

Factsheet: Thrush

Thrush can be a common occurrence during the winter season for both horses living out in muddy wet fields and for those standing in stables for long periods of time. This is because it is caused by a bacterium, *Fusobacterium necrophorum*, that thrives in conditions with low oxygen. Horses feet that are submerged in mud for much of the day or those that are stabled for many hours standing on moist bedding provide the perfect environment for this bacterium to fester. Although moist, unhygienic conditions are the main factors determining infection other factors such as poor foot conformation and lack of foot trimming can play a role. Horses with deep clefts or sheared heels are particularly vulnerable to thrush infection.

Clinical signs

- Black, thick discharge with a characteristic foul odour is seen in the central and collateral sulci of the frog.
- There can be mild or severe tissue destruction of the frog.
- Some horses can be foot sore or lame and have pain on palpation of the frog and heels.

Diagnosis

- Normally these characteristics signs are enough to make a diagnosis however for a definite diagnosis bacteriology testing can be performed on swabs taken from the central and collateral sulci.

Treatment

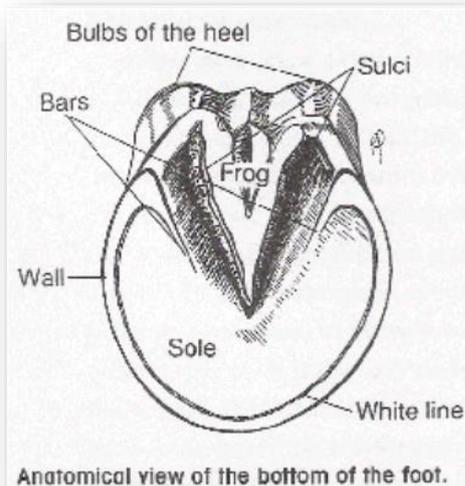
- The horse should be moved to a dry, clean environment.
- All affected feet should be thoroughly cleaned twice daily and the frog and its sulcus scrubbed with dilute iodine solution. This is usually required for 7-14 days.



- If the tissue of the frog or within the affected frog sulcus has become necrotic then farriery assistance is needed to pare this away down to healthy tissue, allowing air to reach any remaining damaged tissues.
- The prognosis is good unless the infection has been allowed to become chronic and/or there is extensive involvement of deeper tissues, veterinary attention is required if this is the case.
-

Prevention

- Provide access to a clean dry area for your horse, even if it is just for part of the day during winter.
- Regular foot care and inspection - ideally horses feet should be picked out every day.
- Good stable management.
- Regular trimming to help with foot conformation and to keep the frog healthy.



This photograph demonstrates the black discharge commonly seen in the central and collateral sulci of the frog.

We'd really value your support

Communities For Hoses works tirelessly to improve the welfare of horses through working closely with their owners to educate and support them.

We believe that prevention is better than cure and that through education we can achieve better outcomes for horses and their owners.

If you've found this factsheet useful, then perhaps you would consider supporting us, either with a one-off gift or as a regular giver.

Any amount, great or small, would be gladly received, even if it's just to buy our hard-working welfare office a cup of coffee or half a tank of petrol.

We need your help to:

- Cover veterinary bills
- Buy equipment
- Cover petrol and transport costs
- Pay our welfare officer
- Run our education programmes

<https://www.communitiesforhorses.org/support-us>

There are a lot of other useful resources on our website, so please take the time to have a browse, and subscribe to our newsletter:

<https://www.communitiesforhorses.org/subscribe>

<https://www.facebook.com/community4horse/>

**Please share this factsheet with anyone
you think may find it useful**