



### \*\*SPECIAL FEATURE \*\*

## DAIRY COW LAMENESS: PREVENTION & TREATMENT

Preventing lameness in the first place is obviously better than treating lame animals. The methods of prevention depend on the primary cause of lameness in your herd, we can help you determine this by looking at cows feet and/or examining foot trimming records.

In brief the basic principles of prevention are outlined below:

**Infectious lameness** (e.g. digital dermatitis, toe necrosis and foul of the foot): look at underfoot hygiene and regular (preferably daily) footbathing in disinfectant

**Non-infectious lameness** (e.g. sole ulcer and white line disease): look at cubicle comfort and maximising lying times (beware the length of time cows may be standing for milking), maintaining normal foot shape through regular trimming and ensuring cows are walking on non-slip and non-abrasive surfaces.

For routine trimming we advocate using National Association of Cattle Foot trimmers Category 1 licensed foot trimmers because not only are they rigorously trained in trimming and correctly identifying the causes of lameness they also have to be regularly re-assessed to keep their license which prevents development of bad habits. For a list of such trimmers see <http://www.nacft.co.uk/wp/findtrimmer/>. David Murray and Niall Lyon are as far as we know the only Cat. 1 trimmers working in Ayrshire. David has kindly provided the article below on foot trimming.

### Prevention is better than cure – the benefits of regular foot trimming

**David Murray of HLM Cattle Services 07772399001  
(Category 1 full licence holder in cattle foot trimming)**

Proper foot trimming is the only means to correct the problems of overgrown claws. Trimming should be carried out two to three times per year by a professional foot trimmer or a trained dairy man. The herd will benefit from regular preventative foot trimming to ensure their toes are kept at correct length - 75mm long, slightly longer for larger Holsteins and with an ideal sole thickness of 5mm. Often the outer claw will be overgrown but regular trimming ensures a balanced foot with an even distribution of weight across the foot.



As a practice we are keen to work with professional trimmers such as David in both prevention and treatment of lame cows. Certain lameness cases e.g. deep seated infections or non-healing lesions, require veterinary attention and use of local anaesthetic and surgery for humane and effective treatment. The key to success is to ensure they are referred to us sooner rather than later to minimise the time the cows is lame and also to maximise the chance of a successful outcome.

*Non-healing lesion with deep seated infection requiring local anaesthesia, radical surgical debridement and insertion of a drain.*



Photo 1, to the left, shows a heifers foot at 92 days into lactation, this heifer was not lame but was presented as part of a routine lameness prevention check. At this stage the foot has been cleaned and an over-grown outer claw can be seen.

Corrective foot trimming was then carried out to ensure correct weight bearing – please turn over to see the results...

Photo 2. Further examination of the overgrown claw revealed **sole bruising on the outer claw**.

Photo 3. The final trimmed foot – bruising removed, toe cut to length and outer claw heel dropped to correct depth to allow an even spread of weight. **No further trimming should be required as bruising has been removed and shouldn't progress into a sole ulcer** (the likely result had routine maintenance not been performed).

The ideal time to trim cows is in the first 30 - 80 days of lactation. This is critical for heifers where if they suffer a lesion in first lactation they go on to have continual problems, and a greatly reduced lifetime performance; often not staying in the herd long enough to cover their cost. Another recommended time is at dry off as this allows any lesions and foot problems time to recover during the dry period.

**Preventative trimming is a sound investment, maintaining cow performance for the whole lactation without lose of any yield and condition due to foot problems.**

Photo 2



Photo 3



### How to take a sterile milk sample

When investigating mastitis, milk samples from affected quarters for culture are very useful understanding where mastitis cases are coming from, and establishing a control plan. It is essential that the milk sample taken is **STERILE** i.e. there is no contamination from the cow's skin, faecal matter or the farmer's skin. **If this occurs the taking samples is a waste of time and money.** Therefore the correct steps for taking a sterile milk sample are as follows:

1. If the teat is dirty, wash and dry. If visibly clean then dry wipe with paper towel.
2. Discard three squirts of foremilk from each quarter/s to be sampled.
3. Coat the teat with a pre dip [best] or post dip and allow a contact time of 20 seconds and wipe dry with paper towel.
4. Put on a clean pair of gloves
5. Scrub the end of the teat/s with cotton wool soaked in surgical spirit so that the end of the teat is spotless.
6. Take the top off the sample bottle, hold it at a 45 degree angle and squirt the milk into the bottle making sure bottle does not touch the teat end.
7. Replace the top of the bottle.
8. Label with Cow number, quarter/s, farm and date
9. If there is any doubt about the sterility of the sample, repeat the entire procedure again.
10. You can freeze the samples until you despatch to the lab/practice.

N.B. It is a good idea to take milk samples from all cases of mastitis. Simply follow the steps above and store in the freezer. Samples can then be sent off if the mastitis doesn't clear up or if too many clinical cases are occurring. If you need sample pots please contact the practice.



## IMPORTANT CHANGE TO THE PRACTICE PHONE SYSTEM

We have recently upgraded our phone system to improve our ability to promptly answer calls.

If calling the practice night or day you must now press

**3**

3 for the farm dept.



Step 4&5: Wear clean gloves and scrub teat end with surgical spirit until spotless.



(Above) Step 6: After discarding first strip, collect **ONE strip of milk** at a distance from teat into sterile bottle, angled at 45° to avoid dirt entry



Step 8. Label: Cow ID, Quarter, Date

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