The Farrier's Corner: by Raymond and Michelle Smith

Muddy Hooves

It has been very wet in the Valley this fall and winter. At this point, spring isn't looking much drier. With all this moisture comes muck and mud – closely followed by nasty hoof problems.

Anyone who has been around horses long enough has encountered abscesses. Abscesses can occur at any time of year, but are generally more common in wetter seasons. Most frequently, abscesses form when bacteria are introduced into the sensitive tissues of the foot and then sealed off to fester. This can occur when an animal steps upon a sharp object and punctures the hoof. Even tiny punctures can result in abscesses if they go deeply enough. Bacteria can also travel into sensitive tissue via cracks, splits or separations in the hoof wall and sole. As hooves soften and expand in wet conditions, the white line and sole become more susceptible to bacterial invasion. Horses with a history of laminitis/founder, especially those with stretched laminae, are often more susceptible to abscessing. The longer the hooves soak in muddy conditions, the greater the risk of bacterial infection.

Another type of abscess results from extreme hoof bruising. If bruising is severe enough to result in internal tissue death (necrosis), abscesses may develop. This particular type of abscess occurs without regard to soil moisture conditions.

Symptoms of abscesses may include: heat in the affected hoof and/or pastern, possible swelling and lameness. Abscesses can be extremely painful and lameness may range from mild to severe. In the worst cases, the animal may refuse to bear any weight on the affected limb.

In some cases, an obvious puncture may be visible. In other cases, a puncture or tract may be located only after paring of the sole. Still other cases will have no obvious puncture. In these instances, bacteria likely entered through existing breaches in the wall and sole.

If the abscess can be opened and drained, visible pain relief is immediately obvious. While healing, the foot should be kept clean through wraps, boots or dry stalling. The drain hole must remain open and free of filth. Healing time can take anywhere from weeks to months depending on the severity of the abscess.

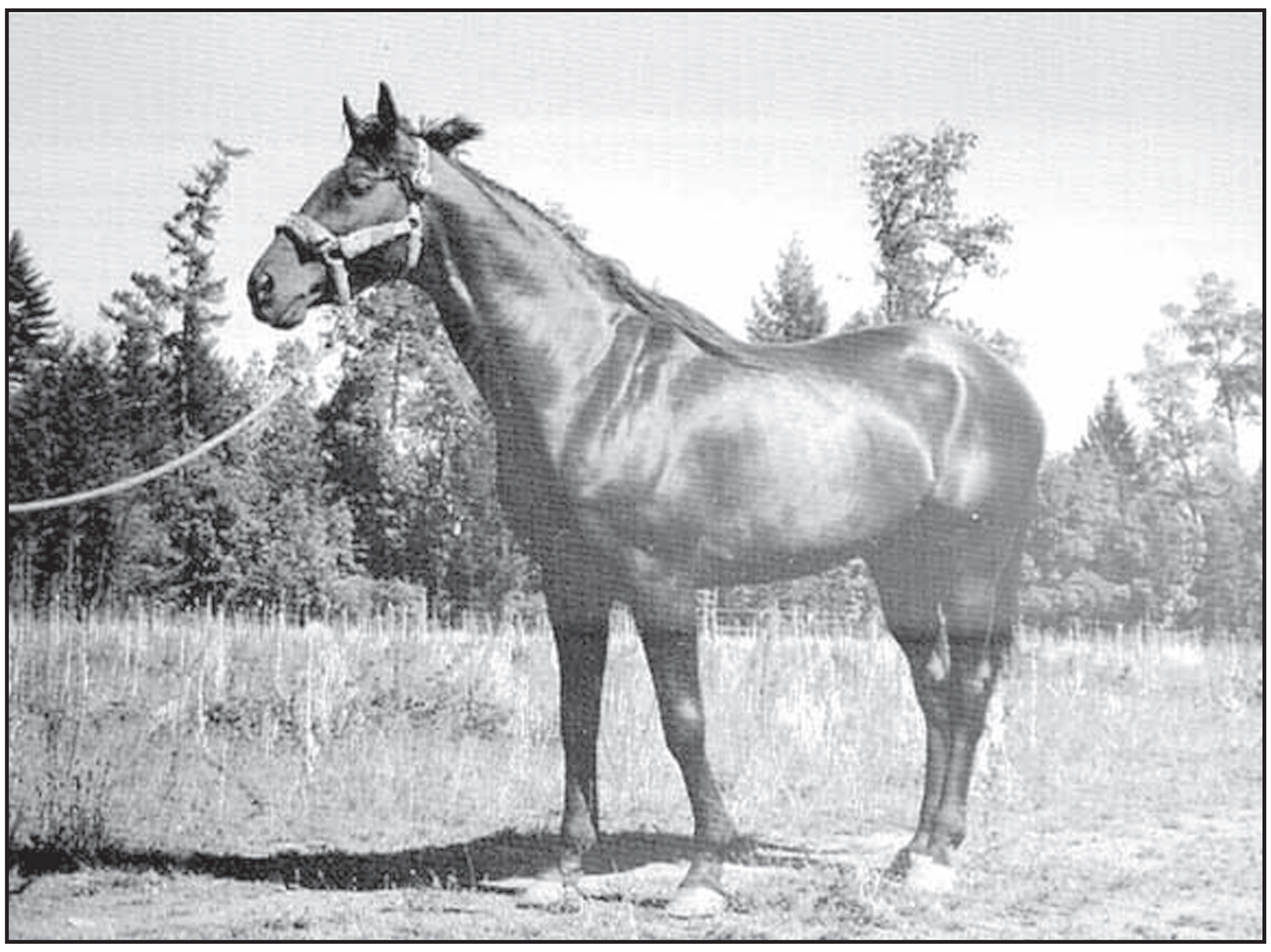
Unfortunately, abscesses are not always located on the initial attempt. In these cases, repeated soakings in buckets or soaker boots, poultices, or antibiotics may be necessary to encourage the abscess to erupt and/or clear. Abscesses will generally blow out following the path of least resistance. This may be anywhere from the hairline to the sole. Blow outs on the hoof wall generally appear as horizontal splits. Stubborn abscesses that refuse to clear, or recur frequently, require immediate veterinary attention.

