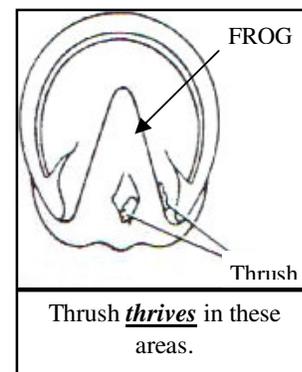


It's Better Dead: "*Fusiform necrophorum*" AKA: Thrush

Thrush is destruction of the frog by an anaerobic bacteria: *Fusiform necrophorum*. Anaerobic means: "without oxygen." Common knowledge tells us that the bottom of the hoof is 'basically' isolated from oxygen 24/7, and therefore provides the ultimate atmosphere for Thrush. It is basically a flesh eating disease - leaving only necrotic or dead tissue in its path. We can also find the disease in deep puncture wounds, because of the limited amount of oxygen. Humans can relate to Thrush in horses because we often compare it to athlete's foot. The picture to the right shows where Thrush is commonly found.



What causes Thrush?

The main culprits are: poor stall management, flooded/wet pastures, and long, untrimmed hooves. Urine and manure saturated bedding create an ideal environment for the anaerobic bacteria to grow. So how do untrimmed hooves come into play? Generally, the part of the hoof that grows the most is the toe. When the toe gets long, all of the horse's weight is shifted back on its heels. If a horse is bearing a lot of weight on his heels then the frog is constantly making ground contact and allowing the Thrush prone areas to become compacted with bedding and moist soils.

Does your horse have Thrush?

How do we detect Thrush? It is notorious for its foul smell and the infection is usually black. The "Thrush smell" is very distinct—not to be confused with manure. Often, the frog and other Thrush prone areas are softer when infected and can even cause lameness!! If you are unsure of your diagnosis, ask your farrier or veterinarian.

Should you be concerned?

Yes. Treatment should be started immediately after detection. **Why?** If the Thrush infection is severe enough, it can penetrate the sensitive structures of the hoof and form an abscess. This disease can definitely put you and your horse out of commission for a while.

Treatment:

There are several products on the market that effectively kill the anaerobic bacteria. Most of the products contain some kind of antiseptic, like Iodine, and a drying agent - formaldehyde. Common Thrush medications: *Thrush Buster*, *Kopertox*, *Thrush Away*, etc. (in no way does the extension service promote any of the listed products.) You can find Thrush medication at your local feed/drug store.

In addition to applying medication, as directed by the label, it is also critical that the infected horse be in a "dry" area while recovering. It is also very beneficial to your horses' recovery that his hooves be cleaned/picked daily. The medication will not reach the active tissue if manure and other debris are in its way - so take special care to remove: manure, bedding, soil, and necrotic tissue. **Home remedies:** Some farriers will recommend a Clorox Bleach application. Precaution should be taken when applying Bleach - sometimes the skin above the hoof, on the leg, can be very sensitive to caustic ingredients like Bleach. Also, hands and clothing should be taken into consideration during application.

"Thrush is caused by an anaerobic bacteria, Fusiform necrophorum."

Prevention:

While there are management practices that can prevent it, Thrush can also occur under optimum conditions.

- Clean stalls frequently
It would only be logical to keep stalls clean, since we are now aware that unsanitary conditions cause Thrush.
- Clean hooves often
Cleaning the hooves often would not only aid in prevention, but it would also give you more opportunities for early detection of Thrush.
- Dry ground
If you find your pastures in flooded conditions, find higher ground for your "hooved friends"!