*Back Home by Chris Hardie*

**Sometimes, nailing it can be really painful**

I was really nailed this past week. And I have no one to blame but myself.

No, I didn’t engage in any nefarious criminal activity — but it was still my own fault. At least I paid the price for my own malfeasance.

If my readers didn’t know by now, I’m sort of a packrat. I am loathe to throw away any spare pieces of lumber; I never know when I may need one for another project. Rummaging through my pile looking for a piece of plywood or a 2-by-4 beats making a special trip to the lumber yard.

I was walking past my pile, which mainly resides in an old feed bin in the hayloft. I say mainly because there is a little spillage. I was carrying two bales when I stepped on a piece of cardboard that is also being saved for some sort of strategic purpose — a purpose that for the life of me I can’t recall.

Underneath the cardboard was a piece of oak window trim I had saved. I’ve stepped on that piece of trim many times. Only this time I stepped on the wrong spot.

Two nails protruding from the trim drove through the fecal-covered bottom of my rubber barn boots. They poked through my sock and into the pad of my left foot just below my toes. I instantly reacted with a simultaneous colorful metaphor as I pulled my foot off the spikes.

I knew the situation was bad. The nails didn’t look too dirty, but there were plenty of germs and bacteria on and in my boot – bacteria that were now inside my foot.

I had really stepped into it this time.

A closer examination was needed but the damage was done. The animals needed feeding so I finished my chores, wincing with every left-foot step.

Inside the house, I pulled off the boot and my bloody sock. I gently soaked my foot in the tub, applying a liberal dose of antiseptic to the wounds. I knew the outside was clean but wasn’t sure about the inside.

My wife, Sherry, said I should go to the emergency room immediately for a tetanus shot. I said I thought I had an up-to-date shot and that I’d check in the morning.

[MayoClinic.org states tetanus is a disease](https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/tetanus/symptoms-causes/syc-20351625) caused by a toxin made by spores of the bacteria Clostridium tetani. It’s found in soil, dust and animal feces — which would otherwise describe the sole of my boot. When those spores enter a deep flesh wound they can grow into a bacteria that creates the toxin tetanospasmin.

Signs of tetanus include spasms and stiffness in jaw muscles, neck stiffness, body spasms, fever, sweating, elevated blood pressure and rapid heart rate. I started to become nervous when I began feeling all those symptoms while watching TV. Then I realized it was only my reaction to the Democratic presidential debate.

We vaccinate our sheep every year with a vaccine called CDT that protects against tetanus and overeating disease. It sounds like something that might be beneficial to me in a couple of ways.

I know a tetanus vaccine is good for 10 years so I was fairly sure I was covered. But it’s not like I carry a tetanus-coverage card in my wallet. Although come to think of it that wouldn’t be a bad idea. Maybe Flo could add that to my auto-insurance coverage — comprehensive, collision, towing and Tdap.

That night, I had difficulty sleeping because of my throbbing foot. I climbed out of bed to grab an ice sleeve that we use to chill wine bottles; I put it over my foot. The bottle was already empty.

The foot and ankle contain 26 bones — one-quarter of all the bones in a human body. There are 33 joints as well as more than 100 muscles, tendons and ligaments. There’s a network of blood vessels, nerves, skin and soft tissue. I didn’t know that, but that’s what HealthCommunities.com said [when I looked for foot pain](http://www.healthcommunities.com/health-topics/foot-health.shtml).

A clinic visit the next day confirmed there were no broken bones. But I was put on a course of strong antibiotics and told to stay off my feet for a few days — or to at least keep the foot elevated.

I did my best to comply with doctor’s orders and the foot is slowly starting to feel better. But I’m not out of the woods yet. The average tetanus incubation period is a week to 10 days — but signs and symptoms of tetanus can appear as long as several weeks after tetanus bacteria enter the body.

I should probably avoid exposing myself to any politics just to be safe.

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