

What's in a PAD?

By: Robyn La Pierre, GM, AEP

Over the past few years, the International Institute of Equine Podiatry has been successfully rehabilitating horses worldwide. We pride ourselves through the constant guidance from KC La Pierre, RJF, MEP, PhD, the Institute's founder and educator, on how quickly and humanely a horse can rebound from lack of structure and lameness. So what is the secret? The secret is: **there is no secret**. It is commitment and providing the proper environment for that horse that is conducive to healing.

There are few constants in the realm of rehabilitation. However, one constant and cushion (no pun intended) that horse owners can fall back on, is the use of Sole Mates™ Therapeutic Hoof pads. Understanding the purpose and theory that these pads represent is the key to our success story. We receive countless phone calls from clients and horse owners who are struggling with their horse's rehabilitation and not utilizing the knowledge that has gone into researching these pads.

Sole Mates™ Therapeutic Hoof pads are meant to be used in conjunction with pinpoint rehabilitation of structure. For example, if a horse is first out of shoes, we highly recommend identifying each of the hoof's structures, and where it falls on our Spectrum of Usability (see The Chosen Road, By KC LaPierre). This spectrum or wellness chart, will identify pinpoint areas that are in need of rehabilitation. But more importantly, this form will tell you how this horse should be used. Should I ride him or not, and on what ground surface? More than likely, the heels are contracted from being in a locked state from the metal shoe, his sole is very thin from lack of stimulus, and the frog has deteriorated. Clean Trax hoof cleanser is a no-brainer for hoof infections and gives the horse owner peace of mind when determining if the start of white line disease has occurred. Then it is highly suggested that the horse owner hand walk the horse 20 minutes a day with Sole Mates™ Therapeutic Hoof Pads, either in a boot or duct taped to bottom of the foot.

How do these pads work? The Sole Mates™ Therapeutic Hoof Pads work in conjunction with our theory: **pressure is the stimulus for growth**. In order to return proper structure that has been lost, "correct" pressure must be applied to the bottom of the horse's hoof without causing pressure necrosis (too much pressure). A good rule of thumb is that pain negates growth. In most cases, the horse's hoof is too short, or rather, below the

healthy frog height at the heels. In order to gain height to the foot, Sole Mates™ Hoof Pads are applied, causing correct pressure to the heels, bars, walls and sole. This pressure is consistent with little rebound due to the closed-cell formula that exists within the pads. A regular sponge or rubber pad that has too much rebound (or give), when put into motion with a moving horse, cannot provide consistent and correct support. Even and systematic pressure is the secret behind our pads.

Increase in sole depth, hoof height, and frog growth is directly related to the use of these pads. Just a few minutes a day (20 minutes on average) can greatly improve the rehabilitation of your horse's hooves. Without the use of these pads, the progressive next step, a sand arena, may be too harsh for the existing structures, especially if you are dealing with white line stretch, white line disease, or frog infection. Sand can erode and deteriorate these already sensitive structures, let alone cause irritation to an already deep central sulcus of the frog.

Which pads do I choose for my horse? The Sole Mates™ Therapeutic Hoof pads range in three densities: our newly added four pound, six pound, and nine pound. We found it necessary to break down the pad use to less than 1200 pounds for the six, and 1200 pounds and over for the nine. However, if your draft or heavily-boned horse is just out of shoes, I would recommend using the six pound because his structure is going to be too delicate and his soles are going to be thin. You may not get as many uses out of the 6 lb pads with a draft horse in that state. However, we don't want to cause undue stress on the foot either. So use your best judgment.

