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## Too much moisture compromises hoof health

One of the more common causes of hoof problems is too much moisture in the hoof. Horses that live in wet, humid environments, those that are bathed repeatedly, and horses that are kept on damp bedding or stand in the mud for long periods of time are at the greatest risk.

To remain healthy, the hoof absorbs nutrients and moisture from the bloodstream. If a horse is well-nourished and well-hydrated, the hooves will be healthy. The hoof is naturally porous and it will absorb moisture from the environment. If too much moisture is absorbed it compromises the structure of the hoof wall.

The hoof wall is made up of a system of ridged, closely packed horn tubules. The tubules are arranged vertically and parallel to each other. The tubules are made up mainly of keratin, a protein. The keratin molecules are held together by hydrogen bonds. Hooves are at their strongest when the hoof tubules are dry and the hydrogen bonds are strong. In a hoof exposed to normal moisture levels, the sole is cupped and the hoof wall is sturdy, operating as a shock absorber when the horse moves.

When the hoof absorbs water from the environment, the water weakens and breaks the hydrogen bonds between the tubules, making the hoof too flexible and reducing the hoof's structural integrity and shock-absorbing capabilities. A hoof that is constantly exposed to high moisture levels becomes increasingly soft and weak. The sole tends to flatten out and the hoof is no longer capable of properly supporting the weight of horse and rider. Soft feet can lead to lameness, particularly when a horse is asked to work on hard surfaces or is being exercised rigorously. Hooves that are continuously wet are also more porous and therefore more prone to bacterial and fungal infections. Soft hooves tend to develop deep cracks, chipped areas and flat soles, where bacteria and fungi set up housekeeping. The sole of the hoof, which is the most porous section of the foot, is particularly susceptible to disease.



Often the outward appearance of the hoof is deceiving. Overly moist feet tend to swell, so cracks are not as noticeable. The hoof may look shiny and healthy but problems are brewing. It won't be long before the hoof wall crumbles, clinches pop, and disease sets in.

### Drying out

Reducing the amount of moisture a horse's feet are exposed to can be as simple as making a few management changes.

- Bedding on absorbent wood products helps dry feet out.
- Keep stalls clean.
- Give sponge baths instead of soaking the horse with a hose.
- Make sure wash areas are free of mud and puddles.
- If the horse lives outside during wet, muddy weather, provide a dry place, such as a well-drained gravel pad or covered shed, for him to hang out in.

- If the horse lives in a wet, humid climate you may have to resort to turning your horse out in a covered arena with dry footing during the wettest season.

## Hoof dressing

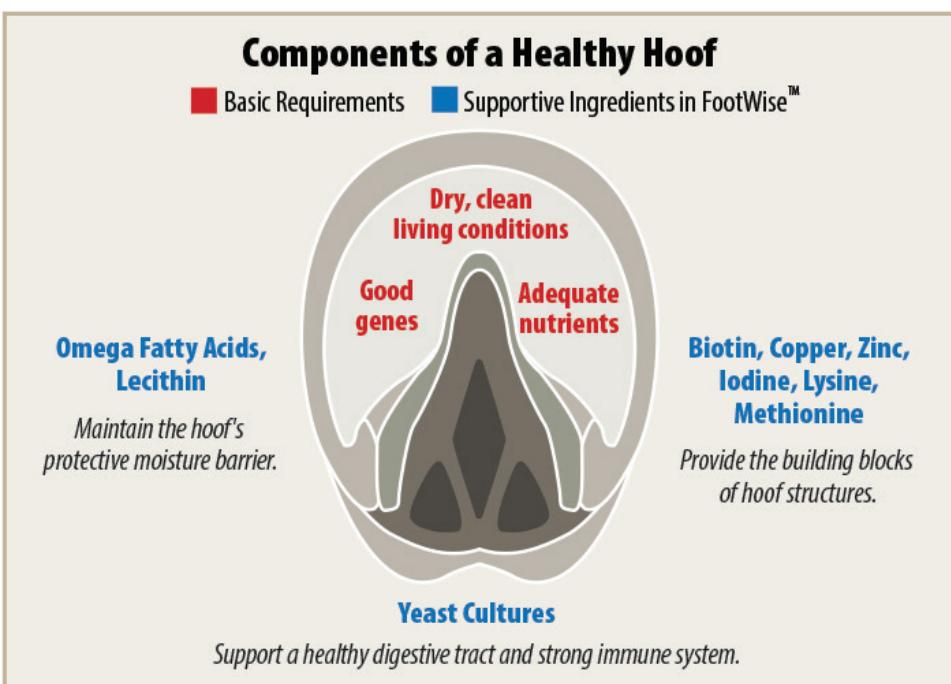
Don't apply hoof moisturizers and dressings to the hoof wall and sole. These products end up wearing off and wasting money. In the worst-case scenario, they develop a residual slime that can trap bacteria and fungi in the moist hoof.

Good nutrition, sanitary living conditions, and appropriate moisture levels are beneficial to all types of horses. With a little attention to detail, and in some cases creative management, most horses can grow and maintain good quality hooves.

## Poor hoof quality causing lameness? How and when to recommend FootWise.<sup>TM</sup>

The old saying "No hoof, no horse" still rings true today, as many of your clients struggle with bruised soles, white line disease, quarter cracks, and crumbling feet that won't hold a shoe. No matter how talented a horse is, if he is lame he can't do his job.

Proper nutrition, clean, dry living conditions, and a dose of good genes are the foundation of healthy, resilient hooves.



You can count on FootWise to contribute the nutrients horses need to grow and sustain tough feet.

Veterinarians frequently recommend FootWise when horses:

- Are not receiving the necessary nutrients in their feeding program to support proper hoof growth
- Are recovering from a hoof injury, surgery, or laminitis
- Have a history of brittle hooves, chronic cracks, or trouble holding shoes
- Live in a wet, muddy environment for part or all of the year
- Participate in a rigorous training or competition schedule and are bathed frequently
- Seem to be particularly susceptible to hoof and skin diseases
- Suffer from dry hair coat and brittle mane and tail

FootWise is available in a 44-day supply (2.75 lb jar) or a 160-day supply (10 lb bucket). The maintenance dose is 1 scoop per day. For horses with very poor quality hooves, 2 scoops per day can be fed. FootWise is readily accepted by horses and can be mixed with concentrates, fiber pellets, or beet pulp.



For more information on FootWise, please  
email [WiserConcepts@KPPusa.com](mailto:WiserConcepts@KPPusa.com) or call  
**800-772-1988.**

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