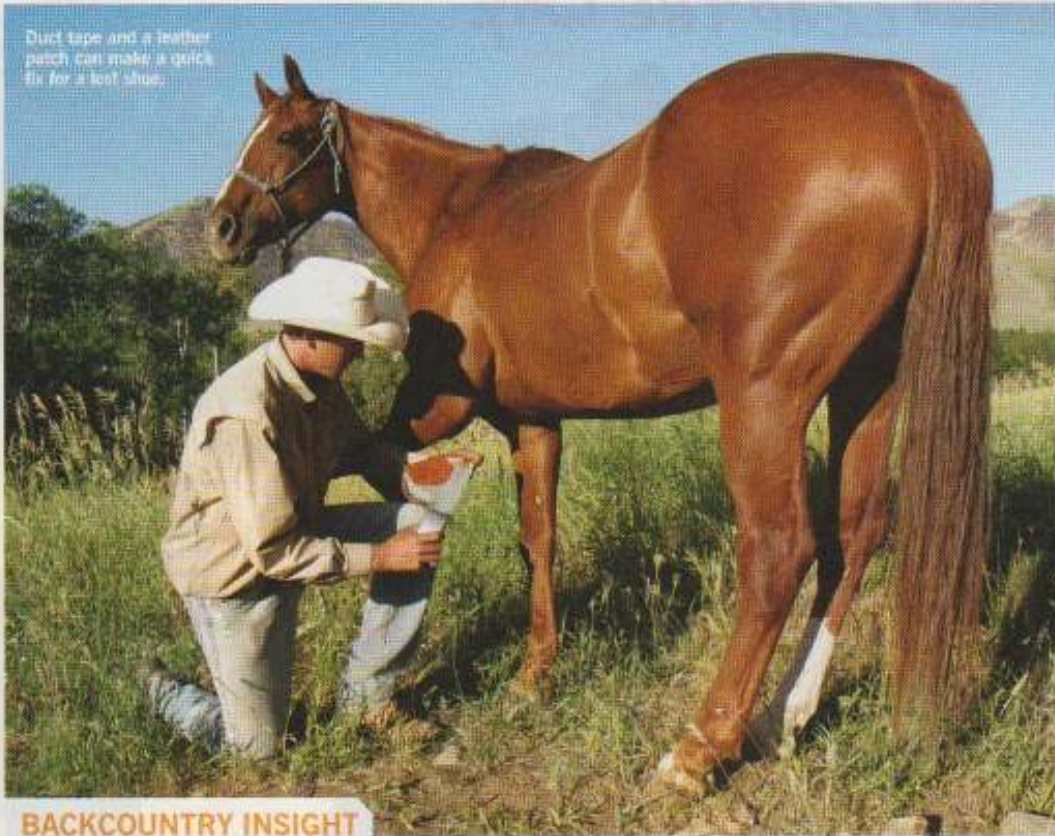


Duct tape and a leather patch can make a quick fix for a lost shoe.



BACKCOUNTRY INSIGHT

Horseshoe Fix-a-Flat

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY RYAN T. BELL

Learn what to do when your horse loses a shoe on the trail.

THROWING A HORSESHOE In the backcountry is the equivalent of getting a flat tire on a desolate stretch of highway. These strategies will keep you from getting stranded in the back of beyond.

SPARE HORSESHOE KIT During your farrier's next visit, ask to keep

your horse's old shoes. They make the perfect spares because they are already formed to the horse's hoof. To ensure that a spare is in good shape, schedule the farrier to come two weeks earlier than usual. Keep in mind that horseshoes get bent in the pulling process, so ask him to flatten them using a hammer

and anvil. Collect a pair of shoes for each horse—one front and one hind—and label them with the horse's name. Duct-tape nails to each shoe, and you have a spare horseshoe kit that is ready for the trail.

LEATHER PATCH Saddle maker Wade Miller of Montana has a good solution

for dealing with a thrown shoe in the backcountry: a leather patch. Miller carries leftover pieces of saddle leather that he fastens to the horse's hoof with duct tape. The leather patch is lightweight, gets surprisingly good traction, protects against stone bruises, and helps protect the hoof wall from chipping

until you make it back home.

HOOF BOOT The hoof boot is a valuable tool in the backcountry. It can be put on mid-trail and requires no farrier expertise. There are many styles on the market, but the high-sided "bootie" variety is the most versatile. It works in lieu of a

horseshoe, and can also be used to administer veterinary care to the hoof and pastern areas. The boot protects cuts against infection and dirt, holds a poultice or bandage in place, and can be filled with cold water for soaking a sprained or swollen joint.

TOOLS FOR THE TRAIL

Create a farrier kit for the trail that leaves the heavy stuff behind. Include multi-purpose items (pack a rasp, but

ditch the nippers), and modify the tools to make them pack-worthy (cut off long handles to make tools more compact). Here is a list of the essentials to pack along:

- Extra shoes and nails
- Hammer
- Hoof pick
- Clinchers
- Rasp
- Pull offs
- Duct tape

Ryan T. Bell is a Montana-based writer and wrangler.

A rider's "fix-a-flat" kit can include hoof boots, extra shoes, leather patches, duct tape and tools.

