

# Equine Thrush Treatment for Chronic Hoof Infections

*By Ray Tricca*

***Field Trials by The Horse Journal reveal best horse treatment.***



Products that target bacteria and fungus without harming sensitive hoof tissue tend to work best.

*The Horse Journal* published the results of field trials on the leading thrush remedies in their December 2009 issue. Before selecting their favorite thrush treatment, they said that cleaning the foot and removing diseased tissue are the necessary first steps regardless of what thrush products you use. In talking with many experienced horse owners, we were surprised to discover how many of them never took the time to clean the hoof before applying a thrush medication.

How serious is the thrush on your horse? *The Horse Journal* classified thrush as either mild, moderate, or severe.

## **Mild Thrush**

*The Horse Journal* said that most of the thrush remedies they tested during the field trials were effective against mild thrush. Mild thrush is often recognized by its obvious black discharge and odor with no deep tissue layer invasions. There is no pain or lameness observed from the hoof. Mild thrush sits near the surface and is easy to kill, sometimes with one application of a cleaning agent.

## **Moderate Thrush**

Moderate thrush has the black discharge and odor along with some pain observed coming from the heel tissue. This is usually an indication of a more deeply rooted infection. *The Horse Journal* said that copper and iodine based products work well on moderate thrush, but they can also be caustic to tender tissues and slow healing.

## **Severe Thrush**

There is severe pain and lameness associated with severe thrush with obvious involvement of deep tissue. Severe thrush is chronic when it is so deeply rooted that it becomes difficult to kill microbes without harming surrounding tissue. Repeated attempts to kill chronic, or deeply rooted infections with traditional ingredients, most of which are caustic, were shown in the field trials not to be as very effective against severe thrush.

At the conclusion of the study, the Journal said that only one product (*SBS Thrush Stop*) defeated some chronic cases that nothing else could touch, yet was gentle to tender hoof tissue. They repeated the test weeks later on chronic cases and came up with similar results. They also liked the way the product formed a barrier and had a long-lasting effect. *The Horse Journal* said, “*Thrush Stop is our No. 1 choice for thrush*”. They also selected it as a “PRODUCT OF THE YEAR” for 2009.

Contrary to popular belief some people wondered, “how could a product be strong enough to kill deeply rooted chronic thrush without harming tender hoof tissue?” We asked the researchers who developed *Thrush Stop*, what was their secret? It is a human interest story that may provide a clue on how to successfully defeat chronic thrush and other deeply rooted infections as well, including white line disease.

### **Necessity is the Mother of Invention!**

Several years ago, a local dentist, Dr. Rick Shakalis, went to pick up his daughter at the horse stable near their home on Cape Cod. Like many other young girls her age, she was responsible for grooming her own horse. The stable manager said that her horse, Coco, had a stubborn case of thrush and recommended that she use some of the products that they kept around the barn for treating thrush and other hoof infections. After reading the ingredients on the labels, Dr. Shakalis realized from his medical training that many of those products were caustic, hazardous, or ineffective against bacteria. He thought that they might be way too dangerous. Dr. Shakalis and a close friend, Dr. John Pautienis, worked on formulating a thrush remedy that was both safe and effective. A new company (**SBS Equine Products**) was born with a mission statement to produce equine products that are safe for the horse, humans, and the environment.

### **Strategy**

The objective of the SBS Researchers was to target deeply rooted thrush without harming the surrounding hoof tissue. Caustic agents kill microbes, but they can also hinder the hoofs natural defense which is tissue rejuvenation. A normal hoof will grow 3/8” in a month. Thrush is a bacterial infection, not a fungus as it is in the human fingernail. They knew that bacteria thrive in moist environments that are dark and low in oxygen. The clefts of the frog are the perfect place for the bacteria to hide because they are often packed with muck and urine soaked manure.

In simple terms they said the products works well because: (1) The key active ingredient is like a birth control pill for bacteria. The bacteria can't reproduce so they die out naturally without harming surrounding tissue. Being a non-caustic formula, it allows the healthy tissue to thrive and grow out. Over-use of products containing caustic agents can be harmful to tender new tissue and hinder growth. (2) The product forms an antiseptic barrier that binds to hoof protein for long lasting protection. (3) The formula also contains a drying agent which helps destroy the moist environment where microbes tend to hide. The long twist cap get the ingredients deep into these crevices where organisms thrive. Aerosols sit on the surface are not as effective at reaching hiding places.

## Summary

Chronic infections are deeply rooted and is impossible to kill with one application of a strong topical agent. Field trials by *The Horse Journal* have shown that repeated use of these strong chemicals can be harmful to the surrounding healthy hoof tissue and slow the healing process. The SBS researchers developed a formula that targets bacteria and fungus without harming sensitive tissue. The product is not caustic and can be used as often as necessary to keep thrush under control and allow hoof tissue to thrive and prosper.

*The Horse Journal* said “the most important steps in dealing with thrush are cleaning and trimming the hoof. Removing the diseased tissue and opening up the flaps of the frog by your farrier can give you a head start to recovery. Improperly trimmed hoofs prevent oxygen from getting in crevices.”

**Frequent hoof cleaning can help keep thrush and white line disease under control.**



**Step 1.  
Wash the Hoof**



**Step 2.  
Pick & Brush**



**Step 3.  
Wipe & Dry**



**Step 4.  
Apply Thrush Stop**