

AT A GLANCE

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Hoof Abscesses

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Hoof abscesses require wrapping to keep the area clean and prevent further infection.

A hoof abscess is a localized infection of a horse's foot, usually behind the hoof wall or sole. While hoof abscesses can be extremely painful, they usually resolve easily with treatment within 3-5 days.

Clinical signs of a hoof abscess include:

- ◆ Lameness, often severe and nonweight-bearing;
- ◆ Swelling in the associated leg;
- ◆ Localized heat;
- ◆ Drainage or evidence of a "tract"; and
- ◆ Increased digital pulse in the affected limb.

3-5

Often, hoof abscesses will "blow" or pop open and ooze a smelly pus, usually giving the horse near-immediate relief from the painful pressure.

There are two common types of hoof abscesses:

SUBSOLAR — Under the sole, which typically vent at the white line, bars, or heel bulbs.

SUBMURAL — Under the wall, which typically vent at the coronary band.

Hoof abscesses often result from an initial trauma, such as bruising or a puncture, which allows bacteria into the foot, where infection festers. Management practices and health conditions can make horses more susceptible to getting hoof abscesses.



Subsolar

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Submural

MAUREN FLEITNER

Rapidly changing wet-dry climates or wet-frozen environments.

These conditions can degrade hoof quality and lead to bruising and injuries.



Frozen ground

Poor hoof quality or conformation. Weak and/or imbalanced hooves are more vulnerable to the injuries that predispose a horse to abscesses.

Neglected hoof care. Lack of hoof hygiene and proper trimming and farriery can lead to weakened hooves.



ISABELLE ARNON

Poor hoof care

Pituitary pars intermedia dysfunction (PPID or equine Cushing's disease) or other immune-system compromising diseases.

Diseases that affect the immune system make horses more prone to infection.



Cushing's disease

Rocky or hard footing.

Poor footing can result in bruising, which can turn into an abscess.

Hoof Abscesses



THE HORSE STAFF

Muddy, unsanitary living conditions. Standing on wet ground makes hooves overly soft. Combine those soft hooves with the bacteria growing in mud, and the conditions are ripe for hoof abscesses to form.

WARNING!

A hoof abscess' failure to resolve quickly could indicate the infection has progressed into deeper hoof structures, such as the coffin bone or synovial structures. This requires immediate veterinary attention.

To locate an abscess, you might need the help of your veterinarian and/or farrier, who will use hoof testers to find the pain point and might open the abscess with a hoof knife to relieve pressure. Treatment can also include:

- ◆ Cleaning the foot;
- ◆ Removing the shoe, when necessary;
- ◆ Locating the entry wound (if there is one);
- ◆ Establishing drainage by softening the hoof capsule with foot soaks and/or poultices to encourage rupture and drainage;
- ◆ Keeping the foot wrapped and protected from debris entering and causing further infection; and
- ◆ In some cases, anti-inflammatory medications and antibiotics.



ALEX BECKSTET

Farriers usually DO NOT REPLACE a horse's shoe until lameness has resolved and drainage has stopped.

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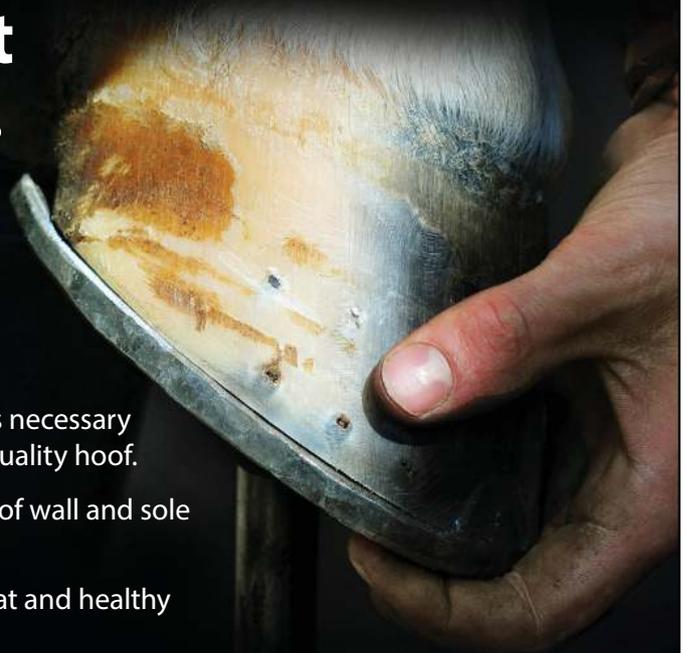
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