How to deal with sharp fret ends
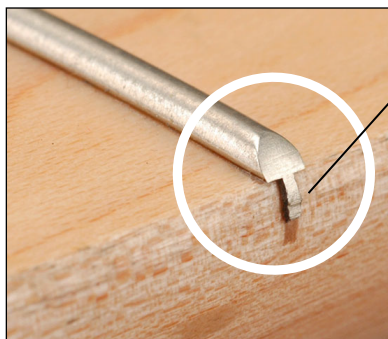
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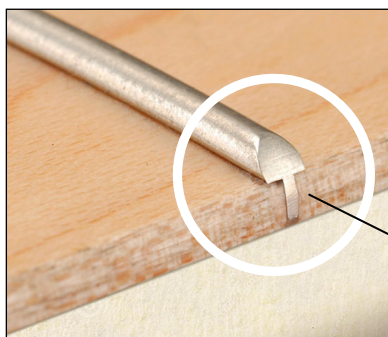
The problem

Wood shrinks in dry air, leaving metal fret ends exposed.
In many places, this is a problem in winter due to dry heated air.
Jagged fret ends are uncomfortable and can even cut the skin.
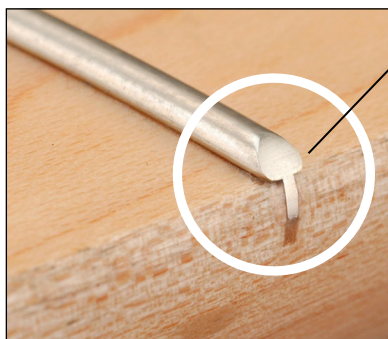
Prevent the problem

Ideally, maintain 45-50% relative humidity in rooms where you keep guitars.
If that's difficult to do, it's easy to control humidity inside your guitar cases
by storing a humidifier in each case with the guitar.

Fix the problem

Protect the finish   Before working on your frets, protect your guitar's finish
with low-tack tape. (Painter's masking tape can damage lacquer finishes.) Put
low-tack tape anyplace where a slip with a file could touch the finish. If you
have a bolt-on neck, consider removing the neck to give you lots of room to
work.

File the fret ends   With a Fret End Dressing File, file each fret end so it's flush
with the fingerboard edge. If the ends are sticking out a lot, use a 6" Fret
Leveling File to file several frets at once. File the metal only, being careful to
stop before you get down to the finish.

Shape and polish   Slightly round off and smooth the ends of each fret using
the Fret End Dressing File. This file has two smooth edges that can ride on the
fingerboard without cutting: use the rounded edge for a rolling action when
you round the fret ends.

Remove the low-tack tape and polish the fret ends with a Micro-Mesh
Touch-Up Stick and Soft Touch Pads. Micro-Mesh removes scratches and gives
the metal and surrounding finish a mirror-like shine. Your frets will feel great
to the touch.

Tools and materials you'll need:

#10908 D'Addario Planet Waves Small Instrument Humidifier
#5087 Rough Fret Smooth & Shine Set
#1175 Fret End Dressing File
#0862 6" Fret Leveling File
#1682 Low-Tack 1" Tape

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