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H *natural* **HORSE**

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THRUSH:
*Restore
Hoof Health
Naturally!*



Thrush

Restoring Hoof Health Naturally

Part 2 | by Gail Snyder

In Part 1, I covered environmental factors including diet, hygiene, footing and proper natural hoof care as it pertains to the topic of thrush. Part 2 covers treatment, tools and a case study to further your knowledge about this condition.

Topical Treatments

No thrush article would be complete without a lengthy discussion on the pros and cons of available thrush remedies, right? Which is better – Thrush Buster or Koper-tox? Or should I try a home remedy such as bleach, iodine, rubbing alcohol, or sugar-dine (sugar and Betadine)? The answer is that all of these treatments will kill thrush temporarily, but you will find yourself having to use these harsh remedies perpetually. This is the definition of insanity, isn't it? Doing the same thing over and over again, while expecting a different result? While they do kill thrush, many of these chemical and pharmaceutical treatments also kill the healthy tissue, thus prolonging the healing process. The more severe the thrush, the more tempting it is to use stronger remedies to eradicate it. This is counter intuitive because the harsher chemicals are caustic and will burn sensitive tissue. And the more chemicals you pour on the bottom of the hoof, the more you disturb the balance of good and bad microorganisms.

You can better support the healing process by selecting more natural products with botanical ingredients that are non-toxic and non-

caustic. These are gentle enough to apply daily each time you pick out the feet, something you cannot do with chemical agents. As with human skin and nails, applied topicals will be absorbed into the body - yet another reason to avoid caustic chemicals.

My favorite off-the-shelf thrush products include: Huuf Magic, Silvetrasol, Thrush Stop, White Lightning Gel, and No Thrush. All five products are non-toxic, non-caustic and are suitable for daily use. Most tack stores carry harsh remedies, so you may need to purchase your products on-line. (For essential oils and other info, see *For more information* at the end of this article.)

If you prefer a home remedy to off-the-shelf thrush products, I suggest you fill a spray bottle with a solution of 1 part vinegar and 5 parts water. Simply rinse the bottom of the hoof with the mixture to change the pH balance to one that is less hospitable to bacterial and fungal infestation. I prefer raw apple cider vinegar if it is available, but all vinegars will improve the pH balance.

Tools

As a professional trimmer, I take great care in selecting the best tools for the job. I'm very particular about the hoof pick I use. My favorite is called the Muller Pick (**Photo 1**), a hand-forged tool with a dual head design. One head has a scoop for lifting mud and manure off the sole while the other head has a curved point that can get into

the deepest part of the collateral grooves. This tool is stout and will not bend. If every horse owner used one of these babies, the thrush situation would certainly improve.

The EasyCare hoof pick (**Photo 2**) is another favorite. Like the Muller pick, it is solid and functional. The EasyCare pick has a built-in magnet and can be conveniently hung in the barn or horse trailer. It is always handy when I need it.

One of the best tools on my truck is a Japanese Bonsai concave cutter (**Photo 3**). The concave blade shape is ideal for trimming the opening of the central sulcus and nipping frog tags. The 8" handle allows for easy one-handed trimming for both professional and novice users.

As a final step, I clean the entire bottom of the hoof with a steel wire brush (**Photo 4**). These can be purchased at most hardware stores. Not only will it adequately scrub the bottom of the hoof, including the clefts, but it will help exfoliate dead tissue.

Exercise

Exercise should probably be moved to the top of the prevention list because it is by far the most important thing you can do for your horse. Horses in the wild and on the range move 20 miles a day on average. The hoof growth and wear are in a state of natural equilibrium making the wild hoof both self-trimming and self-cleaning. As stewards of the domestic horse, it is our responsibility to provide daily movement to this end. The mantra here is, "Ride More, Trim Less, Clean Less". In doing so, we bring our domestic horses closer to the natural, healthy, lifestyle of the wild ones.

