



Edelrid Talon spikes

WE ASKED CTS FORESTRY TO PUT EDELRID'S TALON CLIMBING SPIKES TO THE TEST. HERE, ANDY FIELDING GIVES US HIS OPINION.

I'M sure that I'm not the first one to say it, but my first impression, as I pull these spikes out of the box, is that they look a bit bulky. So, is all that bulk, when strapped to my legs, going to provide me with the comfort I need from a pair of spikes?

The technical specification boldly declares, 'the 3D-shaped padding is for a better comfort with ventilated mesh for better breathability'. So, let's see if that is the case when they're being used in the working environment.

The next thing that strikes me is that, despite the shank of these spikes being made of steel, they feel extremely light. In fact, when I first picked them up out of the box, I actually thought they were aluminium. According to the manufacturer's marketing information each one weighs in at only 1.1 kg. That's as light as most of the aluminium spikes on the

market and only just heavier than the carbon fibre ones. So, by making the spikes lighter, is Edelrid sacrificing something in the design to lose those extra grams? The answer to that question will only come to light once they're put through their paces.

The leg iron shank itself is not a straight up and down shaft, but has been ergonomically designed to fit the anatomy of the leg. In plain speak that means Edelrid has incorporated a bend in the shank where the boot/ankle bone protrudes. This allows the upper section of the shank to sit flush next to the leg which in turn gives a greater area for the padding to be in contact with the leg. More contact should mean a greater distribution of the load and therefore a more comfortable experience.

The lower section of the shank is also angled forward giving an offset stirrup and a gaff that is aligned with the instep of the boot. The

▲ Outside view showing the three-way lower binding system.

▲ One of the minimum overlap markers on the Velcro straps.

spikes came equipped with 43 mm long 'Pole' gaffs, although there is an option to replace these with 70 mm long 'American tree' gaffs at an additional cost. The stirrup that runs underneath the boot is over 30 mm wide and didn't fit snug on the Arbortec Scaffell Lite boots I have - that could just be a 'new spikes on old boots' scenario. However, I did try them out on my even older pair of Meindl Airstreams but with the same result.

The spikes are supplied with a plastic Talon gaff gauge, which can be used to check the length, profile and sharpness of the gaffs and to examine the width and thickness of the stirrup. There are also a few replacement gaff screws and the appropriate size Allen key to fit.

The bulky calf pad - that protects my leg from the steel shank digging in - is made of dual-density foam and is removable, as it is

held in place by a number of Velcro strips. This allows access to the height-adjusting screws and to ensure there is sufficient overlap of padding above the plastic cuff. The height of the plastic cuff can be adjusted in 0.5 cm increments from 38 cm to 47 cm, to fit a wide variety of leg lengths. The instruction manual runs through the initial set-up to ensure the cuffs are set at the correct height. It's worth taking the time to do this to ensure correct fitting and to maximise the comfort and support these spikes give.

There are two separate Velcro leg straps that are set at different angles to hold the leg both above and below the calf muscle. There are three adjustment slots on the plastic cuff through which the straps can be passed. The selection of the correct slot shortens or lengthens each strap to give a wider range of variation in calf muscle sizes. The straps

▲ Inside view of the spike.

▲ Front view showing top foot strap and bent leg iron shank.

certainly seem long enough, with plenty of overlap to ensure a strong, secure attachment.

For a near perfect fixing to the boot, the lower binding consists of a three-directional adjusting system. The Velcro heel strap is adjustable to ensure the instep of the boot is aligned with the stirrup of the spike. The second Velcro strap then wraps over the top of the boot to hold the spikes firmly in place. The foot binding straps are also height adjustable, using a third strap, to give greater range and flexibility. All of the fastenings are on the outside of the spikes so there is no internal rubbing or catching which might accidentally undo the binding.

When I first tried the spikes on I used them on the 'factory settings', before adjusting any heights or attachment points. All of the Velcro straps have a 'minimum overlap' mark. Of the four straps, I found the heel strap the most difficult to adjust to achieve a minimum overlap. I eventually solved it by adjusting the height strap. Once I'd fixed this, I was able to leave the heel strap permanently fastened to make it both quicker, and more efficient, to put them on. If I'm honest, I didn't notice any real benefit from my adjustments but maybe that's because I only needed to adjust them slightly. For comparison, I swapped back to my old steel, straight shank spikes and they hurt like hell after only a few minutes. So that bulky padding seems to have worked on me, and it certainly didn't get in the way whilst climbing.

Having climbed in these spikes for about a month would I swap back to my 'old' steel spikes? In a word, no. In fact, I'm struggling to find anything negative to write about them. If I have to find one flaw it would be that my Saw Pod doesn't fit very easily on, or over, the bulky construction of the spikes. Having said that, I feel that it is such a minor point and only relevant because of where I have my pruning saw.

At around the £300 to £350 price range, these are not the cheapest, nor the most expensive climbing spikes on the market but, pound for pound, and kilogram for kilogram, they may just be the cornfiest.