

THRUSH

What is thrush?

Thrush is an unpleasant infection of the horse's frog which is predisposed by moist, damp, dirty ground or stable conditions.

What causes thrush?

Thrush is an infection of the central and lateral sulcus (groove) of the frog of the horse's foot, most often involving bacterial infection and occasionally fungal infection. One species of bacterium (*Fusobacterium necrophorum*) is particularly aggressive, invading and destroying the frog, sometimes exposing the deeper sensitive tissues. Long heel conformation encourages the development of deep narrow frog sulci which are more prone to the development of thrush if environmental conditions are right.

How is thrush diagnosed?

Thrush produces a foul smelling black discharge in the affected sulcus of the frog. There is pain on applying pressure to the area. The hind feet are more often affected than the front feet and, occasionally, infection may result in a general swelling of the lower limb.

How is thrush treated?

The horse should be moved to a dry clean environment. The foot should be thoroughly cleaned out, removing necrotic debris from within the affected frog sulcus, and then pared out down to healthy tissue, allowing air to reach any remaining damaged tissues. Your farrier or veterinarian can help with this step. The frog and its sulcus should be scrubbed daily with dilute iodine solution. The status of the horse's tetanus vaccination should be checked. There are several commercially available topical products for daily application to dry and disinfect the foot. Thereafter, the horse should be kept in clean, dry stable conditions and the frog should be cleaned and treated regularly until the infection is controlled and the tissues heal.



**Deep infected cleft in frog
associated with thrush**

How can thrush be prevented?

Prevention is better than cure and thrush can be avoided by good stable management, and regular foot care and inspection. Stable your horse in clean dry conditions and have your horses' feet regularly trimmed to avoid the development of long heel conformation and to keep the frog healthy.

With early treatment and good stable and environmental management, the prognosis for complete recovery for cases of thrush is good. Treatment will usually be required for 7-14 days. The prognosis for complete resolution is good unless the infection has been allowed to become chronic and/or there is extensive involvement of deeper tissues.