

# Sharpening hoof knives by The Barefoot Blacksmith

## There are a few tricks of the trade!



Hoof knives should only be used when they are fully sharpened and should only be used with the relevant personal protective equipment.

A knife that is only half sharp is far more likely to slip off a hoof and cut things other than the intended hoof. And then there is the extra effort required to push a knife that isn't fully sharp. Blunt knives will not cut hard hooves.

Hoof knives are best kept with a 'working edge', which is best achieved through constant maintenance. Knives should be kept constantly sharp with regular tune ups, do not allow your knife to get blunt as then you will need to spend quite some time to fully re sharpen it.

A good way to sharpen loop knives is to sit them on top of a wooden fence post because they can be pressed firmly into the wood which holds them securely in place, but it is also a good way to get a good clear view of the edge you are creating with the sharpener.

The blade is only sharpened on the inside edge and the aim is to have a straight edge about 2-3mm wide that finishes in a true point. It is best to continue with the blade angle and width that the knife is manufactured with.

The trick is to keep a relaxed grip on the sharpener so that it is more likely to follow the existing angle. If you grip the sharpener too tightly or push too hard when sharpening, it may start cutting a new angle on the blade.

An excellent cutting edge can be maintained on medium to large loop knives with a large diamond grit sharpener ( see pic above). For small loop knives, it is necessary to use a small sharply tapered diamond sharpener(see pic below).

Whilst the diamond grit will cut easily in any direction, it is important to cover the full length of the blade with each pass to avoid the creation of 'valleys and ridges' in the cutting edge.

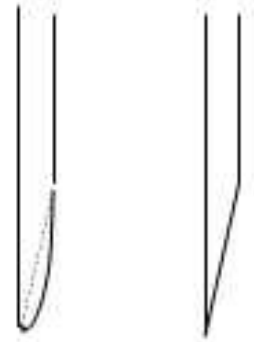


In addition, diamond grit sharpeners are designed to be used 'wet', with an agent that acts to both lift and remove metal filings and reduce friction between the cutting edges. Water, detergent or oil based lubes can be used. A diamond grit sharpener that is used dry will become clogged with filings and also wear out much quicker than it should.



When a knife gets excessively blunt, there may be too much metal to remove for a diamond grit sharpener to be effective. This is because excessively blunted blades are curved, or have a hump in the middle which needs to be removed.

This is where a rat tail bastard file is very useful (see pic above). The secret with using a bastard file is to twist it as you move it along the cutting edge to create straight edge without any valleys.



It is vital that bastard files are kept dry and free from oil. But remember that a bastard file can take away a large amount of metal so it should be used conservatively.

If you are having trouble creating the correct angle on the cutting edge, try to have either a dusty blade or even colour the blade with black texta so you can immediately see the fresh steel where you have cut it.

Maintenance sharpening with a quality diamond grit sharpener is far better (and easier) than a total rebuild with a rough cut file.

We have been looking for quite some time for a range of sharpeners that collectively cover all bases for the sharpening needs of trimmers and we have finally sourced some well-made, good value products.

We have trialed many different diamond grit sharpeners and we are quite pleased with the longevity of these particular sharpeners (when they are used correctly).

The rat tail files are the highest quality STIHL brand.

We offer these three four sharpeners as a discounted set. All bases covered.

**Four sharpeners in a case for just \$44**

