

Equine Manure Fork Repair

For Jonathan Swift

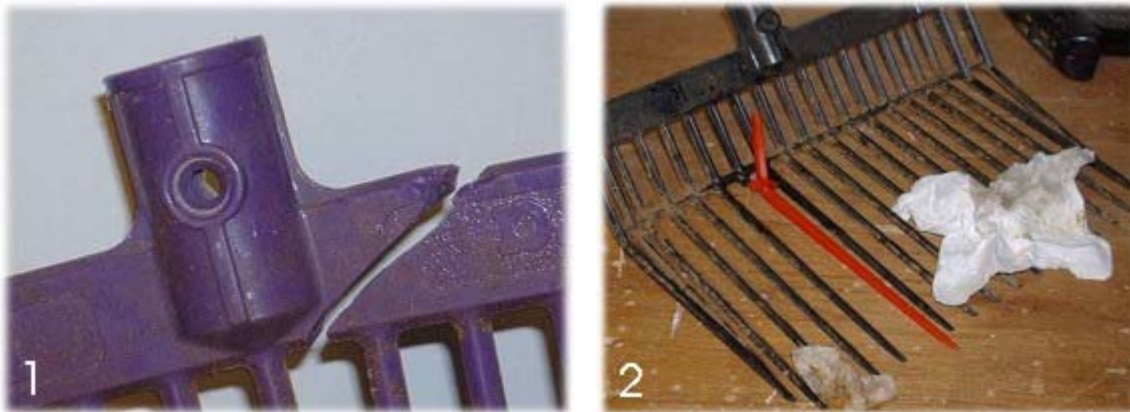
Two types of damage occur to tempered plastic manure forks:

1. The spine breaks
2. A tine snaps off

Regarding 1 (illus. 1): Broken spine:

- A. Tell your people not to run over the fork head with the tractor.
- B. Tell your people not to leave a fork in an occupied stall: the inquisitive horse has nosed the fork over, and has stepped on it.
- C. Tell your people not to put their foot on the spine of a fork. When they need a shovel, use a shovel and put their foot to it.

Outcome: Some splinting is possible. No real cures to date. The damage is fatal.



Regarding 2 (illus. 2): Snapped tine:

- A. Tell your people “Shit happens.”
- B. Repair the fork perfectly in a few minutes for about twenty-five cents in materials.

The repair concept is:

- To use wire to hold the replacement tine in place
- To cover/jacket the rib of the fork head and the rib of the replacement part with hot melt glue

Why it works:

The glue is a little sticky to the plastic fork parts, but it loves to stick to itself: the glue jacket over the splice is rubbery, tough, reinforced with wire, and never twists or releases.

For the repair, you need:

A hot melt glue gun

One or two sticks of ½ by 4 inch sticks of hot melt glue

A sheet of paper towel, water

Two pieces of fine wire, each ten or so inches long (wire about the diameter of that in a twist-tie)

One loose tine replacement/repair part

Suggestions:

Borrow a hot melt glue gun if you have to. Mine uses the ½ by 4 inch sticks, but the little craft guns do work if you put a little more time in.

For the repair-part tine, find a very-dead fork head and trim the tines off the spine. Trim the tines from each other so each tine has two short arms. A coping saw, jig saw, saber saw, work well for the trimming. If you don't have one, take the very-dead fork head to a friend who has one of these saws: even the oldest head ought to yield eight or ten tines, so you won't have to bother your friend very often.

Do this:

Tear the piece of paper towel about 2/3 and 1/3.

Wet the smaller piece, moisten and clean the fork rib above where the tine was snapped, and moisten and clean the replacement tine's arms and rib.

Dry these parts with the larger piece of paper towel.

Take one piece of wire, bend it about in half, and lash the replacement tine to the fork head (see illus. 3). Make one pass to hold them together. Put two or three twists in the wire to snug things up. Several inches of wire remain: use them to bind the two parts a second time, and twist the ends of the wire together when you're near the ends.



Plug the hot melt glue gun in, to warm up.

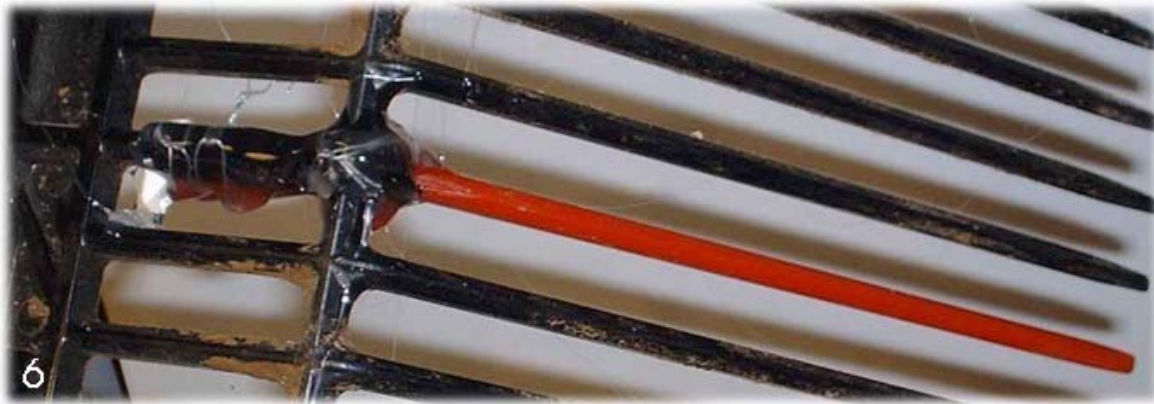
Take the second piece of wire and lash the rib of the replacement tine to the rib of the fork head (illus. 4). I try to use a figure-8 around the two pieces, and often support the rib-end of the replacement tine with a little fold of cardboard, because I want the point of the replacement to be in line with the existing tine points. The wire does not have to strangle the ribs: go around a couple of times, twist the wire two or three times, use the rest of the wire going around one or two more times, then twist it to finish the piece off.



CAUTION: Hot melt glue is very hot at 380 degrees Fahrenheit, and likes to stick to skin. It will burn you where it touches.

Note: Using hot melt glue in the living room over the best carpet in the house is probably not a good idea. At the very least, work over some newspaper or feed sacks, something disposable.

Apply some glue to the space between the ribs (where the wire is), and very lightly coat all of both ribs (the area where the parts overlap, illus. 5, 6). The glue will sag until it cools, so be aware, and turn the head to keep the still-cooling glue where you want it.



I can usually get by with one stick of glue and the tiny start of a second stick. When the glue is cool it becomes pearly and the fork head is ready for back-to-work.

John Sepich.