

Equine Veterinary Associates
Client Information about Abscesses

An abscess is a localized collection of pus anywhere in the body, surrounded and walled off by damaged and inflamed tissue. An abscess can develop in superficial tissues and, less commonly, in internal organs.

Abscesses can resolve in three ways:

- Surrounding capsule can thicken and contract, walling off the enclosed pus and bacteria from other tissues. Over weeks and months, the bacteria die and the body gradually disposes of the diseased tissue.
- The abscess may develop a thick capsule but continue to “smolder,” causing recurrent bouts of inflammation. These typically require surgical treatment.
- Some abscesses grow rapidly and rupture. Rupture of the abscess through the skin to the outside allows drainage of pus, bacteria and tissue debris to the outside. These usually heal quickly. However, abscesses that rupture to release their contents into internal body cavities can cause death.

Treatment after abscess has ruptured or been lanced:

- Flush wound 1-2 times daily with betadine and water (diluted to look like weak tea) until wound closes on its own
- Keep pests clear of area by using insecticides, sheet/fly mask or pest deterring creams (SWAT)

Treatment for hoof (sole) abscess:

- Soak foot once daily in Epsom salts to draw out pus and necrotic tissue.
- Apply poultice pad and wrap with vetrap and duct tape to keep clean
- Continue treatment until abscess heals from inside out