When All is Lost

When thrush is severe and the infection has invaded the heel bulbs, digital cushion or inner corium, lameness will result. What started out as a mild case of thrush



Photo 1. Muller Pick



Photo 2. EasyCare hoof pick



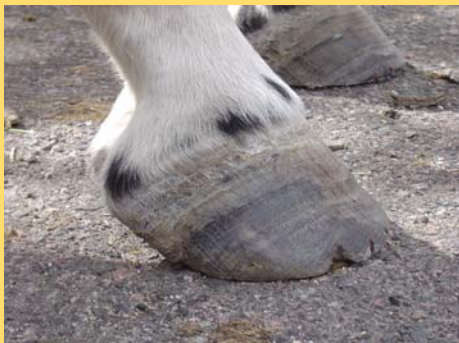
Photo 3. Japanese Bonsai concave cutter



Photo 4. A steel wire brush

Tipper has been shod on and off for most of her life. Her owner is a conscientious caregiver who relied on her farrier to tend to all her hoof care needs. After discovering the benefits of natural hoof care, Tipper's owner asked me to pull the shoes, perform a setup trim, and help Tipper transition to barefoot. In doing so, I pointed out Tipper's chronic thrush problems, something her owner was not even aware of. Tipper's case study is a series of photos, taken during her initial setup trim. This case study demonstrates many of the thrush preventative measures discussed in Parts 1 & 2 of this article.

TIPPER Case Study



Tipper, Right Front, Lateral View, Shoe Pulled, Before Trim:

The horizontal rings on Tipper's outer wall indicate chronic laminitis. Slight ridges may indicate minor nutritional variations, but more obvious rings such as these should not be ignored. Prominent rings are a visual symptom of nutritional or other health problems, described as an unhealthy *inner terrain* in Part 1 of this article. The under-run heels and elongated toe exhibit poor hoof shape. This is typical of horses given too long an interval between hoof care cycles or trimmed/ shod to incorrect angles. The shoe itself prevented the hoof from self-cleaning. Collectively, these observations tell us thrush is likely, before we even pick up the hoof.



Tipper, Right Front, Lateral View, After Initial Trim:

Removal of the shoe is the first step in hoof restoration. The heels were lowered to more natural parameters, which brings the weight bearing to the back of the foot, where it belongs. The breakover was also restored with the application of a modest toe rocker and the long toe will be brought back gradually. The hoof form and biomechanics have been significantly improved in just one trim. Tipper will be trimmed at 5 week intervals for hoof maintenance and gradual rehabilitation.



Tipper, Right Front, Sole View, Before Trim:

The bottom of the hoof reveals collateral grooves plugged with manure, overgrown bar/ sole, and ragged frog flaps. The central sulcus in the back of the frog is also plugged up. The entire foot lacks symmetry, including the heel bulbs. Notice the crusty straw-shaped scar between the heel bulbs, which indicates chronic thrush.



Tipper, Right Front, Heel View, After Trim:

The physiologically correct trim is complete. Hoof balance and symmetry have been restored. The central sulcus and collateral grooves are now open to facilitate self-trimming and oxygenation. A single treatment of White Lightning was recommended, followed by daily use of a gentle topical, because Tipper was previously shod, has a heel bulb scar, and a history of chronic thrush.



Tipper, Right Front Sole Exfoliation, Before Trim:

Large chunks of sole were lifted to reveal black thrush-like growth underneath. These conditions are common when owners go longer than the recommended 4-5 week trim interval or if the horse is sedentary. After the diseased tissue is removed, one of the natural topical remedies should be applied to the affected areas. From Part 1, recall that thrush thrives in environments that are low oxygen, warm, dark, and moist. Tipper's hoof is extremely dry in the Colorado climate, yet anaerobic thrush is very much alive. It is a mistake to think that thrush only thrives in wet environments.



Tipper, Right Front, Sole View, After Trim:

After shoe removal, a single conservative trim brought Tipper's hoof closer to the desired form and function of the wild hoof model. Tipper gets daily exercise and will quickly hone her newly shaped hooves into self-cleaning specimens. Tipper's owner has totally changed her horsekeeping practices to make invasive thrush a thing of the past.

