

# Saving a Mutilated Foot

**Complex modification of keg shoes is the centerpiece of this successful case study**



***BAD INJURY. After catching her foot in a fence wire, Snow Star lost almost a quarter of her foot. The coronet band and hoof wall were torn off, leaving the filly unable to stand correctly because of the missing area.***

*By Blake Brown*

**S**now Star was first presented at the Loomis Basin Veterinary Clinic in Loomis, Calif., where I as the resident farrier, in February 2004. She was evaluated for lacerations to the left hind leg and foot. Snow Star was sedated and the wounds were cleaned, debrided and sutured where possible. There were no skin edges to close over the foot or the medial aspect of the cannon bone.

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*“Approximately a quarter of Snow Star’s foot had been taken off...”*

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A bandage was placed over the wounds of the leg and the foot and she was treated with intravenous antibiotics for a total of 3 days. Other medications were prescribed for infection and pain. The owner informed us that she had recently purchased Snow Star for her 6-year-old daughter with the hope that her daughter and the filly would grow up together and have many happy days. Somehow, the filly had woven her left rear leg into a high tensile strength wire fence and proceeded to mutilate it and as well as her foot



**FIRST SHOERING STEPS.** Blake Brown made a diagonal egg bar shoe to provide support for the injured leg and protection for the injured area of the foot. He nailed the shoe on using the three front nail holes on the lateral branch and a nail hole punched in the toe of the medial branch.



**PROGRESS BEING MADE.** Three weeks after the initial treatment (left), Snow Star's foot is much improved. When the new hoof wall began to distort while growing over the rest of the damaged foot, Brown used a Dremel tool (right) to debride the area beneath the hoof wall.

### **Prognosis: Guarded**

The prognosis was considered guarded for this injury because of the large area of the foot and leg that had been affected. It was noted that a skin graft might be required at a later date in order to provide complete healing of the leg. The foot was another question all together. The owner was advised to bring Snow Star back for a recheck of the leg in a week. We would then decide if anything at all could be done for the foot. Approximately a quarter of Snow Star's foot had been taken off when she pulled her leg out of the fence. The coronet and hoof wall were gone and when she tried to stand on her foot, her leg would collapse to the inside because of a total lack of support. Upon examination I could even see the medial edge of the wing of the coffin bone. I knew that I needed to support the medial side of the foot with the hope that I could get the foot to once more become a steady support for the leg. I also needed to provide support for the wounds on the leg, where the sutures kept pulling loose from the stress placed on them as the horse moved unsteadily.

### Special Egg Bar

I took a Kerckhaert TNC 6 mm shoe and made a diagonal egg bar shoe for the foot. I punched a nail hole in the toe of the medial branch and used the front three nail holes on the lateral branch to nail the shoe on with Delta #3 1/2 race nails. We used a feminine sanitary napkin for protection over the wound and also to fill in the space where the foot was missing. We advised the owner to change the bandage daily for the next 5 to 7 days or until there was only a small amount of discharge each time the bandage was removed. I had the owner bring Snow Star back in 3 weeks for the follow-up shoeing and was amazed at the progress the foot had made. I reset the shoe and rescheduled Snow Star for 30 days. By her next appointment, the coronet band had filled back in and had started to produce a new hoof wall. The underlying area had healed well, but had also atrophied and the new hoof wall was growing in over it in a distorted pattern. I used my Dremel tool to debride the area beneath the new wall. This allowed the new hoof wall to continue growing down in a normal fashion. I followed this procedure for the remaining shoeings during the time that it took for the wall to completely regrow. By the third shoeing I was able to shoe Snow Star with a standard heart bar shoe made from a Delta Lite keg shoe, nailed on with Delta #4 1/2 race nails.



**HEART BAR MODIFICATION.** For the third shoeing after the injury, Brown made a heart bar shoe from a keg shoe (left). Again, he used just one toe nail on the injured side of the foot. Snow Star's injured hoof after several months of healing (right). By 2006, the owner said it was difficult to even see the scar.

### Signs Of Progress

By May, just 3 months after the incident. Snow Star's foot had nearly filled in and her other leg wounds were healing nicely as well. I continued seeing Snow Star until July, 5 months after her accident when we decided that she could go back to being barefoot and continue to grow up with her human companion. I did a follow up call to the owner earlier this year. She informed me that Snow Star is in training and is perfectly sound, adding that you have to look very closely to even see a scar in the hoof wall today. Up next for Snow Star and the owner's daughter are 4-H Club competitions and perhaps a little barrel racing.

*Blake Brown lives in Penryn, Calif. And was the resident farrier at Loomis Basin Veterinary Clinic in Loomis Calif., from 1984 through 2004. He is now retired from shoeing and professionally consults with owners, trainers and farriers to keep top performance horses sound and troubleshoot horses with chronic lameness.*