help the crack heal and, hopefully, prevent its reoccurrence.

Predisposing factors that can lead to overloading the heel region and quarter include medial or lateral imbalances (coffin bone tipped to the inside or outside of the hoof capsule), major conformational faults such as an angular or rotational deformity of the limb, shoeing with inadequate heel support, and long toe and low heel conformation to name just a few.

I like to use radiographs to help correct imbalances and guide the trimming and shoeing process.

Each horse is unique but, generally speaking, I tend to use a heart-bar shoe with a rockered and/or rolled toe. This allows me to float and completely take all of the weight off the affected heel and quarter while asking the frog to share the load.

With rest, this often is enough to resolve most quarter cracks.

We patch the vast majority of quarter cracks to provide stability and allow horses to continue to train and race. An Equiox and Cobra Sox (equine hoof glue and braided carbon fiber) patch works well for me.

Very unstable cracks may require lacing with wire prior to patching with carbon fiber.

There are many techniques for patching cracks but, in my opinion, trimming and shoeing are the most important part of the equation.

With a little collaborative effort from your veterinarian and farrier, your crack will be a thing of the past.



Bryan Fraley, D.V.M.

Fraley was born in Central Kentucky but raised on a commercial cattle ranch in Western Colorado. He has been shoeing horses since age 15 after being introduced to the trade by local rancher Bill Walk. He received his D.V.M. from Colorado State University in 2004.

Upon graduation he completed a one-year internship at Pioneer Equine Hospital in Oakdale, California. Following his internship, he spent 2½ years as an associate in the podiatry department at Rood and Riddle Equine Hospital in Lexington. Fraley left Rood and Riddle to eventually open Fraley Equine Podiatry. Fraley Equine Podiatry is based out of the Hagyard Equine Medical Institute and is proud to be affiliated with the oldest and largest equine hospital in the world.

Fraley sits on the board of directors for the Kentucky Equine Humane Center and also is fortunate to work on many of horseracing's heroes that are retired at Old Friends in Georgetown, Kentucky. Fraley has been actively involved in the AFA/AAEP Farrier Short Course which teaches basic farriery and promotes the veterinary/farrier relationship in U.S. veterinary schools.

In the last year, Fraley and his team have worked in conjunction with Pfizer Animal Health to present eight hands-on podiatry clinics at veterinary hospitals across the country. These clinics have been designed to foster the veterinary/farrier relationship while teaching modern techniques of Equine podiatry.

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A close-up of a farrier tool, likely a rasp or file, with a wooden handle and a metal head. The tool is positioned diagonally across the bottom right corner of the page. The text 'Great Savings!' is written in a cursive font over the tool.