

Winter Weather Can Mean Wet, Soft Hooves

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By Cindy Hale

If your horse cannot avoid living in damp footing during the wintertime, he may be prone to thrush and abscesses in his feet. The thrush is due to the constant moisture combined with frequent contact with manure. Abscesses result because the sole of the hoof becomes soft thanks to the exposure to moisture. A step on a sharp stone or a tiny piece of gravel that works its way into a small crack in the sole or hoof wall can result in a painful abscess. To help prevent these problems, try to keep your horse's living quarters as dry as possible. Your horse should, at the very least, have a dry shelter where he can seek refuge. Wood shavings and other products on the market help to soak up rain water; straw has far less absorption qualities. Make sure you clean out your horse's feet daily. If necessary, after using the hoofpick, use a stiff body brush to sweep away any remaining debris. Next, add a hoof hardener to the soles, avoiding the frog. Thrush remedies, however, can be applied to the frog, particularly to the cleft of the frog and the comasure areas (valleys on either side of the frog) where thrush likes to reside. If you have any questions regarding your horse's hoof care during the wet winter weather, be sure to consult with your farrier and your veterinarian.