The four pounds pads are a new edition and are great for that mini horse in your barn, or any acute stages of laminitis. Why is it so important to specify weight? The pad has a unique characteristic that allows the pads to return to their near natural shape and size after use. If your horse is heavy or lands excessively in the toe due to caudal heel pain, it will exceed the life of the pad; or rather the pad will not be reusable. For years, the farrier sciences have been using a styro-foam pad that is supplied from the local lumber yard or Home Depot. Structural styro-foam is not only not reusable (costly), but crushes down to a hard, stagnant, substance that can cause bruising to the delicate structures (pressure necrosis). Pressure necrosis is a bruising of the capillaries at the corium level due to excessive force on the foot

Sole Mates™ Therapeutic Hoof pads have the unique ability to consistently support the foot through the entire stride phase. Once the Sole Mates™ pad is removed, the imprint of the foot and hoof are astounding. The detail in the print much resembles that of a sand imprint on the beach where each intricate structure is delicately etched out. This type of detailed support is what makes the Sole Mates™ Hoof Pads priceless to anyone practicing hoof care. Once the structures begin to return to proper conformity, pin pointing additional structures like inner wall or transitioning to sand can be achieved safely.

How long can I leave these pads on? The Sole Mates™ Hoof Pads are recommended for hand walking during rehabilitation and should be used approximately 20 minutes a day. Putting the pad in some form of hoof boot can make the rehabilitation process much easier, especially in mud and wet weather. KC's boot is currently in production and will be on the market soon. This new boot is specially designed for the pad system. In the meantime, boots like Old Macs can work if purchased large enough for the pads to fit. Therapeutic Hoof pads can be left on the foot for up to 72 hours during acute laminitis or until a vet arrives. Excessive moisture build up will cause the hoof to soften unnecessarily when left on for that long. We recommend you take the boots off an hour or so to let the hoof and pad to dry each day to be safe. It is also recommended that the hoof be allowed to dry thoroughly in either a stall or isle prior to the application of the pads for an additional 72 hours if needed during your extreme acute stages of founder and laminitis. Puncture wounds and abscessing are also contenders for the use of Sole Mates™.

Do these pads relieve any abscess pain? It's not that the pads relieve pain of the abscess, they allow for mobility in a usually painful environment in order to expel the abscess naturally. Most abscessing is the form of a void in the hoof that is reacting to foreign bodies (necrotic tissue) within that void by providing white blood cells to fight off the infection. Abscesses can re-absorb if not expelled. By applying the Sole Mates™ to the bottom of your horse's foot during an abscess, the horse will be able to be hand walked allowing the abscess to pop. Without the pads, the horse is in extreme pain due to pressure building within the foot. This can also cause secondary lameness as the horse is compensating for that painful foot. You can see now why soaking in Epsom salts is not a good thing during an abscess. Epsom salts cause excessive drying to the hoof. So no wonder the abscess gets re-absorbs and returns a few weeks later. The foot is rock hard and the body cannot expel it naturally.

What if I have frog trauma and need to either build up or excessively relieve an area that is touching the hoof? Here is where our Sole Mates™ pads really step it up in performance. These pads are uniquely designed so that when heat is applied in the form of a lighter, you can adhere them to each other permanently. They become one structure with no worry of splitting apart. This allows you to be able to use different configurations during acute stages of trauma. You can cut a special wedge out or double up on the pads, by simply applying heat to each side of the pad and sticking them together. It's that simple. Also, the pads are great for beveling out an area with a "roto zip" tool that will relieve an area on the pad so everything but that area is touching the hoof. It's so easy to do, and really effective.

As you can see, Sole Mates™ Therapeutic Hoof Pads serve many purposes. They are an inexpensive, effective tool for retuning hoof structure during rehabilitation or during extreme trauma to the hoof. At the Institute, KC La Pierre recommends every barn carry a set of Sole Mates™ in case of laminitis or trauma. It goes hand in hand with Clean Trax when hoof infection is the culprit for a lame horse. Application of the pads will return an infected frog to a healthy state given the infection has been treated and your environment has been improved. If you don't have a healthy frog, it's almost impossible to return health to any other structure of the hoof. (The Chosen Road, by KC LaPierre 2004). So be safe and wise, when it comes to rehabilitation. Proper evaluation of structure and the stimulus needed to return a deformed hoof to health is our ultimate goal. Sole Mates™ do that with one thing in mind: **Do No Harm.**

Stay Tuned for a future PHC DVD on creative ways to utilize the Sole Mates™ Therapeutic Hoof pads for rehabilitation and acute stages of trauma.