

Some savvy farriers say that a horse has not one heart but five: one in his chest and one in each foot.

The Fabulous Frog

By Honi Roberts

Photos by

Chris Niclas



This untrimmed mustang foot has an extremely healthy frog.

IT'S A SAFE BET THAT MOST HORSE owners don't lie awake at night contemplating the frog ... the one in a horse's foot, not the amphibian. After all, it's funky-looking, has an odd, squishy texture and raggedy flaps that can get in the way of cleaning the rest of the hoof. Not to mention the occasional – ahem – odor.

But two questions: How far would you ride in a car without shock absorbers? What would happen if all the blood that circulates down into your legs was never pushed back up?

The two most important functions of the horse's frog are to absorb the impact as the hoof meets the ground and, at the same time, to push the blood that travels down the leg, back up. Like a muscle, if the frog is exercised and used, it grows big and stays strong; if not, it can weaken, even contract and become less efficient.

Time and new information have altered some farriers' approach to the care and maintenance of the frog. But by any approach, it's hard to get a healthy foot without a healthy frog.

To explore and understand that Bermuda triangle on the bottom of the horse's hoof, we've enlisted the help of two Certified Journeyman Farriers: Danvers Child with the American Farrier's Association, an AQHA alliance partner, and Chris Niclas with the Guild of Professional Farriers. Read on, to learn what the frog does, and how and why a healthy, functioning frog is vital to the soundness of your horse.

A Cat's Whiskers

"FOALS ARE BORN WITH A FROG THAT COVERS 50 TO 60 PERCENT OF THE BOTTOM OF ITS FOOT,



This untrimmed Quarter Horse lived in swampy conditions. Some thrush is present.