

Trim

Regardless of steel shoes or plastic shoes/boots the TRIM is the MOST IMPORTANT part of keeping your horse's foot sound. Just because it's easy to slip a boot on and tighten up the Velcro doesn't mean it's the best option for your horse. You cannot become proficient at trimming by doing one online course; it takes a lot of practice. Seek professional advice if you are unsure.

Conformation

In many cases a horse's conformation will dictate if you shoe or boot. Wrongly shod or booted feet can exaggerate conformational faults. It's easier to modify a steel shoe to deal with conformational faults.

Traction

In my experience plastic shoes and boots can be more slippery than steel shoes in the types of varying terrain and weather conditions you will encounter as an endurance rider. Mud/clay and wet grass do not seem to mix well with plastic boots.

Wear

While some of the boots seem to wear extremely well the plastic shoes don't seem to have the same capabilities as steel shoes. Wear depends greatly on how hard your horse hits the ground.

Concussion

Plastic boots/shoes have significantly less concussion than steel or alloy shoes; however, if steel or alloy is used in conjunction with pads and sole packing, the concussion is greatly reduced.

Training barefoot/ Competing in boots

This is like training for a running race in running shoes and wearing gumboots for the race. It adds extra weight and will change the horse's gait.

Endurance is a performance sport and horses need to be treated like a performance vehicle; they need good fuel, regular services, and most of all, good tyres. What we ask endurance horses to do is unnatural to them, so we can't expect them to consistently perform with no hoof protection.