

SHOC BLOC ARENA FOOTING

Shoc Bloc is a by-product of tire recycling. Made by shredding tire tread, it is much like a small sliver known as a "buffing". Shoc Bloc is 100% tire rubber, having no additives or coatings, and having been thoroughly cleaned of all fiber and steel cord. Shoc Bloc is delivered directly from the recycling plant, and it will be packaged in one of three different ways, depending on the size of an order and/or the proximity of the customer to the recycling plant: loose, in a dump truck; loose, in large corrugated boxes; or bagged in 50 pound sacks.

Shoc Bloc is generally used in areas where a high level of shock absorption is desirable, such as on walking paths, around horse walkers, in round pens, or in breeding sheds. Its "sliver" shape allows it to act like a miniature leafspring, and it will more effectively cushion a heavy footstep.

There are certain precautions that must be taken with Shoc Bloc. Tire rubber is a carbon-based material and can be flammable. Unlike straw or wood products, which also can be flammable, tire rubber can be difficult to extinguish once it is smoldering or burning. The loose-fill form of Shoc Bloc requires caution in its use.

We recommend the following: The totally safe use of shredded rubber as a footing additive requires that it be mixed with an inert material (such as sand, limestone screenings, or loose dirt) in the following ratio: 1" of Shoc Bloc to 4" of inert material, preferably sand. One pound of Shoc Bloc mulch will yield 1 sq. ft. of coverage. Shoc Bloc is between 25¢ and 29¢ per sq. ft. depending on the quantity you buy.

For example: if you have a 3,600 sq. ft pen or arena, you will need 3,600 lbs. To use Shoc Bloc in a more concentrated form, which will increase its shock absorbency, might present a fire risk. Also, you don't want too much "spring" as this can trick your horse and confound him when he gets to the Show.

Remember to keep cigarettes, sparks, firecrackers, any open flame, and all other forms of ignition away from Shoc Bloc installations, just as you would normally keep such hazards away from your barns and horses.

Shoc Bloc will give you and your horses many, many years of useful service. The added shock-absorbency will be a blessing to sore muscles and aching joints, and you will spend far less time dragging arenas and controlling dust.



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A RIDING ARENA FOOTING PRIMER

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ARENA FOOTING by Michael M. Donovan –
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Horse people tend to be very particular in their likes and dislikes. You can ask one hundred different horse people their opinion on one product and get almost one hundred different answers. Riding arena footing preferences are a great example of this. Opinions and likes vary from discipline to discipline and even from person to person within each separate discipline. Footing is the material found on the surface of an engineered riding arena. English arena riding falls basically into two categories: dressage and hunter/jumpers. Dressage enthusiasts typically like their footing a bit deeper than the jumpers. In the western disciplines, footing depths are generally split into two categories: barrel racing and reining. Here the reiners typically like their footing deeper than barrel racers. Footing depths generally vary between 2 and 5 inches, depending on material type and riding style.

The basic job of footing remains the same for all disciplines. It should cushion the horse's hooves, and provide Discipline-appropriate traction (which includes the ability of the reining horses to slide). The footing should be non-toxic, odor free, and as dust free as possible. It should also be consistent through out the arena (i.e., level, of uniform depth and firmness, etc.). When deciding which footing is right for you and your horses – ride it before you buy it. A particular footing or additive may feel great in your hand and feel completely different under hoof. Find a facility that has the kind of footing you are considering and ride on it – most footing manufacturers can provide you with a list of farms using their product. It is also recommended that you talk to the people who use it regularly and those responsible for maintaining it. Pertinent questions to ask include: How many riders use the arena per day/week? When was the footing installed? How much did it cost (both material and installation)? How often is the arena groomed and with what tool? What they are using for dust control – and if water, how much, how often, and how applied?

Answers to these questions will help you decide on the best footing to meet your riding needs, budget, and time/maintenance threshold.

The following sections describe a variety of footing materials and additives, but are by no means exhaustive. Every year new products arrive on the market and many may prove to be excellent. In any event, it is important to have clear expectations regarding the performance of your footing (as well as the manufacturer and the contractor installing the material). Footing can be very costly to install and even more costly to replace if you are dissatisfied. So it is very important to do your homework and make your decisions wisely.

Another important rule of thumb when installing your footing – less is more. Even on the most tightly compacted base there will be some co-mingling of base and footing (effectively increasing the volume of footing). Start with less material than you think you will need because it is much easier to add additional material to your arena, than to remove it.

STONE DUST FOOTING

Here in the east it is common to see arenas with a product known as stone dust (a.k.a. blue stone or #10 screenings) as the footing. Typically stone dust is used as the engineered base of the riding arena because it compacts well and does not contain large stones. Some excavators will compact the stone dust then add additional stone dust in its loose form as the footing on top. It is more difficult to maintain this type of arena as the tendency is for all of the material to become highly compacted. With no clear delineation between footing and base (as opposed to the footing in the next section) and the need for more frequent and aggressive harrowing to keep the riding surface from becoming rock-hard, it requires a skilled operator to keep the compacted material level (it will tend to have rolling waves) with a consistent “fluffy” layer above it. Stone dust is the lowest cost material to use as footing and may be appropriate for you if the additional maintenance needs and the possibility of a less level surface will not adversely affect your riding.

SAND FOOTING

By far the most common substance used for footing is sand. Sand is most frequently used as a stand-alone footing, but is also used with other lofting agents (see below). Sand placed over an engineered base composed of compacted stone dust is fairly easy to maintain. Sand will not harden like stone dust and when dragging, one can differentiate between fluffing the sand and harrowing into the base. Sand is the next most affordable footing material after stone dust. While there are a wide variety of sands marketed to equestrians, a washed concrete sand (ASTM C-33) is a good place to start. To meet the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) specifications, all C-33 sands must meet specific particle size requirements (i.e., they are washed to remove fine, dust-causing particles and screened to remove all larger pebbles and rocks). There are two broad categories of sand available: manufactured sand which is produced as a product from rock crushing, and natural sand which is mined from wherever it has been deposited (e.g., river bed sand or bank sand). The chemical composition of the material from which the sand is made will also affect its performance in the ring. Generally speaking, a hard (e.g., quartz), angular C-33 sand will resist breakdown and provide good traction in your arena.

LOFTING AGENTS

People often prefer to add a lofting agent to sand to help with active recovery, retain moisture, and to add more cushion and spring. This list is seemingly endless with new products coming on the market almost monthly. To date there are three major categories on the market: rubber/plastic products, fiber products, and wood products.

RUBBER PRODUCTS

A wide variety of rubber and plastic products are available for use as lofting agents for your arena. Some, like crumb rubber (made from recycled tires), have been around for many years. Others, including ground sneakers or tennis balls, shredded surgical rubber, and stripped electrical wire casings have come to market more recently. Rubber lofting agents provide additional cushioning for your riding surface. In addition, many (the crumb rubbers in particular) help retain moisture by some of the material “floating” to the top of the sand and creating a “lid” to keep moisture in. The darker colored materials also absorb heat from the sun and will stay rideable longer in cold weather than sand-only footings. When installed correctly, these footings can provide a low maintenance, all weather quality riding surface both indoors and out.

(Summit appreciates the contributions of Mr. Donovan to the equestrian industry and support his expert approach to arena design, construction and maintenance.)