



Trimming for Thrush and Frog Disease

We touched already on the causes for thrush during the lectures about Contraction (see Problems with Contraction file).

As with all corrections movement and optimal natural lifestyle are of importance

The cause of thrush, as with most other hoof problems, lies in reduced circulation and thus restricted blood supply to the hoof. Even in the old books on hoof care, thrush was depicted as a contracted hoof. In a contracted hoof, the lateral walls are parallel to one another, i.e. they do not diverge groundward, as would be the case in a healthy hoof. When a healthy hoof becomes contracted, the sheets of sole horn are



compressed laterally, at the expense of the frog, which is pinched. A cross-section through a healthy and a contracted hoof show the changes inside the hoof. The horn pressure against the transition between sole and frog corium (where, in the area of the heel, the bars are formed) flattens the corium and so impedes circulation in the region of the frog sulci. Too little oxygen and nutrient rich blood reaches the frog corium, and too little horn is produced. The frog becomes weaker and weaker. With dehydration of the hoof, cracks appear in the thin sheet of soft horn, possibly in as far as the corium, which then become infected. Wound discharge is a slightly alkaline environment and further helps the putrefactive agents. Because of the poor blood supply, the corium cannot heal. The frog region is sensitive to pressure to the point of lameness.

The situation cannot be improved by drying and immobilization (stall rest), but rather only by the removal of the cause - the contraction of the hooves. The contracted hoof must be brought to a normal, open shape, in which the frog corium will again be optimally supplied with blood. It does not help to use circulation-enhancing or anti-infectious agents, intravenously or through the alimentary tract, because they do not reach the problem area on account of the reduced blood supply.

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Left: before first trim



Right: 6 weeks later



Left: before first trim



Right: 10 days later the top of the central frog sulcus starts to fill in



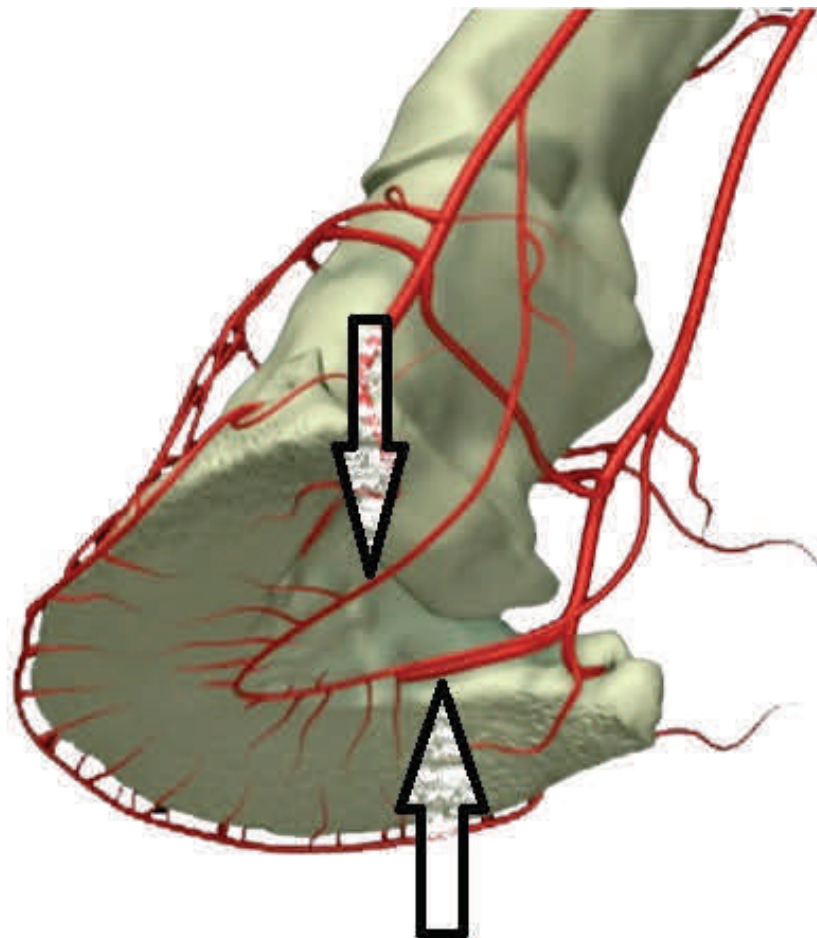
Before (left) and after correct trimming for several months (right)



Trimming for Thrush

First and foremost the hoof has to be brought back into balance, so it may function optimally.

That means it has to be balanced medio-laterally (left to right) as well as anterior-posterior (front to back). In case of severe thrush the horse may not want to put weight on the back of the foot, as this becomes very painful. Restoring circulation to the frog corium may initiate the healing process, but with circulation also comes restored nerve function, which may make the horse more aware of the existing damage. As the blood supply to the frog lies in part under the bar, it sometimes helps to lower the bar a couple of millimeters more to make sure the frog really receives optimal circulation.



It is really important to treat thrush aggressively and that requires not only a correct trim, but even more important the involvement of the owner. Thrush often needs to be treated every day.

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