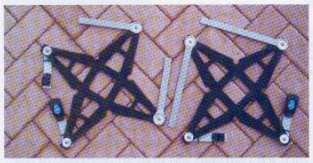
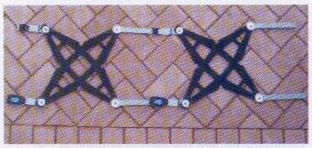


Each of the six sections of a Go Claws set folds to a square for storage. The straps and buckles are fitted on strong swivels.



Two of the three sections that link together to fit on each wheel.

(10.6lb). Three pieces fit on each driving wheel. Each piece consists of a four-pointed star of ribbed, moulded rubber, having two toothed plastic strips and two ratchet buckles.

They can be fitted without jacking or moving the 'van. The two strips on one piece are entered into the buckles from the adjacent piece, and all are tightened evenly.

The first fitting is important for two reasons. One, it is likely that the lengths of the toothed strips will need to be reduced. It is easy to measure how much, and there is a table on the box to guide you. Two, it is imperative to check for adequate clearance between the fitted Go Claws and any parts of the suspension, brake hoses, or cables. The suppliers will advise before you buy whether this clearance is normally sufficient on your model of base vehicle. Furthermore, if there does turn out to be a problem, the set can be returned and the company guarantees a refund. That seems fair.

The performance of Go Claws is claimed to be equally good on sand, snow, or (most widely important for motorcaravanners) wet grass. Conveniently, you can drive with the Claws fitted even on dry, paved roads at up to 30mph 'for a limited distance'. In fact, the literature quotes a test drive over 200 miles,

with very little wear resulting. Being flat rubber, the Claws are kind to tyres.

Between them, the three models of Go Claws fit most tyre sizes from 195/70 (14in wheel) to 285/75 (24.5in). They are guaranteed for a year.

Fitting the test set to my Ducato, I probably took five minutes to assemble the three pieces in situ, and another five to tighten the six straps slowly and evenly to make the rubber 'star' settle exactly centred on the middle of the tyre. Thereafter, it was just a matter of noting where to cut one of the strips in order to trim all twelve on the bench later.

A wheel fitted with a complete Go Claws assembly.

To remove the set from its wheel, only one of the strips at the back of the wheel needs to be unbuckled before the whole assembly is lifted away. Like most other jobs, this one is much quicker after the first time.

Now for the test results. When fitting the Go Claws, two of the buckles that will be on the back (far side) of the wheel can be engaged and adjusted to length before fitting the assembly to the wheel. To engage the third; you need two hands and to work by feel or lie on the ground to see behind the wheel – fine on dry paving, but no fun in mud or snow. With the back fitted, you have to pull hard to bring the mid-line of the assembly onto the mid-line of the tyre tread.

The lever-operated ratchets at the front that do the final tensioning of the assembly are powerful, require little effort, and hold perfectly.

Tough rubber rings are used to hold the ends of the adjuster strips flat against the wheel and to avoid the possibility of their catching against any suspension parts, cables, or hoses. The rings are difficult to move once the whole assembly is tight, so should be fitted as soon as each strip is engaged in its buckle and, later, placed precisely.

The tensioning levers are easy to operate. To release the buckle, you press the blue section.

Driving on road, you can, of course, feel each driving wheel ride up onto each section of its Go Claw, resulting in a low-frequency vibration rather like that experienced when driving on those grit roads that develop corrugations. You can probably find a speed at which this effect is minimised: for my medium coachbuilt, this was at 18mph.

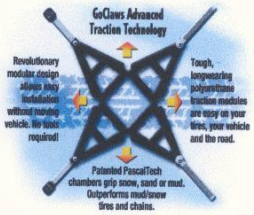
For the grip test, I drove on wet grass, which is what matters most for the vast majority of owners. I found I could drive up, and re-start on, a slope of 1 in 6 (9 per cent), which is steeper than you would find on almost any campsite and few CLs or CSs.

To force a failure, I tackled a gradually steepening slope. Approaching at a good walking pace, I had the impression that the 'van would have climbed any slope on which the engine could have delivered enough torque. (Sutton Bank's notorious 1 in 3 comes to mind. Almost any modern 'van can surmount this, and the limit is set more by the amount of oil on the road than the gradient.) The more critical test was re-starting, and the limit came with the front (driving) wheels on about 1 in 4 (15 per cent), though the rear was on only 1 in 8 (7 per cent).

Where the ground was soft or sandy, the slipping wheel dug a hole, but on firm ground, the tyre slipped within the Go Claw – not entirely surprising where there are wet rubber surfaces.

As for removing the muddy devices after use, because driving on tarmac roads is no problem, you can at least drive to a clean bit of surface somewhere in which to fumble around the back of the wheels to undo that one essential fastening.

To summarise what appear to me to be the critical features. Go Claws are low in bulk and weight compared to some other grippers that also work well. They can be fitted without moving the wheels even if on sticky ground, and can be driven on roads. The choice is yours.



CONTACT

A set of Go Claws costs £125 including delivery from **Van Comfort**, Aurillac Way, Hallcroft Industrial Estate, Retford, Nottinghamshire DN22 7PX (tel: 01777 701804; fax: 01777 701799; e-mail: sales@vancomfort.co.uk; web site: www.vancomfort.co.uk).

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GET A GRIP

We have tested several arrangements for improving the grip of tyres on slippery surfaces, but all have been rather (or very) bulky and some quite heavy. Some fit on the wheels, so that you can drive as far as necessary to reach firm ground. Others rest on or are pegged to the ground, and you need to gain as much momentum as possible in a short distance, then 'hope for the best'.

These Go Claws do at least pack flat (in a box 39cm square x 14cm/15.5in square x 5.5in) with a combined weight of 4.8kg