

# EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THRUSH

## THE BASICS

What it is: An anaerobic bacterial infection that penetrates the soft tissues of the foot, particularly around the frog. Thrush is caused by a combination of different bacteria, but it is commonly associated with *Fusobacterium necrophorum*.



How it develops: Although unsanitary living conditions are often blamed for thrush, there are multiple causes, from a lack of exercise to imbalanced hooves. Even well-kept horses in ideal conditions can develop thrush. Some horses are simply more prone to the condition.

How to recognize it: Thrush produces a characteristic black discharge and strong, foul odor. It can also give the frog a rough-looking appearance and abnormal shape.

## HOW TO PREVENT THRUSH

- Provide dry footing. If your turnout areas are constantly muddy, bring horses into a barn periodically to give their hooves a chance to dry out.
- Keep stalls and paddocks clean. Manure and urine foster the growth of pathogens.
- Pick out your horse's feet regularly. Stall-kept horses need a daily hoof cleaning, while those kept in large outdoor spaces need their hooves checked weekly.
- Put your horse on a regular farriery schedule. Periodic farrier visits will help keep your horse's feet healthy and sound.
- Make sure your horse gets plenty of exercise. The flexing of the hoof capsule associated with movement pushes out dirt and debris. Horses who stand for long periods of time are more likely to develop thrush.



## HOW TO TREAT THRUSH

Effective treatment of thrush requires the application of an antiseptic solution to combat the causal bacteria. But avoid homemade thrush treatments, which are often ineffective and damage tissue. Instead select a commercial preparation that contains copper sulfate, iodine, Manuka honey, microsilver or other anti-microbial agents.

Treatment entails two steps:

- 1** Clean the affected hoof thoroughly with a hoof pick, removing dirt, debris, and loose tissue from the frog area.
- 2** Then apply your chosen treatment solution directly to the affected areas, taking care to ensure that it penetrates into even the deepest crevices.

Most mild cases of thrush respond well to consistent daily treatment and will clear up within a week or two.



Contact your veterinarian if the affected hoof doesn't respond to treatment within a week. You'll also want to seek veterinary help if a thrush infection causes significant lameness or appears to be spreading to other parts of the hoof.



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