



## Get On Top Of Feet Before They Get On Top Of You! Natasha McCappin

AHDB average the cost per single incidence of lameness at £180, this factors in cost of treatment, yield loss and increased cull risk, whilst leading cattle lameness vet Roger Blowey estimates this cost as £400/case when you also factor in effects on fertility and increased replacement costs! Why not try the AHDB lameness cost calculator available at <https://lamenesscostcalculator.ahdb.org.uk/calculator> to find out how much lameness is costing your herd, appropriate foot care can be well worth investment!

Average lameness levels in the UK are thought to be 50-70 cases per 100 cows per year with 20-30% of the herd affected at one time, however the top herds achieve much lower levels. Regular mobility scoring to identify cases early, maintaining good housing hygiene and walkways, targeted routine foot trimming and frequent footbathing can all greatly reduce both the number and severity of cases seen.

### Routine Foot Trimming

The horn on cows' feet is constantly growing at around 5-6mm/month and the quality of that horn is affected by things such as nutrition, e.g. you can see 'rings' of poor horn on the hoof wall relating back to an acidosis incident or stressful event; the hoof wall is like a health timeline! On top of this they will move through multiple management areas with different surfaces (soft/hard/abrasive/smooth) and where they must spend their time differently, for example a dry cow will generally spend a lot of time lying and walks on a soft bed, whilst the milking cow will spend extra hours standing in collecting yards, milking, bulling and eating all whilst on hard abrasive surfaces.

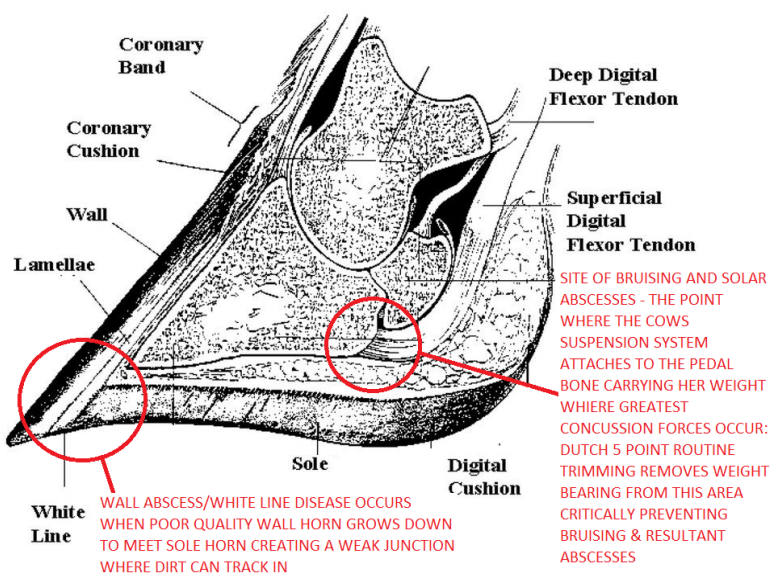
### The Ideal Routine Trim List

- Any lame/overgrown,
- @dry off (4wks pre calving for heifers),
- Mid lactation (80DIM heifers, 100DIM cows)
- **AVOID: Late gestation, early lactation, before first service, same time as turn out/housing, if thin soles**

**So why is this important?** As the environment is continually changing there will be periods of adaption for each stage, these are the critical control points for preventing mechanical lameness lesions when targeted trimming is most beneficial.

### Fresh Calved Heifers?

This group is of extreme importance as their feet represent your herds future feet! Heifers have a much higher risk of lameness when they transition from dry to freshly calved. They are now carrying the extra weight of an udder on their small feet with thinner fat pads to cushion them as they walk. The udder they have just developed alters their leg position and gait so they suddenly distribute their weight differently. They are also subjected to more bullying as they establish a position within the herd resulting in these more vulnerable feet spending a lot of time shifting around in confrontations rather than resting. Heifers lame in first lactation are twice as likely to suffer future lameness and early culling so extra attention here is critical.