Scratches is a dermatitis of the pastern region. It is caused by a fungus but can involve an anaerobic bacterial component. It generally occurs to the rear of the pastern between the fetlock and heel. It is commonly associated with persistent muddy stabling conditions, moisture and cold. Scratches appear as a chapped, scabby or crusted patch. The area maybe tender to the touch and the bulb of the heel may be visibly red and inflamed. In some cases, leg swelling may be present.

Scratches is also known as pastern dermatitis, mud fever or dew poisoning. The terms "scratches" and "grease heel" are often used interchangeably. However, some equine practitioners make a distinction between the two, stating that grease heel is either a specific condition of the skin's oil glands or eczema. In severe cases, both conditions can lead to lameness.

Scratches is most easily avoided by providing clean dry stabling areas. In muddy, wet regions, this is often easier said than done. Another method to help avoid the condition is to clip long, matted and/or dirty fetlock hair. While fetlock hair can serve a protective function, filthy hair encourages infection. In addition, excessive washing of the lower legs and use of deep abrasive footing should be avoided. The latter can lead to pastern irritation and skin sores which open pathways to infection. If contracted, scratches is generally treatable by careful cleaning and topical medications.

Regardless of the weather, it is a good practice to keep a close eye on your animals' hooves. If you see something suspicious, contact your vet or farrier immediately. The sooner infections are dealt with the better!



Kentucky Derby fourth place finisher is buried in the Illinois Valley.

ROGUE VALLEY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Food & Friends Menu

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MONDAY – MAR 27
CHICKEN & PENNE PASTA
WEDNESDAY - MAR 29
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SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

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What is volunteerism? Volunteer service is unpaid service that directly benefits the community, and is intended to promote goodness or improve human quality of life. Volunteering can give you the opportunity to try something new, gain experience, develop skills, improve your career prospects, build confidence and meet different kinds of people and make new friends. Getting involved in something new can be a real challenge.

Community service involvement teaches people of all ages and backgrounds compassion and understanding and can be used as a way to advocate for causes that you are personally passionate about.

Perhaps the first and biggest benefit from volunteering is the satisfaction of making a difference in your community and country. The intangible benefits alone—such as pride, satisfaction, and accomplishment—are worthwhile reasons to serve.

Over the past two decades there has been a growing body of research that indicates volunteering provides individual health benefits in addition to social ones. Those who volunteer have lower mortality rates, greater functional ability, and lower rates of depression later in life than those who do not volunteer. Older volunteers are the most likely to receive greater benefits from volunteering, either because they are more likely to face a higher incidence of illness or because volunteering provides them with physical and social activity and a sense of purpose at a time when their social roles are changing.

It's been suggested that physicians should start prescribing volunteerism. Part of finding the right volunteer opportunity is being honest about what you hope to learn and accomplish. If in the process of meeting your personal and professional goals, you are also serving as an effective volunteer, helping to meet the goals of your particular volunteer project or role, and/or helping to move an organization's mission forward, it's a win-win situation. Lastly, don't forget that sometimes it just feels good to be valued; as a volunteer you can contribute unique skills, experiences, and perspectives. Illinois Valley Wellness Resources has lots of volunteer opportunities to challenge you and to benefit our community. Please give Laura Mancuso a call at 541-9781 and become part of the solution!

You can contact I.V. Wellness Resources at www. ivwellnessresources@gmail.com. Please like our Facebook page by searching for ivwellnessresources.

SENIOR BULLETIN

HOME SAFETY EVALUATAIONS
If you are in need of a home safety evaluation with a registered nurse please call I.V. Wellness Resources for an appointment. We have flexible hours to meet your needs. Call 541-592-9781.

FREE ADS
If you are a senior and want to place a FREE AD for a living or health care need call Laura Mancuso at 541-592-2541 or email laura@illinois-valley-news.com.

CHAIR FITNESS
Classes FREE at Healthy U, Monday and Wednesdays from 2 - 2:45 p.m. 535 E. River St., Cave Junction Call 541-592-4888 or visit www.healthyucenter.org.

AARP TAX-AIDE PROGRAM
Providing free tax assistance for middle & low incomes. Tax counselors are IRS-certified. Call 541-592-6139 for a Wednesday appointment in Cave Junction.

Illinois Valley Wellness Resources

WANTED

ILLINOIS VALLEY WELLNESS RESOURCES SEEKING SERVICES
Valley seniors are looking for transportation, caregivers, firewood, handymen, computer skills, housekeepers and yard work.

If you would like to provide one of these services and will complete a background check and have references, please contact Laura Mancuso at 541-592-9781.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE
If you are a senior or disabled resident and are looking for a help to stay safely in your home please call Illinois Valley Wellness Resources at 541-592-9781.

Rack-o- Ribs
BINGO Fundraiser
Saturday, Mar. 25 th
$.50/3 game card 50/50 and other raffles
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