

# Horses Land Water

*Improving the health of horses and the environment*

## GREASY HEEL • MUD FEVER • THRUSH

Waterlogged areas • Muddy paddocks and yards

### GREASY HEEL, MUD FEVER & THRUSH

**Greasy heel** is a bacterial infection which affects the horse's fetlock extending to the back of the pastern. It occurs more frequently during winter months.

When the condition spreads up the legs and belly it is referred to as **Mud Fever**. The problem can re-occur and once on a property is enzootic (i.e. lives there and spreads to other horses). It has been shown that stable flies and other biting insects can spread it from horse to horse, however, in most cases it relates to poor management in a wet environment.



*Greasy heel*

**Thrush** is a blackish, foul smelling fungal infection of the frog and results from horses standing in muddy areas.

#### Common causes

- Muddy and waterlogged paddocks and yards.
- Long wet grass.
- Horses sweating in too many rugs in a humid stable.
- Poor daily grooming and hoof care, particularly after the horse is covered in mud.
- Excessive hosing or washing of legs

Horses with pink skin and white hair on lower legs are most susceptible.

#### Symptoms

- Pain and swelling in the heel area that oozes.
- Crusty lesions around the heel working up to the fetlock (mud fever can exhibit similar lesions on the legs and occasionally on the belly).
- Severe cases exhibit deep skin cracks above the coronet which may result in lameness.
- Most common in hindlegs, on old scars or in new wounds.
- Blackish, foul smelling discharge around the frog area of the hoof (thrush only).

#### What to do

- Remove the horse to a dry yard, stable or paddock (avoid long wet grass).
- Seek advice from a veterinarian A demonstration in thorough cleaning techniques and a recommended medication will be required. In some cases antibiotic injections are necessary.

**Note:** An accredited farrier can assist horse owners to manage thrush.

**Avoid grazing in muddy and waterlogged areas.**

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### Land Management

- Restrict access to waterlogged and muddy areas (consider temporary electric fencing).
- Improve pastures by sowing or encouraging deep rooted perennial grasses where possible (i.e. perennial ryegrass, cocksfoot, phalaris and fescue).
- Consider growing kikuyu in small paddocks to give good cover during summer.
- Reduce weeds.
- Rotationally graze paddocks and do not overgraze (maintain 70% cover of at least 3 cm in height in all paddocks).
- Construct stables and yards to house horses when paddocks are waterlogged.
- Provide a suitable surface and adequate drainage for horse arenas and yards.
- Make sure that water draining off stable roofs is directed away from yards.
- Seek advice on location of fences, gates troughs and access paths.
- Avoid continuously working horses on muddy surfaces.



Consider electric fencing to restrict access to muddy areas.



Provide a suitable surface and adequate drainage for yards.

[horseslandwater.com](http://horseslandwater.com)

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