

THE VOICING ALTERNATION IN ENGLISH NOUN PLURALS

You might doubt, initially, that some of the words given below are countable nouns. They all are, though, in one meaning or another; moreover, I'm sure that the list is not complete.

There are very few nouns that end in invariant /ð/. So far I've been able to find *lathe*, *tithe*, and *scythe*.

I expect that some of you will have different pronunciations of some of these words and/or different judgments about how the plural is formed, but that shouldn't change the overall picture much.

<u>/f/ only</u>	<u>/f/ ~ /v/</u>	<u>/v/ only</u>	<u>/θ/ only</u>	<u>/θ/ ~ /ð/</u>	<u>after:</u>
tiff		sieve	myth		/ɪ/
whiff			smith		
skiff					
sniff					
cliff					
clef			death		/ɛ/
			breath		
			lath		/æ/
gaff	half	salve	bath =	bath	/æ:/
laugh	calf		path =	path	
staff					
			swath		/ɑ/
cough			moth		/ɔ/
trough					
	hoof				/u/

<u>/f/ only</u>	<u>/f/ ~ /v/</u>	<u>/v/ only</u>	<u>/θ/ only</u>	<u>/θ/ ~ /ð/</u>	<u>after:</u>
puff		dove			/ʌ/
tough		shove			
duff		love			
chough		glove			
cuff					
muff					
ruff					
bluff					
fief	beef	(eaves)		sheath	/iy/
chief	thief	leave		wreath	
reef	sheaf	reeve			
brief	leaf	sleeve			
		greave			
safe		shave	faith		/ey/
waif		cave			
		knave			
		wave			
		stave			
		slave			
		glaive			
		grave			
fife	knife	five			/ay/
	life	dive			
	wife	hive			
		chive			
		drive			
coif					/ɔy/
				mouth	/aw/

<u>/f/ only</u>	<u>/f/ ~ /v/</u>	<u>/v/ only</u>	<u>/θ/ only</u>	<u>/θ/ ~ /ð/</u>	<u>after:</u>
oaf	loaf	cove stove clove grove drove	oath		/ow/
	roof	move groove youth	booth sleuth		/uw/
kerf serf dwarf =	wharf scarf dwarf* turf	curve nerve	earth hearth firth birth berth dearth girth		/r/
(*pl. 'dwarves' resurrected singlehandedly by J. R. R. Tolkien)					
sylph gulf	elf self shelf wolf	helve valve			/l/
nymph			plinth length strength depth width		(other cons.)