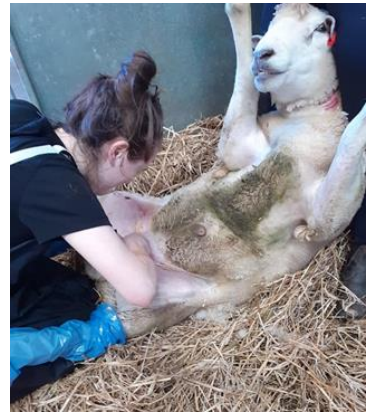


Early intervention is key to mechanical lameness, routine foot trimming maintains healthy balanced feet, unloads the site of solar abscesses and removes white line damage giving your cows feet built for walking! Speak to the vets if you think regular intervention could improve your herds health and performance.

## The Teaser Effect Jennifer Hutchison

With lambing almost over for the season, it's surely time to start planning the next one?! Think about what went well this year, and where there is room for improvement. For example, did you have a nice short lambing period, or did it feel as though it dragged on for months? One simple way to tighten up lambing time - giving you fewer sleepless nights - is using teaser (vasectomised) tups. When introduced to ewes pre-tupping, they can advance breeding by up to 2 weeks, as well as cause a peak in mating over a 2.5 week period.

Surgery is best performed on young, fit and healthy tups, to maximise their working life and effect. The operation takes only 30 minutes, but should be done at least 4 weeks before the teasers need to be used, to make sure they are infertile. Teasers should be used at a ratio of 1 to 50 ewes, to ensure coverage. Speak to one of the vets if you would like more information.



## Suckler Fertility Tom Crawshaw

The financial benefit accrued from increasing numbers of calves reared and achieving a compact calving are substantial and are a significant contributor to business performance.

### Areas To Focus On

#### 1. Management of bulling heifers

- Ensure that heifers reach target weights for bulling – minimum 65% of mature weight
- Use an easy-calving bull on heifers with a positive calving ease direct EBV
- Aim for a compact heifer mating with a target of six weeks or two turns of AI – this also selects for fertility
- Synchronisation can tighten up heifer bulling period and time first calving to the start of calving period, this gives heifers calves the best start and allows heifers greater recovery time before going back to the bull
- Manage heifers and first calvers in separate groups from the main herd, and provide preferential treatment for grazing and winter feeding

#### 2. Targeting cow condition throughout the year

- Manage body condition throughout the production cycle i.e calving, mating & weaning
- Calve in correct condition and prevent weight loss until conception has been confirmed
- Divide cows into overfit, satisfactory, and lean groups at weaning/housing and ration accordingly
- Feed thin spring calvers well after weaning to regain condition score and reduce the risk of over-thin cows
- Check that you are feeding the correct mineral and vitamin supplements
- Manipulate cow condition by adjusting weaning time, weaning too early can cause fat cows – big calves

#### 3. Avoiding difficult calvings

- Manage cow condition score to avoid having overfit cows at calving
- Select bulls with low calf birth weight, shorter gestation length and good calving ease direct EBVs
- Keep a simple record of the need for calving assistance - review to determine if any links
- Review diets and feeding systems if you have overfit cows at calving

#### 4. Bulls – selection, soundness and fertility

- Consider bull use and select bulls on both looks and appropriate EBVs
- After-sales service – speak to the breeder and ensure a gradual transition from pre-sale diet to your farm diet
- Bull breeding soundness examination by us two months before mating
- Observe that bulls are mating properly in the first few days of breeding and continue to monitor bulling activity

### Advantages Of A Compact Calving

- Labour – less time supervising extended calving periods,
- Nutrition – more accurate rationing as stock at similar stages of growth, pregnancy and lactation which reduces risk of more difficult calvings due to over conditioned cows
- Disease – reduced disease build up and spread from older to more recently born calves
- Fertility – more cows cycling when the bull is turned out so more chances to get back in calf
- Weaning weight – Average weaning weights higher & bigger calves take less of a check at weaning
- Marketing – more even batches of stores/ finishers sold earlier with fewer tail enders
- Replacements – earlier born heifer calves more suitable and mature for bulling

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