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### **Is my horse more likely to get a hoof abscess in stretches of wet weather?**

With the recent onslaught of wet weather, we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of hoof abscesses. The moisture causes the sole, hoof wall, and the white line to soften and weakens the integrity of these structures. A small opening in the white line or a soggy sole can allow bacteria to migrate into the hoof. The bacteria then gets sealed into the foot, and a pocket of pus builds up around it, as the body sends white blood cells to the area to try and fight off the infection. The pressure of the accumulated material in the foot causes pain - from subtle lameness to non-weight bearing lameness. The pain is relieved when the abscess drains, preferably from the bottom of the foot, but occasionally from the coronary band.

The most typical place for a hoof abscess to occur is at the white line. Abscesses on the sole or in the frog are more likely to be caused by penetrating injuries. A defect made by stepping on a foreign object, especially in the back half of the foot, is a veterinary emergency. Ideally, the object (nail, etc.) is left in place until the vet can examine the horse and [radiograph](#) the hoof. If the nail contacts the coffin bone, disrupts soft tissue structures in the foot, or enters a synovial structure (coffin joint, navicular bursa, tendon sheath), it can be a life-threatening situation.

It is impossible to completely prevent abscesses. [Regular hoof trimming/shoeing](#), keeping feet as clean and dry as possible, applying sole hardener, and inspecting feet for foreign objects, defects, loose shoes, and white line disease on a daily basis will minimize your chances of dealing with this frustrating ailment.

**Answered By: Karen Reynolds, DVM**