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could be life threatening. Now is the time to put the topical remedies aside and get out the heavy hitter hoof soaks. As mentioned in Part 1, horse shoes should be removed to help prevent thrush. The shoes MUST be removed before hoof soaking because many of the products are known to react with metal. Be sure to read the application instructions provided by the manufacturer.

White Lightning liquid by Grand Circuit is a simple compound called *chlorine dioxide* and is my product of choice for serious thrush. When White Lightning liquid is combined with equal amounts of white vinegar, the solution emits a gas. Unlike topical treatments, the vapor (**Photo 5**) can penetrate thrush tracks deep within the hoof capsule. Chlorine dioxide is used to control bacteria in orange juice. It uniquely kills the contaminants, leaves the healthy juice intact and is safe for us to ingest (in small amounts). Although this cannot be considered a natural remedy, it is a very effective treatment when something stronger is warranted. I have seen amazing results in even the most stubborn cases of thrush and also recommend its use for horses with white line disease and those transitioning from shoes to barefoot.

Other effective soaking products for eradication of serious thrush include Oxine AH and Clean Trax. As with White Lightning liquid, it is imperative to follow the manufacturers' instructions. Be sure to call your vet if you have treatment concerns or need help eradicating severe thrush.

For more information:

- See NHM Volume 13 Issue 1, *What Is A Miasm?*
- Volume 12 Issue 1, *Battling White Line & Thrush from the Inside Out*
- Volume 11 Issue 2, *Essential Oils Support Hoof Health*
- Volume 9 Issue 4, *Fragrant Feet: Essential Oils Offer A Scent-sible Alternative*
- Volume 8 Issue 2, *Essential Oils to Assist with Hoof Problems*
- Volume 4 Issue 4, *Practical Aromatherapy*
- Volume 3 Issue 4, *Homeopathy and Hoofcare*
- Volume 2 Issue 3, *Homeopathy: Remedies for Hooves*

- www.healing-tree.com/HuufMagic.html
- <http://sbsequine.com/thrush-stop>
- www.grandcircuitinc.com
- www.nothrushshop.com/index.html
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- www.grandcircuitinc.com/white_intro.html
- www.appliedequinepodiatry.org/perfecthoofwear/Silvetrasol.html
- www.revivalanimal.com/store/p/283-Oxine-Fogger-and-Oxine-AH.aspx
- www.easycareinc.com/Other_Products/natural_hoof_care.aspx
- www.centaurforge.com/CleanTrax-Hoof-Cleaner-25g/productinfo/10701

Photo 5.
White Lightning Liquid Soak



Summary

- ✓ Don't rely solely on your vet or trimmer. Take an active role in the hoof care process to eradicate thrush. Your horse is counting on it!
- ✓ Fight thrush with good nutrition and a healthy inner terrain.
- ✓ Hoof cleaning, dry loafing areas, and exercise are daily needs.
- ✓ Seek a hoof care professional capable of restoring natural hoof form and function; schedule trimming at 4-5 week intervals.
- ✓ Choose non-toxic, non-caustic thrush products over chemical ones.
- ✓ Exercise your horse every day.
- ✓ For serious thrush, use White Lighting, Oxine AH or Clean Trax soaks per instructions and be sure to consult your veterinarian.
- ✓ Control the cause of the thrush, don't just treat the symptoms. 🐾

About the author:

Gail Snyder is an experienced hoof care professional, clinician, author, trim instructor, and hoof rehabilitation expert. She has worked on horses with severe hoof conditions, previously deemed incurable, and was able to restore health through natural hoof care, nutrition, and the healing powers of movement. This recipe for success is proven, however, Snyder's degree in Mechanical Engineering and work in the field of dynamics, modeling, and mechanics give her unique insight into the biomechanics, form, and function of the equine hoof. gailsnyder@netzero.net



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