

Hoof Abscesses

What is it?

An abscess is a damaged area inside the hoof that has pus buildup from infection or a foreign body present inside the hoof wall. The pus generates pressure inside the hoof, creating significant pain for the horse.

Natural Hoof Care by Rob Sawyer

For assistance in abscess diagnosis and pain management, contact your vet or hoof care provider.

How did this happen?

Abscesses may be caused by a puncture to the hoof wall, separation of the hoof wall, severe bruising, or other problems that create dead tissue inside the hoof leading to infection.

Symptoms

- Sudden, severe lameness.
- Foot pain from pressure, such as hoof testers
- Heat in the hoof and/or frog
- Increased digital pulse
- Swelling of the pastern, fetlock, and possibly higher

Treatment

Movement stimulates circulation and aids in quick recovery. Provide turnout to a horse with an abscess.

Option 1: Soaking. Soak the affected hoof in Epsom salt daily using a soaking boot or bucket until the abscess ruptures. Repeat every 12 hrs until the abscess ruptures.

Option 2: Poultice. Apply a clay poultice or Ichthammol to the bottom of the hoof. Wrap the hoof with roll cotton or use a baby diaper. Wrap vetrap around the cotton/diaper layer. Use duct tape as a final outer layer around the vetrap. Do not put the duct tape above the hair line. Change the poultice every 24 hrs until the abscess ruptures.

Option 3: Use a pre-packaged kit such as HOOFix and follow the manufacturer's directions.