



By nature the hoof has a tendency to become narrow. This is necessary in order to withstand the constant force expanding it with every step. Hoof mechanism and shock absorption are accomplished through the horses' weight and the impact of each step expanding the hoof capsule against the resistance of the ground. If for any reason this expanding force is lacking, the hoof will become over time more narrow - contracted.



A horse with insufficient movement and/or unnaturally soft terrain will develop contracted hooves. Some adaptation to softer terrain is possible as long as there is sufficient movement and the horse is barefoot. In most cases mechanical forces like high heels and/or shoes are added to the problem, increasing both the speed at which the hoof becomes contracted and the severity of the deformation



How can we prevent contraction in the first place?

Breed proper terrain and sufficient movement at any age (foals from the day they are born).

Natural boarding conditions with enough space and reason for sufficient movement on breed appropriate terrain. This may require riding, driving, ponying to make up the natural amount of movement each day.

Physiologically correct trimming at the necessary intervals or natural wear through sufficient movement on appropriate terrain.

No shoes.

Daily immersion of the hooves in water past the coronet band for at least 15 minutes. Ideally the horse has a natural water source where he will immerse his hooves during drinking.

Prevention of contraction due to injury: Trim bare hooves properly. Immerse frequent in water. Keep the horse moving as much as possible on terrain the horse can accept. Hoof boots may help in some cases to maximize movement. Physiotherapy, massage, acupuncture may help to speed up healing.

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